Conclusion

Tine Van Osselaer

From 18 December 1845, feast of the expectation of the most blessed Virgin Mary, up until today, 19 January 1846, the crown of thorns with 90 to 150 drops of blood, is daily visible on the head of the sufferer, similar to the manifestation on the head of the suffering virgin Dominica Lazari in Capriano [*sic*] in Tyrol, connected with ecstasies and levitation, like those of the suffering Maria Theresia von Mörl in Kaldern [*sic*] in Tyrol; and the condition of this stigmatized virgin of Dorsten shows great similarity with that of the famous Augustinian nun Anna Catharina Emmerich of Dülmen, who is buried five hours away from Dorsten in Dülmen.¹

Published in 1846, the small booklet, *Die Dornenkrone (Crown of Thorns)*, almost reads as a ‘who’s who’ of the famous stigmatics. Making an appeal for the credibility of Theresia Winter, Father Gossler compares her with other celebrity stigmatics that he knew of. The more similarities he noted, the more plausible her case became – there were precedents and she matched the type. Three elements stand out: firstly, his points of reference are all stigmatics who had fairly recently attained religious celebrity (Emmerich had died in 1824, but the other two referred to were still alive). Secondly, he used international as well as more ‘local’ examples and seems to have expected his readers to be familiar with these cases. Finally, by listing them together he demonstrated that he saw them as similar and, by doing so, also co-created a canon of famous stigmatics, the ranks of which would later be joined by Louise Lateau and Therese Neumann. These processes of grouping different cases, the logic of selection

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- 1 “Vom 18 December 1845, dem Feste der Erwartung der allerseligsten Jungfrau Maria bis heute, den 19 Januar 1846 ist die Dornenkrone mit 90 bis 150 Blutstropfen täglich an dem Haupte der Leidenden sichtbar, ähnlich derselben Erscheinung an dem Haupte der zu Capriano in Tyrol leidenden Jungfrau Dominica Lazari; verbunden mit Extasen und Erhebungen, welche ähnlich sind denen der in Kaldern in Tirol leidenden Maria Theresia von Mörl; und es hat der Zustand dieser stigmatisierten Jungfrau von Dorsten mit dem der bekannten Augustiner-Nonne Anna Catharina Emmerich von Dülmen, welche fünf Stunden von Dorsten zu Dülmen, beerdigt ist, grosse Aehnlichkeit.” *Die Dornenkrone mit Biblisch-katholisch-kirchlichen Auslegungen oder das zeigende und zeugende Zeichen in Dorsten bei Münster in Westphalen*. Dorsten: Verlag von Franz Ahn, 10.

(his focus on physical features) and comparison, as well as the media used for this, is what has interested us here.

In previous chapters we have shown how the nineteenth century witnessed the reinvention of stigmata and an increase in the use of the term “stigmatic” as an organizational category (having the wounds as a defining feature) and as a specific type: the stereotypical stigmatic was a lay woman with visible wounds who received a lot of attention (and, not seldom, also visitors at home). Both developments were indicative of the importance that the faithful attached to stigmata as a sign of the divine. Lists of stigmatics from the past and the present were created and published in books and articles, and new cases were summarily referred to as “the stigmatic of” (e.g. Lütgeneder and Bois-d’Haine). Moreover, the “stigmatic” also entered non-Catholic lexica, indicating that knowledge of this sub-category of mystics had become relevant to a broader public (not just the faithful). We believe that the development of the type and its popularity had much to do with the fact that these women could function as saints and celebrities. Newspaper articles covered stories about celebrity stigmatics such as Louise Lateau, and she and other women like her became meaningful as symbols and religious ammunition in political battles. Their visible wounds, ecstasy and other exceptional corporeal phenomena such as inedia were regarded as “proof” of the divine by their supporters, and as signs of superstition and credulity by their critics. However, the enthusiasm of the faithful for reports of visible stigmatization and the emphasis on the wounds of Christ was not mirrored in the Church’s responses to them. The Vatican preferred not to focus on such corporeal epiphenomena and did not use the term “stigmatic” as an analytical category.²

In the following, we will summarize our findings, (1) focusing on the development of the type and the role that modern media and consumer culture played in its development, (2) discussing the development of the religious types, pointing to the importance of the media in creating a shared devotional repertoire, and (3) reflecting on new areas of research that emerge from these.

1 A Visible Type

The lists of stigmatics that were created during the nineteenth century featured several different types. They included, for example, the names of women religious whose invisible stigmata were only discovered after their death (when

² Although the word could feature in the files on them – albeit only rarely – “stigmata” was used more frequently but generally in a negative way.

the spiritual father or fellow nuns scanned their writings) and lay prophetesses renowned for their prophecies or religious leadership. So why did the Louise Lateau-type (like e.g. Maria von Mörl, Anna Katharina Emmerick and Therese Neumann) become stereotypical? A short but rather superficial answer would be that the stigmata of these women were their main point of attraction. The faithful were indeed attracted by the visible wounds, but in cases such as Anna Katharina Emmerick it was certainly not this alone that interested the public. The famous German author Clemens Brentano, for example, spent years at her bedside recording her visions of, among other revelations, the Passion of Christ.³ However, in this respect, Anna Katharina Emmerick, Therese Neumann and Anna Schäffer seem to differ from silent stigmatics such as Louise Lateau, Maria von Mörl and Karoline Beller, who did not express religious teachings or prophecies. Similarly, Therese Neumann and Louise Lateau were also famous for their ability to go without food, but did not become famous as “fasting girls.” So why this narrowed focus? Why rank these women in the same category – bearing stigmata – using only stigmata as the point of reference, and why list them as stereotypical “stigmatics”? As we noted in our introduction to this volume, this type of “stigmatic” does not represent the majority of the people reported to have stigmata.

In order to understand the popularity of the stigmatic, its prominence, we looked at the type from a bottom-up perspective. We argue that “visibility” is a key term here, relating to both the physical, visible wounds and the public visibility that the media or others created, drawn by the “stigmatics.” Three aspects are of relevance: (1) the stigmatics fit older Catholic interpretations of suffering and became objects of devotion in a vibrant pilgrimage culture; (2) the visibility of their wounds and the enthusiasm they generated among the faithful was picked up by the press and cultivated in consumer and devotional culture (that highlighted specific features); (3) while the fame of the stigmatics was often transitory because of the developments in media and consumer culture, the names of the stigmatics circulated more easily (and quickly) on a larger scale and celebrity stigmatics thereby helped to “fix” or standardize the type.

First of all, (1) the importance the faithful attached to the stigmata was in line with an increase in lay and corporeal mysticism. The type became successful because it matched ideals of sanctity held by the faithful. Stigmatics such as Louise Lateau were regarded as “living saints” by some of their Catholic

3 *Das Bittere Leiden unseres Herrn Jesu Christi nach den Betrachtungen der gottseligen Anna Katharina Emmerich, Augustinerin des Klosters Agnetenberg zu Dülmen, (+9ten Februar 1824), nebst dem Lebensumriss dieser Begnadigten* (published anonymously in Regensburg 1833). See e.g. Engling, *Die Wende*, 148.

contemporaries. Popular ideas on sanctity varied, as they depended on perceptions of different communities and were thus historically contingent. In Lateau's case, her saintly reputation tallied with popular perceptions of sanctity, in which the saint was perceived as a revelatory token and the wounds she displayed were regarded as proof of divine intervention. The saintly reputation of the stigmatic did not build solely on their miraculous wounds, but also on the meaning the devotees attached to their suffering. The reputation of holiness was created in interaction with the faithful. The devotees co-created both the *fama sanctitatis* and the "stigmatic" through their devotional practices (similar to more traditional pilgrimage culture) and the use of contact relics (the cards and cloth that carried drops of blood), exemplary of what has been called a fetishism of the wounds. As Nicole Priesching suggests in her work on Maria von Mörl, the visitors knew what to expect of stigmatized virgins, and such pilgrimages confirmed these ideas.⁴ During their visits to the stigmatics, the devotees gazed at these "living crucifixes" with a specific mindset. For them, the suffering of the stigmatics not only referred to Christ's body, but also symbolized the state of society and reflected the threats to the Catholic Church. Thus, although stigmatics were linked to older traditions, they were not timeless but loaded with contemporary context-bound meaning.

Secondly, (2) the "standardization" of the stigmatic type was enhanced by the public interest in these women. The enthusiasm for stigmatics was picked up by the press and consumer and devotional culture. In order to sell them as stigmatics, certain features were highlighted (e.g. emphasis on wounds in images) and media (blood-stained cards) produced. Those stigmatics who found themselves in the spotlight and made the headlines could be called the "religious celebrities" of their time. As noted, this phrase, like the term "sanctity," is historically contingent; as we have seen in the previous chapters, it could mean that the fame of the stigmatics was marketable. In order to be marketable, they had to be recognizable as "stigmatics" (being presented as *grabataires* and emphasizing the bloody wounds) and as individual religious celebrities (e.g. by adding their names, small hints at their biography). Thus, while relics and devotional cards reflected and imitated older types of devotional and promotional material, new media such as periodicals and film also developed. The fame of modern stigmatics thus thrived on the circulation of old and new media.

We might wonder whether this increased visibility contributed to the rise in the number of stigmatics reported in this period. Were they, because of the publicity, more well known and thus recognizable (increasing the chance of

4 Priesching, *Maria von Mörl*, 385: "In allen diesen Fällen wurde der Eindruck von dem, was man sich von dem Anblick einer 'ekstatischen Jungfrau' erwartete, vorgeprägt."

detection), acceptable (phenomenon was already known) and thus able to be imitated? It is not unlikely, but caution should prevail, as older types of stigmatization continued to exist and lists of predecessors were also drawn up. What is clear, however, is that this increased visibility (via the new media and its scale) presented particular challenges to the ecclesiastical and political authorities. By becoming celebrity stigmatics in the public sphere, they could develop into political threats that needed to be neutralized – especially in those contexts in which Catholicism was regarded with suspicion (e.g. during the culture wars of the last quarter of the nineteenth century). Derided as fraudsters, they were under attack for what they represented. As we suggested in our discussion of the term “stigmatic,” the visibility of negative examples such as Sor Patrocinio might have even had a negative effect on the use of the term in Spain.⁵ Nonetheless, as we have shown elsewhere, it would be incorrect to reduce this negative discourse on stigmatics solely to an anti-Catholic phenomenon. The case of Louise Lateau, for example, fuelled discussion between the ultramontane and liberal Catholics in Belgium in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁶

Finally, (3) while their fame could be transitory, the scale of the media production allowed the names of famous stigmatics to circulate on a large scale. In the period under discussion, the fame of the stigmatics spread on different levels and via various means – leaving us with a wide variety of sources. To grasp the reception radius, we can adopt the perspective suggested by David Blackbourn in his book on the Marian apparitions in Bismarckian Marpingen. He considers that a report of religious phenomenon was an event with a widening impact: travelling from reception at the family level to a more general local response (through informal exchange of information), the local event then gained wider resonance, with pilgrims arriving and attempts at commercialization increasing. At this point, the political significance of the event might also draw the attention of the civil authorities, after which it enters its final phase of either rejection by the religious authorities or authentication.⁷ To a certain extent, we can follow the same route for the stigmatics, as in the cases of Louise Lateau and Therese Neumann, both village girls who became international celebrities. For each of these phases in the promotion of the stigmatics as “living saints,” different means of communication were involved (e.g. word of mouth, letter writing, an article in the local newspaper or the biography of a stigmatic in a foreign language). In this period, new means of

⁵ See Chapter 1.

⁶ Van Osselaer, “Stigmata.”

⁷ Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 20.

communication and production developed that allowed for an increase in the scale and speed in which news about the stigmatics could be spread. In other words, the stigmatics could quickly become meaningful to devotees beyond the local level. Given the development of cheaper and easier ways to travel (e.g. railway network), it was increasingly possible for these foreign devotees to go and see for themselves.⁸ This was not only the case for world-famous stigmatics such as Maria von Mörl and Louise Lateau, as less famous cases also attracted foreign interest. As noted, Rosalie Put drew the attention of German devotees, but she was never popular in her own region. Her case thus complicates the teleological narrative in which foreign interest is the final phase in an ever-expanding sphere of impact. In the case of Maria von Mörl, Bernhard Gißibl has noted how it was probably Joseph von Görres's portrait of her in his book, *Die Christliche Mystik* (1836–1842), that helped her gain such wide popularity.⁹ We know that Maria von Mörl herself read about Anna Katharina Emmerick (in the 1860s apparently, and thus long after she developed the stigmata in 1834).¹⁰ In the case of Karoline Beller, discussed in Chapter 3, it is clear that such literature provided an example: she had read the lives of Catherine of Siena and Anna Katharina Emmerick and, as one physician noted in his medical report on her, “nothing is more natural than gradually believing oneself to be a similar saint” – so when the eagerly wished for stigmata did not develop, she created them herself.¹¹ Devotional cards seem to have been thought of as having a similar effect. A report on Theresia Taubenberger, dated 1842, hints at the imitation of the ecstatic pose of Maria von Mörl, of whom she had an image in her room.¹²

Reports on celebrity stigmatics helped to standardize the type, as we find references to, for example, the “Lateau recipe,” or “a new Therese Neumann.” Moreover, when the term “stigmatic” entered Italian and Spanish public

8 The stigmatic Elisabeth Bartenhauser, for example, made a pilgrimage to Maria von Mörl in 1840, before developing her own corporeal phenomena. According to a physician involved in her examination, this had stimulated her sweating blood (“hervorgerrufen”), Gißibl, *Frömmigkeit*, 57.

9 Gißibl, *Frömmigkeit*, 52.

10 Priesching, *Maria von Mörl*, 249.

11 Berlin, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Preussischer Kulturbesitz (GStAPK), I.HA Rep.76. Kultusministerium VIII A Nr. 2180: Acta betreffende die angeblichen Wunder-Kuren und Wunder-Krankheiten 1821 Nov. 1904 Jan, report by Kreisphysikus Pieper, 6 June 1845. See also the discussion on Beatrix Schuhmann and whether or not she had read about Anna Katharina Emmerick. Archiv des Bistums Passau (ABP), OA Varia I 17 b II Maria Beatrix Schuhmann, PAN, 2. correspondence 1856–9, 18/08/1889: to Kooperator Anton Moosmüller, Pfarrer.

12 Gißibl, *Frömmigkeit*, 57.

discourse on these mystical women, it was linked to celebrity stigmatics such as Louise Lateau and Therese Neumann.¹³ Thus, in both cases, the increase in the use of the word seems to have been linked to the popularity of two stigmatics from abroad (Belgium and Germany), whose mediatized fame travelled across national borders to Spain and Italy. Here, caution should prevail, however, and although the word was used to describe famous foreign stigmatics, Italian Catholics shied away from using the word for their “own” stigmatics. Only when Gemma Galgani and Padre Pio, who was considered the new Saint Francis, became immensely popular in the first half of the twentieth century was the term used more often and without the negative connotations it held in the previous century.¹⁴

2 New Types and the Scale of Their Circulation

Should we look at this development of a new religious type as a unique story? We can see parallels with the concept of the “*miraculé/e*” – the faithful who were miraculously cured at a pilgrimage site. Like the stigmatics, they were often common laypeople who received the divine grace of being cured, and whose miraculously healed bodies were seen as “proof” of divine intervention. Moreover, as Suzanne Kaufman has shown in her work on Lourdes, they used the modern media to promulgate their cases and enjoyed their moment in the spotlight, and while their fame might have extended beyond the local region,

13 Louise Lateau (“estigmatizada”) and the German Therese Neumann (in the 1930s, when the word was used more frequently). Similarly, the Italian word “stigmatizzata” was used in book titles on Louise Lateau and for publications on Therese Neumann. Van Looy, *Luisa Lateau la stigmatizzata di Bois-d'Haine* (1876). A translation of the original French.

14 As Leonardo Rossi remarks, we can trace this trend in the pages of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, one of the most influential Catholic magazines closest to Vatican circles. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Jesuit authors of the journal wrote several articles on the relationship between mystical phenomena, science and the Church. They also mentioned contemporary stigmatics, especially Louise Lateau and Anna Katharina Emmerick. The judgment on “foreign” stigmatics was prudentially positive (Civ. Cat. 39, 11 (1888), 267–81; Civ. Cat. 39, 12 (1888), 33–50; Civ. Cat. 40, 1 (1889), 8–24, 609–82; Civ. Cat. 40, 3 (1889), 270–81, 668–83). It took the magazine more than half a century to adopt the lemma “stigmatizzato” for an Italian stigmatic. Despite the numerous investigations conducted during the life of Padre Pio, on the occasion of his death, the Jesuits wrote: “[t]oday, despite the controversies and the strong criticism, it is difficult to cast doubt on the nature of the power with which he attracted millions of souls.” This sentence not only gave the benefit of the doubt to the “stigmatic of San Giovanni Rotondo,” but to stigmatics tout court. Civ. Cat. 119, 3 (1968), 145–62: 145.

it was often transitory in nature.¹⁵ These women and men were famous for a while because they matched the well-known category of “*miraculé/e*.” People knew what type of narrative to expect and there were specific media (postcards before and after) and parts of the press (a journal section on the cures) dedicated to them.

In addressing the development of such new religious types, we can see similarities with the work that has been done on the historicity of new types of saints. More specifically, we can draw inspiration from Gabriella Zarri’s studies. In her work on sixteenth-century “*sante vive*,” she reflected on the development of this new type of holiness represented by the “holy women.” Zarri argued that these “*sante vive*” were successful at the end of the fifteenth century and during the first three decades of the sixteenth century because they matched a specific profile. They combined their ecstasies, stigmata and prophecies with their role as consultants to the high and mighty. In other words, they gained importance “in the most difficult junctures of the Wars of Italy,” years of continuous political uprising, and in such times, their prophetic counselling was useful to princes.¹⁶ What is of relevance to our argument here, is the importance she attaches to the specificity of the context and the concomitant saintly profile, or type of saint, that emerged from it.¹⁷ While we have also pointed to the importance of the historical context for the perception of sanctity (e.g. the saint as a token rather than as exemplary of Christian virtues),¹⁸ it is the emergence of the new type and the specificity of its contexts that interests us here. Could we address the “*miraculé/e*” from this angle as well? In other words, can we also see the historical contingency of new religious “types” (not necessarily subcategories of saints)? More research on the concepts is needed, but it seems telling that we do not really find translations of the concept of “*miraculé/e*” into other languages (although it is also used in Belgian sources on *miraculé/es* at Belgian apparition sites¹⁹). Is that because the Lourdes cures did indeed reach a wider audience than miraculous cures at other, perhaps more local or national, pilgrimage sites?

In comparison with the “*sante vive*” and the “*miraculée*,” the reception radius of the “stigmatic” seems broader. The scale on which the concept of the

15 Kaufman, “Les miraculées,” 542.

16 Zarri, “Living Saints,” 248.

17 See similar reflections on the specificity of Brazilian “popular saints” and the importance of a shared history (e.g. slavery) for their development and popularity by Eduardo Hoornaert “Heiligheidsmodellen.”

18 See Chapter 3.

19 Archives de Beauraing, “1934–1935” Dossiers Mr. Pierroux, 13. 5/1/35: le visionnaire de Malonne, Alfred V. calls himself “miraculé.”

stigmatic ultimately had its effect goes beyond the regional and national. We found the type in French, German and Belgian sources, and in the end it also entered Italian and Spanish discourse through the fame of specific celebrity stigmatics such as Louise Lateau and Therese Neumann. If anything, this shows the importance of the modern media and consumer culture in the creation of a shared devotional repertoire, and the importance of the transnational networks of Catholics who travelled to visit stigmatics in other countries and wrote about them, as well as the role of the international press. It is difficult to think of the history and success of modern stigmatics without taking the modern media (and its opportunities and challenges) into account.

The modern “stigmatic” was not invented *ex nihilo*. Catholic devotees, including the stigmatics themselves, were aware of older examples of women carrying the stigmata.²⁰ Scholars such as Ulrike Wiethaus and Peter Dinzelbacher have understood modern stigmatics as continuations of older traditions. Wiethaus saw Therese Neumann as a twentieth-century variation on medieval blood mysticism,²¹ while Dinzelbacher referred to Anna Katharina Emmerick as a nineteenth-century example of a continuation of the mystic model of saintliness that had already developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²² When we look at the contemporary reports on Emmerick, we also find references to “the nun Lucia of Ferrara” (Lucia Brocadelli).²³ Nonetheless, referring to Anna Katharina Emmerick, Gábor Klaniczay notes that, with her, a new chapter in the history of stigmatization commences – she is found to be the first of a new type.²⁴

As Nicole Priesching suggested in her discussion of the mystical model of Maria von Mörl, the “Grundtypus” (basic type) already existed.²⁵ In her discussion of the new type of mystic in the nineteenth century, she notes that these new mystics were primarily identified as such by their contemporaries

20 Gábor Klaniczay is currently working on an overview of the history of stigmatization from the Middle Ages to the modern era. See also Klaniczay, *Discorsi*, and *idem*, “Louise Lateau,” 285. See also the book by Muessig, *The stigmata in medieval and early modern Europe* (2020).

21 Wiethaus, *German mysticism*, 32.

22 Dinzelbacher, “Heiligkeitsmodelle,” 16. In his opinion, because of the importance of an interior spiritual life and phenomena such as stigmata and inedia, this model of sanctity was an easy one to simulate. Many of them were lay, according to him, but the majority were members of a religious order (between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries).

23 See Chapter 3 “Nonne Lucia” of Ferrara. Pascal, “Nichts Neues,” *Hermann. Zeitschrift von und für Westfalen*, 44. Stück, Hagen, 30.1817, 352.

24 Klaniczay, “Louise Lateau,” 291.

25 Priesching, *Maria von Mörl*, 407.

because of the corporeal epiphenomena they displayed.²⁶ Such an emphasis on the physical aspect also became apparent in our analysis. We thereby wish to take the argument one step further and argue here that the stereotypical “stigmatics” discussed in this book were, as far as labelling was concerned, reduced to their stigmata. While they often combined other exceptional features, such as bilocation, inedia, hyperthermia and glossolalia,²⁷ having the stigmata was their defining – and most appealing – feature. Newspapers and devotional books alike introduced new cases as “the stigmatic of ... X.”

In this respect, it does seem safe to say that the modern media was not only of importance with respect to the uniformization and standardization of Rome-approved devotional culture (top down, see e.g. the studies on the popularization of the Sacred Heart devotion or the promotion of the Lourdes apparition shrine²⁸), but also to the grassroots cults. Furthermore, in addition to what scholars such as Don James Tilson and Sophia Deboick have shown in their studies on post-mortem devotional campaigns (e.g. pleas for the beatification and canonization of Therese of Lisieux²⁹), focusing on the means (images, commercial products, “world tours” of the relics) through which they were promoted not only allows us to see how the popularity of a specific individual grew, but also how a religious type developed and functioned.

Given the fact that the “stigmatic” appears in different geographical contexts, does this mean there was a need for them, similar to what Zarri described in relation to the sixteenth-century “*sante vive*”? Does this not imply a uniformity of context that is highly implausible for the long period under discussion (150 years) and the geographical range of this study? This is not necessarily the case, as what we are arguing here is that because of the international mobility and scale of the press, a shared Catholic repertoire developed that could be “activated” at different moments in different geographical contexts – the devotees were familiar with the type and new versions were reported. In this respect, the scale of circulation resembled that of Rome-supported cults, including the Lourdes Madonna and other “icons of ultramontanism” such as the Sacred Heart. As Vincent Viaene has argued, “(t)he communication

26 Priesching, “Mystikerinnen,” 81.

27 See, among others, the keywords in the database: <https://mediahaven-stigmatics.uantwerpen.be/> (accessed online 14 August 2019).

28 John Moore calls the Sacred Heart devotion not so much a “popular” devotion but rather a “popularized” devotion. Moore, *Herz-Jesu-Verehrung*, 155, 156. For the evolution of the cult, see also Jonas, *France*. On Lourdes: Kaufman, *Consuming Visions*.

29 Sophia Deboick, for example, addressed the strengths and weaknesses, such as the alleged risk of “debasement,” when including the commercial in promotional campaigns, Deboick, *Image*, 36; Deboick, “Céline Martin’s images.”

revolution” allowed them to be promulgated on a massive scale. They “became the cornerstones of a transnational and universally accessible language, a new kind of religious pop culture – kitsch if you like.”³⁰ Nevertheless, as he also emphasized, the “romanisation, the Catholic variety of globalisation, was real, but was sculpted locally.”³¹

Similarly, among the various types of stigmatics, reference points went beyond the local or regional. A stigmatic (both the type and a specific case) could receive different meanings in different geographical and/or chronological contexts. As Kristof Smeyers and Leonardo Rossi have shown, the Tyrolean stigmatics Maria Domenica Lazzeri and Maria von Mörl attracted visits from prominent British Catholics (among others), who used their stories as pro-Catholic currency once they returned to Britain, inspiring local examples.³² Likewise, Louise Lateau was the point of comparison (and inspiration) for French stigmatics of the 1870s,³³ and she had a symbolic meaning for German Catholics in their struggle through the *Kulturkampf*. Foreign visitors came with expectations derived from their own devotional backgrounds and reference frameworks. French visitors, for example, often expected her to utter political or other prophecies, probably because many of their stigmatics were prophets as well.³⁴

In other words, as Vincent Viaene has suggested in his exploration of the transnational dimension of modern Catholicism (and especially the nineteenth-century revival), studying stigmatics allows us to leave the “national paradigm,” since they (1) “acted as a magnet upon believers across borders.” Moreover, as we have shown, they also (2) functioned – similarly to the apparitions in Lourdes or the Sacred Heart devotion, to which Viaene refers – as “key elements in the symbolic idiom of the revival, which gained cross-national (and cross-cultural) currency as shorthand for its counter-revolutionary worldview and its utopia to christen modern society.”³⁵ It is not unlikely that

30 “De communicatierevolutie liet toe om die en andere iconen van het ultramontanisme, zoals de Christus van het Heilig Hart, in massaoplagen te verspreiden. Ze werden de hoekstenen van een transnationale en universeel toegankelijke vormtaal, een soort religieuze popcultuur – kitsch, zo men wil.” Viaene, “De ontplooiing,” 81.

31 “De ‘romanisering’, de katholieke variant van de globalisering, was reëel, maar werd lokaal geboetseerd.” Viaene, “De ontplooiing,” 82.

32 Smeyers and Rossi, “Tyrolean Stigmata.” Priesching lists the different networks through which the fame of Maria von Mörl spread within Catholic circles in Europe, Priesching, *Maria von Mörl*, 420–421.

33 See Chapter 4 and the work of Sofie Lachapelle on Louise Lateau and Marie Bergadieu, “Prophecies of pilgrimage.”

34 Van Osselaer, “Stigmata,” 600.

35 Viaene, “International History,” 589. See e.g. Kotulla’s work on the reception of the Lourdes devotion by German Catholics (*Nach Lourdes!*).

the fact that this type, including celebrity cases such as Louise Lateau, could function beyond the local scale is due to some extent to the “silence” of many of the “stereotypical” stigmatics. As such, they were not known for their prophecies, but remained silent suffering bodies, and therefore – as Elke Pahud de Mortanges has shown – meanings could be projected onto them.³⁶

It is thus important to keep in mind that stigmatics were not only meaningful to Catholics: they also featured in non-Catholic newspapers and at times became well-known symbols of a derided Catholicism. Scholars working on anti-Catholicism, such as Manuel Borutta, Timothy Verhoeven, Yvonne Maria Werner and Jonas Harvard, have emphasized the specificity of its national variations, while at the same time stressing the transnational character of anti-Catholicism.³⁷ “Anti-Catholicism,” as Werner and Harvard have noted, “presented a shared symbolic language [...] in the communicative landscape of the nineteenth-century circulation of opinion, the transmission of materials between countries increased rapidly, as papers and publishers copied stories from one another.”³⁸ In this respect, they come close to Christopher Clark’s reflection on the role of the Catholic press during the culture wars, who recognized its importance in creating a “transnational community of sentiment.”³⁹

3 Suggestions for Further Research

The speed and the scale with which the fame of some stigmatics spread widened their range of reception, and people such as Louise Lateau and Therese Neumann became religiously significant to devotees on the other side of the globe. The discussion and promotion of them through the modern media also allowed the creation of a shared vocabulary, types and examples.⁴⁰ Given the

36 She differentiates between a “mute icon,” as she categorized stigmatics such as Maria von Mörl (1812–1868), and a “visionary seer” such as Anna Katharina Emmerick (1774–1824), who had a specific message and allegedly acted as a medium for a divine voice. Pahud de Mortanges, “Irre,” 208.

37 Borutta, *Antikatholizismus*, 13–14; Verhoeven, *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism*.

38 Werner and Harvard, “European Anti-Catholicism,” 17.

39 Clark, “The new Catholicism,” 35. As Viaene notes in his reflections on this and other chapters in the *Culture Wars* volume edited by Kaiser and Clark, the book was one of the first to focus on Europe as a “common politico-cultural space” during the culture wars (rather than adopting a merely comparative perspective), Viaene, “International History,” 589.

40 As such, our research ties in with current trends in anthropology. As Patrick Eisenlohr remarks: “Anthropologists have therefore begun to see the modalities of the public circulation of culture, above all the circulation of images and discourse, as one of the key questions in cultural analysis.” Eisenlohr, “Introduction,” 1. Forms of belonging “emerge through changes in the way culture circulates.” Cf. Hirschkind, “Media,” 93: “the way the

opportunities that the new media and scale provided for the promoters and devotees, we might wonder whether or not we should see this as a period of what David Morgan has called a “media make-over” of religion; an era in which new media transformed religious communities into something new, “replacing the material basis of one form of fellowship, interaction and community, with another.”⁴¹ The opportunities that the new media provided not only played a part in the popularization of cults supported by Rome, but also in the missionary encounters (e.g. the work on the impact of mission periodicals in the home country) and campaigns for beatification; grassroot cults and deviant devotions (rejected by the Church), which also benefited. In his work on religious deviance, Peter Jan Margry has shown how contemporary movements also thrive through transnational networks (linking unofficial shrines) and modern media.⁴²

As our discussions of the Church’s criticism and censorship have shown,⁴³ the new media landscape, the visibility of the stigmatics, provided specific challenges for the Church. The ecclesiastical authorities (e.g. the local bishops) attempted to deflect interest for different reasons, such as avoiding accusations of commercialization or an increase in religious tensions, or reigniting interest in a local stigmatic. As such, the discussions we came across have similarities with those on the late twentieth-century “mediatization” of religion and the Church’s loss of control over the religious messages that are now promulgated (e.g. on the internet).⁴⁴ In the cases we have traced, the international response to the stigmatics presented a specific challenge, but the clergy found a solution by using modern media to reach out to the faithful. However, is the role that new media played unique for this period? Scholars working on the interplay

spread of new media forms and formats changes the conditions under which the task of practicing a religious tradition is defined and pursued.”

41 Morgan, “Mediation,” 143. Morgan was thereby criticizing the lack of historical funding of the late twentieth-century “mediatisation of religion,” often linked to present-day internet culture. This thesis implies that the media grew into a more autonomous, independent institution in society in the late twentieth century and became integrated into the workings of other social institutions (such as religion), see Hjarvard, “The mediation,” 122. However, according to Morgan, if this implies a “media make-over of religion,” this is something that had happened many times before. He thereby referred, by means of example, to the impact of British Evangelical print culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Morgan, “Mediation,” 141.

42 He focuses primarily on movements that developed since the 1960s, Margry, “New transnational religious cultures.”

43 E.g. the censoring of the book on Palma Maria Matarrelli by Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre, as discussed in Chapter 2. Adnès, “Stigmates,” 1221.

44 Apolito, *The internet*; Lövheim and Lynch, “The mediatization.”

between religion and media have repeatedly stressed that we should be careful not to overemphasize the “novelty” of the role of the media.⁴⁵ It would be interesting to compare our findings to other periods, such as the sixteenth century – in which mysticism and “living saints” blossomed – looking into the media used at the time and the role it played in creating a shared repertoire.⁴⁶

Furthermore, while we concentrated primarily on the enthusiasm for living stigmatics, it would be interesting to explore their post-mortem cults; in particular, how some of them eventually gained the support of the Vatican, although not as “stigmatics.”⁴⁷ Were these cases of what Norbert Lüdecke has described as canonization for the “protection of the hierarchy,” that is, the use of the charisma of religious celebrities to enhance the charisma of office?⁴⁸ As we discussed in the final chapter, the Vatican regarded the stigmatics with distrust. Popular perceptions of sanctity (emphasizing exceptional phenomena) clashed with Vatican ideas of sanctity (in which heroic virtues played a greater role than preternatural phenomena). By the mid-nineteenth century, the Vatican seemed to have been well aware of the charismatic appeal of these “living saints” and attempted to downplay and censure their fame and reduce the popularity of these women bearing the stigmata. The same rules seem to have applied after the death of the “saint.” In order for the people’s saint-to-be to have a chance of becoming an official canonized saint (rather than a folk saint), the promoters had to minimize the importance of mystical phenomena and emphasize virtues such as humility, obedience and resignation. Of the fifteen blessed and three saints that lived in the period discussed here who had the stigmata, only four were well known as bearers of them – it certainly was not a central element in the claim for their holiness. Nevertheless, the Vatican policy was not an overall success, and popular devotion could continue after condemnation by the Holy See. Moreover, the Vatican attitude could change

45 Schofield Clark, “Why study popular culture?” 11; Lövheim and Lynch, “The mediatization,” 111. “The argument that mediatization is a modern condition of the autonomy of media, separate from the institutions of Church and State that once dominated the press and patronage of arts, is not entirely convincing since book and tract production in Europe since the late fifteenth century occurred largely in the commercial sphere,” Morgan, “Mediation,” 141.

46 On the dialectical relationship between official and “popular” religion (Badone, “Introduction”) and the role of new media and consumption practices in religious change, and in the construction of religious identities, see Lynch, “Religion,” 548–549; Lynch, “What can we learn”; Geppert and Kössler, “Einleitung,” 22.

47 During the course of our research, the Vatican archives were available up to the end of the pontificate of Pius XI, in February 1939.

48 Lüdecke, “Heiligsprechung,” 246 (“Auffrischung des Papstcharismas.”)

after the death of a stigmatic, as it has allowed folk saints into the ranks of official saints.

While this book primarily focused on the fame of living stigmatics, the majority of which were never officially approved, we do believe that it would be interesting to study the interim period between the death of the stigmatic and her official recognition as blessed or a holy figure more closely. While we have addressed some of the successful cases of continuous interest (e.g. Elisabetta Canori-Mora, Anna Maria Taigi⁴⁹ and Anna Katharina Emmerick)⁵⁰ as have other scholars (e.g. on Therese Neumann⁵¹ and Padre Pio),⁵² a more comprehensive study is still lacking. One could explore, for example, why the four of fifteen blessed as well as three saints were officially recognized despite explicitly being stigmatics, and how the profile of others might have shifted (Canori-Mora and Taigi developed from mystics into good Catholic housewives). While the Vatican archives are still closed on the majority of the cases, there are other sources available to access this interim period (e.g. the file on the 1924 campaign for the beatification of Anna Katharina Emmerick preserved in the Archives of the diocese of Münster).⁵³ Campaigns such as these invite questions about who preserved the memories (and what memories), how they constructed the post-mortem image (and linked it, for example, to regional and national identity), the type of souvenirs and relics they kept and the religious practices that developed.

Most importantly, however, we hope that our preliminary work for this book, our own “list” of stigmatics, may serve as the basis for further research. At the back of this book, we include summary biographies of famous, unknown and lesser known cases and the sources we have traced on them. We do not claim this to be an exhaustive list, and there might still be cases that we have overlooked. However, we do hope that the sheer number of cases we have traced and the variety in their stories, will inspire other scholars to embark on new studies and allow the voices of these stigmatics to be heard again.

49 Van Osselaer, Rossi and Graus, “Virgin mothers.”

50 Van Osselaer, “Valued.”

51 Seeger, *Res!*; Köppl, *Mystik*.

52 Margry, “Merchandising,” Krass, “Stigmata,” Luzzatto, *Padre Pio*.

53 Bistumarchiv Münster (BAM), Emmerick/Hensel, 45. Kaplan Hunkemöllers Werbereise für Katharina Emmerich in Nordamerika 1923/24: Korrespondenz, Zeitungsausschnitte u.a., c. 1921–1924.