Eszter Ramóna Sajni

THE AMBITIOUS MYSTIC: PUBLIC SANCTITY AND ITS PITFALLS IN THE CASE OF MAGDALENA DE LA CRUZ

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University Private University

Vienna

May 2021

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by

Eszter Ramóna Sajni

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Eszter Ramóna Sajni**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This research focuses on the figure of Magdalena de la Cruz, a once revered holy abbess from Córdoba living in the sixteenth century, who was condemned as a heretic. Scholars have previously shown that Magdalena strategically planned her image as a living saint, implementing motifs from the lives of esteemed female mystics such as Catherine of Siena. Following these theories, this thesis provides a comparison of her case with two of the most successful female mystics: Catherine of Siena and Bridget of Sweden; and with one mystic who just like Magdalena, was once admired for her divine gifts but was eventually accused to feign her sanctity – Lucia Brocadelli da Narni. The thesis aims to draw a clearer picture of what episodes was used from the life of Catherine of Siena; to see if the claimed mystical pregnancy was modelled after Bridget of Sweden; and to compare what aspects that led the downfall of Magdalena and Lucia. The first chapter serves as a theoretical background and introduction to the objects of comparison. The second chapter deals with the life of Magdalena de la Cruz, both her successful career and her downfall; then it presents the comparative analysis. The research argues that some of the miracles claimed by Magdalena show similarity with episodes from the *Legenda maior* of Catherine, but not without modifications. Such inspirational connections cannot be found regarding the mystical pregnancy. Finally, similar patterns can be found in the downfall of Magdalena de la Cruz and Lucia Brocadelli da Narni.

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Introduction

Magdalena de la Cruz the acclaimed holy abbess of Córdoba in the first half of the sixteenth century enjoyed the recognition and the admiration of the public. She was venerated as a prophet, a miracle-working saint, intercessor for the salvation of souls, a stigmatic and a living relic. She also claimed to be mystically pregnant and giving birth to the child Christ. This status of reverence however collapsed, and she was condemned by the Inquisition as a heretic who had made a pact with the devil.[1]

Previous research has dealt with Magdalena' saintly image as a strategically planned narrative to deceive and manipulate people.[2] María del Mar Graña Cid theorized that Magdalena implemented patterns and narratives from the lives of successful female mystics, like Catherine of Siena, to fabricate her image as a living saint.[3] Following these theories, I aim to understand to what extent did Magdalena treated the life of Catherine of Siena, one of the most successful living saints[4] as a model for emulation. I also will adapt this theory to see if Magdalena's mystical pregnancy was influenced by the example of Bridget of Sweden, whose mystical pregnancy and understanding and appreciation for motherhood and the Virgin Mary were the defining elements of her mystical activity and theology.[5] Then concerning the fact that

[1] María del Mar Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de la Cruz, santa viva y abadesa (h. 1487-1560)', Descripcion: Entrada en la web del Proyecto de Excelencia de la Junta de Andalucía HUM-1469, 'Identidad e imagen de Andalucía en la Edad Moderna', 31 December 2018, http://hdl.handle.net/11531/36577.

[2] Cuadro García Ana, 'Tejiendo una vida de reliquia: Estrategias de control de conciencias de la Santa Diabólica Magdalena de la Cruz', *Chronica Nova. Revista de Historia Moderna de la Universidad de Granada*, no. 31 (17 March 2005): 307–26.

[3] María del Mar Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje: Feminismo y Disidencia de Género En El Monacato Observante Español (1504-1560)', *Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje: Feminismo y Disidencia de Género En El Monacato Observante Español (1504-1560)*, 2020, 200–215; María del Mar Graña Cid, 'En torno a la fenomenología de las santas vivas: Algunos ejemplos andaluces, siglos XV-XVI', *Miscelánea Comillas: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales* 59, no. 115 (2001): 739–54.

[4] Maria H Oen and Unn Falkeid, 'Introduction', in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, ed. Maria H Oen and Unn Falkeid (New York: Routledge, 2020), 1.

[5] Gábor Klaniczay, 'The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherine - Bodily Signs of Supernatural Communication in the Lives of Two Mystics', in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, by Maria H Oen and Unn Falkeid (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 169–72; Kirsi Stjerna, 'Birgitta of Sweden and the Divine Mysteries of Motherhood', *Medieval Feminist Newsletter*, no. 24 (1997): 31.

Magdalena could not maintain her saintly image, I will compare her case to a contemporary female mystic, Lucia Brocadelli, the court mystic of Ercole d'Este, who just like Magdalena, was a publicly venerated saint who eventually had to face accusations of feigned mysticism, which effect she bore for the rest of her life.[6]

In my analysis will take a comparative approach. I will follow the conceptual framework of María del Mar Graña Cid, in dealing with the sanctity of Magdalena de la Cruz as a designed sacred image that incorporated elements from the lives of famous female mystics, including Catherine of Siena. I will also implement her theories on what factors contributed to her exposure. [7] In understanding Lucia's loss of status, I will rely on the works of E. Ann Matter and Tamar Herzig, as they point to the resentful environment in her convent and her affiliation to the Savonarola movement being deciding factors.[8]

Regarding my primary sources, I will rely on Inquisitorial documents from the case of Magdalena, such as a manuscript version of her indictment and a version of her confession; that is accessible from the collection of the French National Library. The other primary sources used in this thesis were published in print by Jesús Imirizaldu, like a letter from a nun providing a testimonial account and the verdict of Magdalena. In the comparison, I will rely on a modern translation of the *Legenda maior* of Catherine of Siena that was written by her confessor, Raymond of Capua; and a modern translated version of the revelations of Bridget of Sweden.

[6] Tamar Herzig, 'The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary: Lucia Brocadelli's Contribution to the Piagnone Movement', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte - Archive for Reformation History* 95, no. 1 (1 December 2004): 34–60, https://doi.org/10.14315/arg-2004-0103.

[7] María del Mar Graña Cid, 'La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz. Identidades Religiosas y Poder Femenino En La Andalucía Pretridentina', in *La Mujer* (Actas del III Congreso de Historia de Andalucía, Córdoba, 2002); Graña Cid, '"Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje,"'.

[8] E. Ann Matter, 'Prophetic Patronage as Repression: Lucia Brocadelli Da Narni and Ercole d'Este', in *Christendom and Its Discontents: Exclusion, Persecution and Rebellion, 1000-1500,* ed. Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 172–74; Herzig, 'The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary', 53–54.

As for the structure of the thesis, the first chapter will serve as a theoretical background to provide a better understanding of the comparative analysis. It will start with a discussion of the living saint phenomena. The work of Aviad Kleinberg, Gabriella Zarri and Daniel Bornstein will be in focus here. Then I will introduce the religious context in early sixteenth century Spain that which has allowed the flourishing of the careers of charismatic female mystics. Then I will provide an entry into the lives of Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena, in chronological order. It is important to note that in the comparative analysis in the second chapter I will deal with them in a different order, as with Bridget, smaller aspects her mysticism is subject to this study.

The second part of the first chapter will deal with the concerns and doubt that surrounded the activity of female mystics. Discernment of spirits, the work of Jean Gerson and Johannes Nider is necessary to include here as well how the perception regarding charismatic female mystics changed in Spain in the sixteenth century. Then I will touch upon the topic of issue of false stigmatics before discussing the case of Lucia Brocadelli, the court mystic of the duke of Ferrara, to give an understanding of her case as an object to comparison.

In the second chapter I will turn to the case of Magdalena de la Cruz. I will introduce her life as a successful living saint, then I will turn to the story of her exposure as a heretic, her confession to a diabolic pact and the outcomes of her Inquisitional trial. Finally, the comparative analysis will take place. Regarding the comparison with the successful examples, I will try to see which episodes from the *Legenda maior* were taken by Magdalena to build her image as a living saint; and to what extent did she copy them. I also argue in contrast to the impact of Catherine of Siena, Bridget of Siena's mystical pregnancy and appreciation of maternity in her mystical practice did not served as an influence for the mystical pregnancy of Magdalena de la Cruz. Finally turning to the comparison with Lucia Brocadelli, I argue that resembling factors contributed to their downfall.

Chapter 1: Female Mysticism in the Fourteenth-Sixteenth Century: Genuine vs Feigned Sanctity

1.1 Living saints and the Spanish charismatic mystic phenomenon

From the twelfth century onwards, living saints emerged to popularity in the religious sphere.[9] Although it was not solely a female phenomenon – some of the first popular ones even being men - it greatly affected how women could earn access to the public sphere, therefore in this thesis I will focus on how some of the main literature on sainthood and female religiosity treated the status of being a living saint as a role for women that provided power and authority.

According to Aviad M. Kleinberg, being a living saint was not a sure recognition, as it could be questioned at any time. He rather refers to it as a "saintly situation" which could be understood as a constant practice of saintly behaviour that made the audience see the individual as a saint.[10] The audience or the community that approved the saint could become doubtful at any moment and turn away from the individual. Furthermore, communities differed in who they regarded as a saint. There was no standard formula of being a saint, that one could follow to gain the approval of any type of audience, but each community shaped its view on sainthood by the relationship it had with the person who was to be regarded as a living saint. This relationship was "social negotiation."[11] As Kleinberg argues, what mattered for someone being regarded as a living saint was the public's perception of them being a divinely gifted individual, regardless of whether they were genuine or faking it. The true intention behind the practices of a so-called living saint did not matter, which Kleinberg illustrates by saying that a "sincere

[9] Graña Cid, 'La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz.', 105.
[10] Aviad M Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 7.
[11] Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country*,5.

ecstatic" and a "successful impostor" had the same role as long as they gained the approval of their audience.[12]

But how can we imagine a living saint in action? Gabriella Zarri provides a typology for the category, whereby she defines the living saint as a person who received charismatic gifts and by those gifts, the saint was able to perform miracles.[13] Miracle-working attracted attention, fame, and a group of followers. Zarri focuses on Italian female saints and mystics of the early modern period, meaning that the historical and social context of the living saints was the troubling period of the Wars of Italy, bringing hardship, famine, and poverty to the population, meaning that people searched for the aid and protection of their saints. Zarri also argues that the lives of prominent female saints provided "hagiographic stereotypes" for the living saints, especially the life of Catherine of Siena, who will be discussed later in this chapter.[14] The claim that there was a model for woman saints, seems to contradict the Kleinberg's claim that the characteristics of a living saint were negotiated by the interaction between the saint and its community. Zarri seems to suggest that there was a "formula" indeed that women of various backgrounds could adapt.

The first signs of the hagiographic stereotype that Zarri discusses showed in childhood by receiving a call from God, facing the devil, and overcoming its temptations. Also, there were common elements of the manifestation of sanctity: ecstasies, prophetic ability, receiving visions, mystical marriage to Christ and bodily signs, the most particular cases being the appearance of stigmata.[15] The question of the stigmata generated conflict in religious politics and especially between the Franciscan and the Dominican Orders.[16] Zarri suggests that a

[12] Kleinberg, "Prophets in Their Own Country," 1–8.
[13] Gabriella Zarri, 'Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century', in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 219.
[14] Gabriella Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity,"; "hagiographic stereotypes" at 234.
[15] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity,"235.
[16] See, e.g., Tamar Herzig, 'Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century', in *Dissimulation and Deceit in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon and Tamar Herzig (London: Palgrave Macmillan,

common element in the bodily manifestation of mysticism was the total abstinence from food relying only on the Eucharist.[17] Furthermore, both the severe restrictions imposed on the body and the significant connection to the Eucharist demonstrate that the woman saint associated herself with Christ and his passion.[18]

As the community could always become ambivalent about the authenticity of the nature of one's sanctity, the question about the origin of the supernatural powers of a woman had to be settled. In legitimizing the divinity, the male confessors—whom the living saint confided in—and the writers of their autobiography (these two roles could overlap) had a significant role.[19] Medieval notions about the female sex suggested that women were more exposed to spiritual revelations, also including diabolical influence, therefore the confessor's judgement of true nature of the revelations was necessary to settle the reputation of the saint.[20] In addition, as Daniel Bornstein suggests, since women were restrained from studying and attaining theological knowledge, their revelations could be regarded as of divine origin, because they contained details that could not be made up without the sufficient expertise.[21]

Women as living saints held a specific position in the public sphere, and they could carry political influence. When participating in the religious life, as Bornstein argues, women found a way to manipulate the Church's view on female inferiority and "carve out themselves a broad

2015), 142–64, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137447494_10; Tamar 1975- Herzig, 'Stigmatized Holy Women as Female Christs', *Archivio Italiano per La Storia Della Pietà* 26 (2013): 151; Carolyn Muessig, 'Receivers and Deceivers True and False Stigmatics', in *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Oxford University Press), 189–217, accessed 14 March 2021, https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198795643.001.0001/oso-9780198795643-chapter-6; Klaniczay, 'The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherine'.

[17] An influential work about the relationship between religious women and food in the Middle Ages was written by Caroline Bynum, that is taking a socio-cultural perspective analyzing the issue, see, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, The New Historicism (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987).

[18] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 235–38.

[19] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 240.

[20] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 234.

[21] Daniel Ethan Bornstein, 'Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy: History and Historiography', in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Ethan Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

area of influence."[22] Bornstein as well as Zarri, mostly refer to members of the tertiaries and lay converts, who were not enclosed behind the wall of the convent, but actively participated in the social sphere of its communities.

As Päivi Salmesvuori discusses, when looking at power, the question of authority also needs to be examined. In her analysis of the life of Bridget of Sweden, after an overview of some theories on what authority is and how it works, she provides her own simple definition: *"*to have authority is to be listened to."[23]

The trust that was placed into the actions of the saint would come from all levels of society, however, considering the role of the living saint as a public persona, it is pertinent here how they could become advisors in higher political spheres, both secular and ecclesiastical. The prophetic power of the living saint was what attracted monarchs and princes to have the saint at hand.[24] The living saint, however, could also use their prophetic power to criticize Church politics.[25] Zarri argues that the intercessory prayers that the saint exercised on behalf of people who sought their help, was a way of strengthening their political prominence.[26]

In the late fifteenth century, and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the religious atmosphere in Spain also favoured the presence of charismatic holy woman. The reign of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabel I of Castile was a period for political consolidation, which included their aim to enforce authority over religious life, by calling for centralization reforms of the religious orders.[27] These reforms aimed at female religiosity in the monastic orders because they wanted Observant reforms that were promoting passive, contemplative religiosity,

[22] Bornstein, "Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy," 2.
[23] Päivi Salmesvuori, *Power and Sainthood: The Case of Birgitta of Sweden*, The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 10.
[24] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 241.
[25] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 242.
[26] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 241.
[27] William A. Christian Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 158.

as the ideal way of living in the female convents. The leader of the reform endeavours was Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros.[28] Cardinal Cisneros, during his life (d. 1517) was one of the most influential persons of the Spanish Church. Originally a Franciscan Observant friar, he attained many high-ranked positions, such as archbishop of Toledo, confessor of Queen Isabel, Cardinal of Spain, and Inquisitor General, among other titles.[29]

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, emotional and affective female spirituality was welcomed and promoted by the Spanish Franciscan Order. Cardinal Cisneros himself played an important role in promoting such visionary spirituality that focused on the interiorized mystical experience, such as visions, trances, and dreams. He aligned himself with mystics like Sor María de Santo Domingo and Juana de la Cruz and he supported the translation and distribution of works written by mystical authors like Catherine of Siena, Vincent Ferrer, and Angela of Foligno.[30] The role of Cardinal Cisneros and his advocacy for Spanish holy woman highlights the initial approval and popularity of female living saints at the beginning of the sixteenth century. As Moshe Sluhovsky argued, the beginning of the sixteenth century also brought the popularity of seeking passive and interiorized spiritual practices that encouraged individuals to seek connection with the divine by themselves. This trend was part of the Franciscan and Dominican spirituality in this period, and one of the most notable attributes was the practice of mental or silent prayer.[31]

[28] Elizabeth A. Lehfeldt, 'Habits of Reform: Religious Women before Trent', in *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain* (London: Routledge, 2005), 137–38, https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/habits-reform-religious-women-trent-elizabeth-lehfeldt/10.4324/9781315244600-6.
[29] Jodi Bilinkoff, 'A Spanish Prophetess and Her Patrons: The Case of Maria de Santo Domingo', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no. 1 (1992): 30.
[30] Geraldine McKendrick and Angus MacKay, "Visionaries and Affective Spirituality during the First Half of the Sixteenth Century," in *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 94–98.
[31] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 98–99.

1.2. Successful examples of female mystics: Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena

Two of the most successful female living saints of the Middle Ages are Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena. Both women were able to voice their stance on the highest political issues of the papacy, as well as their ideas of spiritual reform of the Catholic Church in the fourteenth century. This was possible because they attained an accomplished public role as living saints and legitimate channels for communication with God.[32]

Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373) was born to a prominent aristocratic family.[33]At the age of thirteen, she was married to a nobleman called Ulf Gudmarrson, and their marriage lasted for approximately thirty years, during which Bridget became a mother of eight children. Before transforming into her religious persona, she served in the Swedish royal court, by the side of Queen Blanche of Namur. The transformation took place in the 1340s, when, after a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, she decided to dedicate herself to religious life and took a vow of chastity with her husband.[34] After the death of her husband she embraced her role as a prophet and a visionary and she became a "bride of Christ."[35] She gathered followers around her, among them theologians and religious men, and she was able to have her political messages delivered to the monarch of France and England as well as to the pope in Avignon, weighing in on the issue of the Hundred Years' War and the Avignon papacy. 700 revelations of hers were collected and published as a body of text titled *Liber celestis revelacionum*, after she passed away. In 1349, she moved to Rome and never returned to Sweden. In Rome, she maintained her political activity by advocating for the pope to return to Rome, proposing spiritual reform

[32] Oen and Falkeid, 'Introduction', 1.
[33] Kirsi Stjerna, "Birgitta of Sweden and the Divine Mysteries of Motherhood," *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 24 (1997): 31.
[34] Oen and Falkeid, "Introduction," 2.
[35] Stjerna, "Birgitta of Sweden and the Divine Mysteries of Motherhood," 31, 2.

for the Church, and working on establishing a new order. She also embarked on pilgrimages to several Italian shrines as well as to the Holy Land.[36]

Päivi Salmesvuori studied the life of Bridget between 1340 and 1349. She examined the ways in which Bridget established herself as a prophet with miraculous abilities and exercised power by acquiring this position. Salmesvuori argues that an "obstacle" for Bridget in attaining her excellence in piety was the fact that she was married and had a family. After becoming a widow that obstacle could be left behind, but the fact remained that she was not a virgin, and being a virgin was a requirement is acquiring the highest levels of female religiosity. Bridget had to overcome this issue, and she did that by associating herself with the Virgin Mary, professing her presence in prayers, visions, but most of all, in her mystical pregnancy.[37] As Gábor Klaniczay argues, there were previous instances of visionary experience of mystical pregnancy with the Christ Child, but the mystical pregnancy of Bridget was to become a model for emulation by early modern saints, and also had a role in bringing the concept of motherhood closer to the realm of female sanctity. The mystical pregnancy of Bridget was a vision received on Christmas Eve, where she could feel the infant Christ in her heart and could sense that he was turning around.[38] Salmesvuori argues that the mystical pregnancy had the risk to be regarded as a diabolic illusion, but Bridget's confessor as well as other writers recording this experience, legitimized the divine origin of the vision. The importance of the confessor in determining the authenticity of mystical phenomena is apparent in Bridget's life. Further aspects of Bridget exercising power, according Salmesvuori, included the public performance to convince others of her sanctity; she also maintained personal connections with her followers in Sweden as people approached her for spiritual help such as intercessory prayers for salvation of deceased relatives. Bridget also reported a journey to the Purgatory, emphasizing the

[36] Oen and Falkeid, "Introduction," 2–3.
[37] Salmesvuori, "Power and Sainthood," 168–70.
[38] Klaniczay, "The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherine," 169–72.

participation in helping those who confided in her. Speaking of trust, she became an advisor to the Swedish royal couple as well, which shows the level of influence she earned, and later she used her prominence as a visionary to establish her new rule for a monastery.[39]

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) was born to a family of merchants, as a daughter of a wool dyer. She was born with a twin, they were the 23rd and 24th children of their mother, but the twin sister passed away as an infant. The signs of her sanctity already showed at childhood: at the age of six, she received her first vision of Christ, surrounded by Peter, Paul and John the Evangelist; and when she was seven years old, she took an oath of virginity to Christ. As a teenager she had a brief period enjoying secular life under the care of her married sister Bonaventura, but at the sudden death of Bonaventura in childbirth in 1362 turned Catherine to a rigorous ascetic life once and for all. Her family was originally opposed to her idea to follow a religious life because they wanted her to get married, and to discourage her, they refused her to have her own room to embrace her asceticism, and she also had to do house chores for the family. Their attempts failed and Catherine remained determined to carry on with her abstinence and piety.[40] She became associated with the *mantellate*, a movement of religious laywoman, usually widows with financial means, who were associated with the Dominican Order.[41] In 1368, after the passing of her father, Catherine became mystically married to Christ, and she commenced her public life. She joined the mantellate, attracted a group of followers, that consisted of nuns, friars, but also lay men and woman, and they were referred to as *famiglia*. The members of the "family" called Catherine *mamma*. By 1374 her fame as an ascetic and a devoted helper of the sick in her community began to spread beyond her native Siena, and in

[39] Salmesvuori, "Power and Sainthood," 169–72.
[40] Carolyn Muessig, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco, and Beverly Kienzle, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, Volume: 32 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011), 1–2.
[41] Oen and Falkeid, "Introduction," 4.

1375, she received invisible stigmata in the Santa Cristina Church in Pisa.[42] Catherine, due to her popularity, also took up on political activity, starting from 1374, when she was first approached by the papal office. Then she served as peace negotiator on behalf of the papacy in a conflict against Italian city states. Her connection to the papacy was established through her association with bishop Alfonso of Jaén (who reached out to her on behalf of Pope Gregory IX), and her confessor, Raymond of Capua. In 1376, she visited Pope Gregory IX in Avignon. Catherine not only participated in political missions, but she voiced her ideas as an author: in 1377 she dictated a body of text that was to be published as a book, titled *Libro della divina dottrina* or *Dialogue*, in which she presented her political and spiritual views. The text was formulated as a dialogue between the soul (Catherine) and the Creator. Just a few years later, in 1380, she died at the age of 33.[43]

Catherine of Siena is considered as a model for female living saints, who looked at her life and tried to emulate her.[44] The life of Catherine was first written down by Raymond of Capua, titled *Legenda maior*.[45] Karen Scott argues that the biography written by Raymond of Capua focused on the holy and mystical aspects of her life, while her political activity was minimized or ignored. Some of the major mystical aspects detailed in the *Legenda* include her mystical marriage, the abstinence from food, eucharistic vision, her invisible stigmata, the exchange of hearts with Christ, and her mystical death. When discussing why Catherine took up on a public life, Raymond of Capua refers to it as her mission to save souls. Scott further argues that this biography was what formulated the "Catherinian model" focusing on sharing the Passion of Christ, and seeking mystical connection with him, which would become a model of religiosity for cloistered nuns, even though Catherine, a lay tertiary, was never a cloistered nun.[46] This

[42] Muessig, "Introduction," 4–5.
[43] Oen and Falkeid, "Introduction," 1–5.
[44] Zarri, "Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity," 235.
[45] Muessig, "Introduction," 1.
[46] Karen Scott, 'St. Catherine of Siena, "Apostola"', *Church History* 61, no. 1 (March 1992): 36.

ascetic-mystical model coincided with the attempt of the Church to reform female monasticism, emphasizing the contemplative spiritual life and enclosure, and also, "in turn shaped the self-expression of many early modern women."[47] As the *Legenda* by Raymond of Capua was the *vita* accessible for the public, Scott's concept of it as the source for ways to emulate Catherine's life provides a tool to find the ideas and elements that early modern women tried to imitate as living saints.

1.3. Feigned sanctity: growing suspicion against female mysticism and the case of Lucia Brocadelli as a failed mystic

1.3.1. Discernment of spirit and the suspicion regarding female mystics: Jean Gerson and Johannes Nider

Deciding the question of whether a vision or miracle originated from a divine or diabolic entity was a problem that had been raised in the Bible[48], as the often-quoted statement from the first letter of John shows: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false have gone out into the world."[49] The process of testing was called "discernment of spirits" by Paul, who defined it as a "supernaturally infused ability" to be able to make a difference between a true and a false revelation. As he had not elaborated further on how to acquire such ability, it remained for theologians of later times to come up with a set of guidelines on how to make the right judgment regarding the actions of a self-claimed visionary or a mystic. As Andrew Keitt argues, the need for such criteria became relevant in times when the Catholic Church faced a tumultuous period or a crisis.[50]

[47] Scott, "St. Catherine of Siena, 'Apostola'" 35–36.
[48] Andrew Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred: Imposture, Inquisition, and the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 56.
[49] John 4:1 .
[50] Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 56.

Here, I will introduce some of the ideas of two of the two prominent writers who dealt with questionable female mysticism, Jean Gerson and Johannes Nider. Influential French preacher, theologist, and chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, experienced the struggles of the early fifteenth century, the papal schism, and the Hundred Years' War. Gerson produced one of the first influential works in the discernment of spirits—in the form of three treatises, first *On Distinguishing True from False Revelations* in 1401, second, *On the Proving of Spirits* in 1415, in which he also attacked the idea of the canonization of Bridget of Sweden. The final treatise on the subject was written in 1423, titled *On the Examination of Doctrine*.[51]

Gerson presented the idea of discernment in the first treatise; he compares the process of detecting a true revelation to how a moneychanger detects if a gold coin is authentic or not. A real gold coin had five important characteristics: weight, durability, flexibility, conformability, and colour. These corresponded with the five attributes that Gerson identified as necessary qualities to have a vision identified as genuine: humility, discretion, patience, truth, and charity. [52] Summarizing the main ideas of Gerson on the discernment, Dyan Eliott notes that he used several points for his argument as to why one has to raise concerns about the divine gifts that women received: on the one hand he brought in the medical discussion, connecting visions and revelations to the effects of dementia. In this, he turned to the Bible to support his argument with the idea that "women should remain silent", therefore suggesting that those who act otherwise should be treated as questionable. Gerson did not fully dismiss the possibility that women could be blessed with divine gifts. He acknowledged that women were more sensitive when it came to the perception of supernatural instances. However, he warns that due to lack

[51] Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 57–58.
[52] Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 58.

of training, women, did not have the necessary means to avoid falling into the trap of demonic deception during the process of meditation.[53]

Ecclesiastical writer, reformer, scholar, Dominican friar, and prior of the Convent of Nuremberg, Johannes Nider, was a contemporary of Jean Gerson. His greatest work as a writer is the five-part book series titled *Formicarius,* which he finished at the end of his life, between 1436 and 1438. It was influential for the most important book on demonology in the early witch-hunting period, the *Malleus Maleficarum* by Heinrich Kramer. It is a complex work, presented as a dialogue between two characters, Theologus and Piger, and touching upon a series of topics regarding religiosity, both on the positive and negative side, dealing with the subjects of heresy, sanctity, true and false revelations, virtues and sins, possessions, simulations, and witchcraft, and so on. The problematic visions and revelations are the subject of the third book, "On False and Imaginary Visions." He discusses disturbing episodes of public rapture, mostly afflicting holy women of high reputation. About these scenes of screaming and moaning, as well as their uncontrolled body expressing their love for Christ, he suggests that, in effect, "most educated people consider demonstrations of this sort to be mere simulations."[54] Although Nider reminds the reader that the strength of "heavenly love" can elicit such a strong reaction in women, he adds a misogynistic remark about the female sex to emphasize why they should doubt their credibility.[55]

[53] Dyan Elliott, 'Descent into Hell', in *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 245–47.
[54] *Et tamen a multis literalis tales pro fictis habebantur*, Chapter 3.1 in *Fornicarius,* 292-93; cited and translated in Gábor Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance: Heavenly and Diabolic Apparitions in Johannes Nider's *Formicarius*," in *Procession, Performance, Liturgy, and Ritual*, ed. N. Van Deusen, Claremont Cultural Studies (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2007), 208.
[55] Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance," 203–9.

> But we should not be surprised, if thoughtful men of experience give very little credence to the actions of these women, for they have an inclination to evil, have no perseverance when it comes to doing good and have an unquenchable thirst for spurious fame.[56]

Nider also uses the inferiority of the female nature, both on the intellectual and moral level, to explain why women are more easily misled by "astray men," and why they would lie and simulate their sanctity and spiritual experiences. While he deals with the problematics of the assessment of genuine or false female mysticism, he does recognize the fact that women could elevate to such graces. To support that notion, in the fourth part of the *Formicarius* he praises Catherine of Siena as an outstanding figure of the Dominican movement and Colette of Corbie, an influential reformer of Poor Clares.[57] However, similarly to how the Observant Dominicans from the northern Alps region interpreted Catherine's rigorous fasting and *imitatio Christi* as allegoric elements of the *Legenda maior,* Nider overlooked her claim to sustain only on the Eucharist or that she had received invisible stigmata.[58]

1.3.2. Diabolic possession of holy women and feigned sanctity in Early modern Spain

In Spain, the growing popularity of mental prayer that encouraged the direct communication of an individual seemed to diminish the importance of priestly mediation activity, which evoked anxieties in the clergy. As a response, the Inquisition began to examine the charismatic female mystics and prophetesses who faced accusations of being part of a heretic movement of *Alumbrados* or Illuminists.[59] After 1520, the previously encouraged form of Franciscan and Dominican spirituality was seen as suspicious and the mystics once praised for embodying such

[56] *ne mireris, si prudentes & experti de quarumdam feminarum actibus fidem habeant modicam, quas flexibiles ad malum, inconstantes ad bonum, & pronas valde ad vanam gloriam esse agnoscunt,* Formicarius 3.1, p.293 cited and translated in Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance," 209.
[57] This was about the "merits of the perfect ones"; Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance," 204.
[58] Tamar Herzig, *Christ Transformed into a Virgin Woman: Lucia Brocadelli, Heinrich Institoris, and the Defense of the Faith; With the Text of* Stigmifere Virginis Lucie de Narnia aliarumque spiritualium personarum feminei sexus facta admiracione digna, Temi e Testi (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2013), 106–8.
[59] To see a concise summary about the legal category of Alumbradismo used by the Spanish Inquisition, see Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 78–81.

spirituality faced the accusation of heresy or diabolic possession.[60] Between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century, a large number of anti-superstition treatises were published, "which were in essence attempts to isolate causal principles to differentiate genuine miraculous causation from natural processes or demonic agency."[61]

To illustrate some ideas about the nature of the relationship revealed between a demon and a human, (in most cases, women), Angus Mackay and Richard Wood analyze the underlying theoretical notions in the accusations against Magdalena de la Cruz's alleged diabolic pact. They suggest that the Christian polemic, Alonso de Espina's *Fortalitium Fidei* written around 1460 may have served as a manual for the inquisitors in the case.[62] Espina theorized about the demons being fallen angels from the sky who tried to ridicule the "good angels," using the scenes from the Bible where angels had a significant role, such as the Annunciation. He also argues that the demons tend to choose women as the subjects for their deception.[63] The idea of ridiculing the articles of faith was also present in a treatise about superstition and witchcraft, written by the Spanish Franciscan friar Martín de Castañega in 1529. Castañega was concerned about the corruption of the Sacrament and that the devil would mock divine rituals. He also argued that the devil chose women for the mocking practices since only men could administer the Sacraments, and therefore for the opposite, blasphemous rituals women were an ideal fit. Carnality and credulity were just two of the characteristics that Castañega used to characterize the female nature, which made them an easier target for diabolic deception.[64]

[60] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 180–81.
[61] Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred*, 9.
[62] *Fortalitium Fidei*, or *The Fortress of Faith* is a work consisting of five books, which metaphorizes Christian faith and the war against its enemies. Each book represents a tower of the fortress, the first one prasinig faith, and others discussing war with its enemies: the Jews, the Saracens and the demons. Alisa Meyuhas Ginio, "The Conversos and the Magic Arts in Alonso de Espina's *Fortalitium Fidei*," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 5, no. 2 (1990): 169.
[63] Angus Mackay and Richard Wood, "Mujeres diabólicas," in *Religiosidad femenina: expectativas y realidades (siglos VIII-XVIII)* (Madrid: Asociación Cultural Al-Mudayna, 1991), 190–92.
[64] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 181–82.

Based on women's nature, Martín de Castañega inferred that not only they would easily fall for diabolic deception but also, that they would more readily lie about being possessed, thus succumbing to a malicious spirit. With this idea, Castañega introduced a new category, that of the "feigned possession," that is, when women wilfully deceived people about being possessed by a supernatural entity. A year later, another Spanish theologian, Pedro Ciruelo, published another treatise on the same issues, superstitions, and witchcraft, in which he developed the idea of possessions that were simply not real, just faked.[65]

The two theologians were prime examples among the others who, according to Moshe Sluhovsky, participated in the formulation of a new problem regarding the assessment of the mystical phenomenon: the evaluation of whether someone's sanctity was a supernatural phenomenon or a performance by an impostor. In the second part of the sixteenth century, the Inquisition began to deal with cases of feigned sanctity. It was no longer a category in the theology of the discernment of spirits. It turned into a legal category, focusing on the question of morality, a trial between sincerity or the planned, thoughtful deception of the community.[66]

1.3.3. False stigmatics

The appearance of stigmatized mystics was a peculiar phenomenon in medieval mysticism that needs to be addressed separately. The stigmata, the five corporeal marks of the Passion of Christ that appeared of St. Francis of Assisi in 1224 on Mount La Verna, made him a type of saint without precedent. Before Francis, the word stigmata only appeared once in the New Testament, in Paul's epistles to the Galatians, and before the thirteenth century, it was understood in the figurative sense, as a term to emphasize if someone was keen to lead a life dedicated to Christ. Between the eleventh and twelfth century, the stigmata also referred to the self-inflicted marks

[65] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 182–85.
[66] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, 188–92.

that were the results of penitential practices. But the case of Francis was different, because, as his hagiographers claimed, he received the wounds as divine gifts, something that no saints had experienced in the past. Due to this miraculous event, Francis was acclaimed as "alter Christus," a second Christ. It also made him an outstanding figure amongst the other founders of the mendicant orders, which created a ground for conflict between the Franciscan order and the Dominican order. At first, the Dominicans aimed to prevent the official recognition of Francis as a stigmatic but failing this, they shifted to the promotion of stigmatics who were associated with them – Catherine of Siena being the most outstanding among them.[67]

Catherine's alleged invisible stigmata caused controversy between the Dominicans and the Franciscans because the advocates of Catherine's sanctity and stigmatization sought to compare the greatness of her sainthood to that of Francis. The Franciscans strove to prevent the recognition of Catherine as a stigmatic saint, and it did help their cause that this episode of her life was left out from her canonization bull issued by Pope Pius II in 1461. In 1471, a Franciscan pope, Sixtus IV, forbade the depiction of Catherine with the stigmata. This measure did not stop the Dominicans to revere her as a stigmatic, and as we will see with the stigmatization of Lucia Brocadelli, the advocates of Catherine's stigmatization saw in Lucia an opportunity to enforce the veracity of Catherine's invisible stigmata.[68]

Johannes Nider dealt with the problem of false stigmatics in the *Formicarius*. Francis did not want to publicize his stigmata, which only became known for the public two years after he had received it, after his death.[69] Nider based his argument in the third book of the *Formicarius* on the difference between Francis's behaviour as the model stigmatic, and that of the women who claimed to be stigmatic, whom he used as a negative example. The difference lay in Francis's

[67] Herzig, 'Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century', 143.
[68] Herzig, 'Stigmatized Holy Women as Female Christs', 155–59.
[69] Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance," 227.

humility about his gifts and that he did not want to disclose them for the public, not so much in Nider's negative example, the recluse woman from Radolfzell, who was caught in her conceit. She revealed a prophecy to the public shortly before the start of the Council of Constance in 1414 that she would receive the *stigmata*, but eventually, nothing of the sort occurred. As the public was waiting for the miraculous event to happen, they were left feeling deceived, and the woman whom they believed to be holy lost her credibility. Nider does not accuse the recluse women of wilful deception by false prophecy, instead he pinpoints the arrogance of the woman to have the "presumption" that she would receive the stigmata. Muessig shows by interpreting Nider's words that he regarded as Francis "went to a great length to hide his visible wounds for fear that he could lose his treasure, unlike the female sex who presumed to have them," highlighting that Nider connects the phenomena of false stigmatics to his preconceptions about gender.[70]

1.4. The failure of a stigmatic: Lucia Brocadelli da Narni

The life of Lucia Brocadelli da Narni represents the case of an appraised stigmatic and court mystic whose authenticity was questioned, leading to her loss of status and to a life of confinement within the tertiary house that was supposedly founded for her.

Lucia Brocadelli was born in 1476 in the city of Narni, Umbria. According to her hagiographers, as a child, Lucia expressed her desire to follow the life that was led by Catherine of Siena.[71] She was also encouraged by her confessor to devote her life to Dominican spirituality. She kept this commitment given the circumstances that she was given to marriage after the death of her father in 1490, to Count Pietro di Alessio of Milan. This marriage remained chaste upon Lucia's

[70] Carolyn Muessig, *The Stigmata in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 192.
[71] Fitting the typology of Gabriella Zarri, who argued that Catherine of Siena was a model to be emulated by early modern female mystics in Italy, Zarri, 'Living Saints: A Typology of Female Sanctity in the Early Sixteenth Century', 221.

insistence, which she ensured by sprinkling the bedroom with holy water, putting a cross in the marital bed between her and her husband, and keeping penitential practices and prayer. The marriage did not distract her from religious life, and in 1494, she took on the Dominican tertiary habit. The following year, she moved to the same tertiary house in Rome where Catherine of Siena lived during her residence in the city.[72] There, her emulation of the Catherine's ascetic practices attracted the attention of Observant Dominican and chronicler, Girolamo Albertucci de' Borselli, who was an advocate for the authenticity of Catherine of Siena's invisible stigmata, and who found in the person of Lucia an opportunity to justify such claims as she later received the *stigmata* herself.[73] He reported a vision of Lucia of the bleeding Christ telling her about a divine punishment that would strike on Rome.[74]

The peak of her sanctity, however, was receiving the *stigmata*. It took place in the tertiary house of Viterbo, where the general of the Dominican Order placed her with the purpose to have her reform the house. She first received invisible *stigmata* on December 25, 1496, as she was praying the company of her tertiary sisters. The stigmata turned visible and started to bleed on the following Passion Week, in 1497, with such severity that it seemed to threaten her life, but she survived, and her popularity grew.[75] However, because of her ties to significant Dominicans supporting the case of Catherine's stigmata, it caused suspicion, as is shown in a letter written by a Ferrarese jurist, Felino Sandei, to Ercole d'Este in 1498. Sandei claimed that it was a case of false *stigmata*, and pointed the finger at the Dominican supporters, friars and tertiaries who stood by the cause, whereas Lucia was pictured as a manipulated person who was unknowingly involved in a scam set up by others. To prove the divine origin of the wounds, Lucia's supporters had to convince the doubters about two things—that the marks were real wounds

[72] Matter, '"Prophetic Patronage as Repression"', 168–70.
[73] Muessig, *The Stigmata*, 213.
[74] Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 145.
[75] Matter, "Prophetic Patronage as Repression," 169.

and not drawn, and that they were not self-inflicted.[76] Lucia had to undergo an inquisitorial examination in 1497 to prove the authenticity of the marks, which was led by Dominican inquisitor friar Domenico of Gargano. During the examination, Lucia had to reveal her *stigmata* to a group of theologians and prominent men of Viterbo. This was followed by the close examination made by the bishop of Viterbo, who was called upon to touch and confirm the stigmata.[77] Sandei's letter was written after the examination discusses how the process of examination was executed—being only one of the sources to document the event, besides Lucia's spiritual autobiography drafted at the end of her life, in 1544. According to Sandei, the bishop washed Lucia's hand with vinegar or warm wine to wash off any paint. Then her hand was sealed with a cloth for fifteen days to see if it would heal or become infected like an ordinary wound. This served to eliminate the possibility that Lucia was cutting the wounds for herself. Finally, upon removing the bandage, everyone could see that the wound stayed intact and also, they could witness that it emitted a sweet odour—further corroborating its supernatural origin.[78]

The most significant moment of this examination took place when Lucia disclosed a vision which revealed that she earned the *stigmata* on behalf of Catherine of Siena, who had appealed to Jesus to prove her invisible stigmata through the visible and bleeding ones that Lucia received. This testimony was then proof for the Dominican advocates to present both Catherine and Lucia as true stigmatics. [79]

The stigmata of Lucia attracted the attention of Pope Alexander VI, who first sent his personal physician to examine her in Viterbo, and after receiving the reassurance of the specialist, summoned Lucia to Rome. The visit took place in 1498, and after touching the wounds,

[76] Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 145.
[77] Muessig, *The Stigmata*, 213–14.
[78] Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 145–47.
[79] Muessig, *The Stigmata*, 213–14.

Alexander was fully convinced that Lucia was a true stigmatic, and thereupon granted her a wish. Lucia requested that the pope allow the depiction of Catherine's bloodless stigmata, which permission was granted for the Dominican communities.[80]

As the fame of Lucia grew, she attracted the attention of Ercole d'Este. Fitting Gabriella Zarri's typology, the duke required the presence of a court saint. There is more than one reason why Ercole chose Lucia specifically. While E. Ann Matter points out that Ercole d'Este was fascinated by the spirituality of Lucia, highlighting the fact she was a stigmatic, Tamar Herzig argues that the affiliation of both Ercole and Lucia to the charismatic Dominican preacher fra Girolamo Savonarola should be viewed as the main underlying reason behind Ercole's efforts in the process of acquiring Lucia for his city.[81] Savonarola, a Dominican friar born in Ferrara, propagated his ideas with his followers in Florence between 1494 and 1498. Such ideas were instrumental in his fight against the moral corruption in Florence, as well as urging for a Church reform in general. He wanted the Observant rule to be applied in Dominican communities—both monastic and lay houses—and he also claimed to get rid of ecclesiastical corruption. Savonarola's activity and views of positioned him against Pope Alexander VI, resulting in his conviction as a heretic and execution in Florence in 1498. As the movement he had launched lost its leader, his followers developed a cult around his figure and venerated him as a martyr and prophet, thus supporting visionaries who echoed the Savonarolan ideas. It is known that starting in 1495, Ercole communicated with Savonarola, seeking his advice in political matters. He also advocated the dissemination of his works in northern Italy.[82] Herzig states that not long after meeting with Borselli in 1495, Lucia also started to voice her support of the friar preacher,

[80] Herzig, *Christ Transformed into a Virgin Woman*, 88.
[81] Matter, "Prophetic Patronage as Repression," 169; Tamar Herzig, "The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary: Lucia Brocadelli's Contribution to the Piagnone Movement," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte - Archive for Reformation History* 95, no. 1 (2004): 34–43.
[82] Herzig, "The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary," 35–42.

and by the time of Savonarola's execution, she gained attention among Savonarola's supporters as a visionary promoting the Savonarolan call for reforms.[83]

E. Ann Matter argues that given the religious context in Italy, it was not an unusual phenomenon that the Duke of Ferrara wished to have his own court prophetess, however, the effort he put into acquiring Lucia was exceptional. He began the process in 1497 when he sent an invitation to Viterbo, promising the mystic that he would build a tertiary house for her in Ferrara, which would operate under her leadership. Based on the letters exchanged between Lucia's mother and the duke, Lucia accepted the offer. However, the people of Viterbo and especially the tertiary sisters resisted the idea of their mystic leaving town. A conflict erupted between Ercole and Viterbo, and during the struggle Ercole even sent his people to Pope Alexander VI to lobby for his case. The resolution came in 1499 when Ercole bribed the podestà of Viterbo, and in April 1499 Lucia was hidden in a basket of linen and smuggled out of the city to be taken to her mother's house in Narni, whence she embarked on their journey to Ferrara. In preparation for the arrival of the new court saint, Ercole recruited Ferraran girls to be novices in the house that would be founded for the Lucia. The convent was finished in 1501 and was named after Catherine of Siena.[84]

During her stay in Ferrara, Lucia's wounds bled with routine regularity on Fridays, during Holy Week, and occasionally on Wednesdays. When these bleedings occurred, the duke paid her a visit for a personal talk. The cloths tied over the wounds were venerated as relics, and her ability to guess people's thoughts and her prophetic power were also recognized.[85] In 1500, Ercole wrote letters in confirmation of Lucia's stigmata, noted her Eucharistic inedia during the Advent period, and warned anyone who dared question their authenticity.[86] The letters were collected

[83] Herzig, *Christ Transformed into a Virgin Woman*, 84–85.
[84] Matter, "Prophetic Patronage as Repression," 170–72.
[85] Matter, "Prophetic Patronage as Repression," 173.
[86] Herzig, *Christ Transformed into a Virgin Woman*, 163.

in a pamphlet about Lucia and other holy women by Heinrich Kramer. One of the letters was also disseminated separately in several European cities, Olomouc, Seville and Valladolid. This particular letter was written by Ercole's son Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who made a statement that "Jesus Christ transformed Himself into a Virgin woman,"[87] which in itself was a radical idea.[88]

Lucia could only enjoy the life as an appraised stigmatic until the death of her patron in 1505. The sisters of the Santa Catarina tertiary house turned against her, allegedly one of them even tried to stab her.[89] Lucia was defenceless against her opponents who took advantage of her unpopularity in her community and spread a rumour that some sisters, when peeping through a hole on the ceiling of her cell, had caught her in the act of cutting her wounds. Although she did not face official charges for faking her stigmata, she was stripped of all her privileges, and banned from holding any position in the future.[90] She spent the rest of her life as a "virtual prisoner" of the tertiary house until her death in 1544.[91]

There are several reasons that may have contributed to Lucia's downfall. As Matter argues, Lucia had no community and support system in Ferrara, who could have backed her in times of trouble. She was too dependent on her patron, and when he passed away, she was on her own. The sisters of the community resented her; on the one hand they were recruited forcefully. Some of the Ferraran girls who had been gathered as novices left the temporary house because Lucia did not have the charisma of a leader; and the sisters who remained complained that Lucia gave the alms of the convent to her family members. Numerous women who eventually became members of Santa Catarina da Siena house were her old companions who were compelled to

[87] Cardinal Ippolito d'Este's letter of July 24, 1501, ASDF, SCS, busta 3/25 cited in Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 149.
[88] Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 148–49.
[89] Matter, "Prophetic Patronage as Repression," 173.
[90] Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 150.
[91] Matter, "Prophetic Patronage as Repression," 173.

go to Ferrara by political and ecclesiastical pressure—through his connections Ercole petitioned Alexander VI to issue a papal decree that all tertiaries enlisted by Lucia had to come to Ferrara. On the other hand, the sisters also resented Lucia because they were jealous of the privileged position granted to her by her connection to the duke.[92] As Herzig argues, another contributing factor could have been Ippolito d'Este's statement that Lucia was Christ reincarnated. This was not acceptable for the Dominicans, who, in agreement with the Franciscans, thought that although Christ had suffered equally for the salvation of both the male and female sexes, because of the superior qualities of the male sex, he could only be reborn in male form.[93] However, this was not the main basis for the ideological clash with the Dominican Order, but Lucia's association with the Savonarolan movement, which threatened the reputation of the order.[94]

[92] Matter, 172–74; Herzig, "The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary," 53, note 57.
[93] Herzig, "Genuine and Fraudulent Stigmatics in the Sixteenth Century," 149.
[94] Herzig, "The Rise and Fall of a Savonarolan Visionary," 53–54.

Chapter 2: Magdalena de la Cruz

2.1. Life of Magdalena, the acclaimed saint

Magdalena de la Cruz was born in the village of Aguilar, a village in the province of Córdoba around 1487. There is not much information about her family, what is known is that "she was born to humble background"[95]. As a child, she was admired as a saint in her village, which manifested in various ways: bodily signs, revelations and miraculous events.[96] Following Graña Cid, here are the stories exemplifying the many aspects of Magdalena being a child saint: the two little fingers on her hands were not fully-developed, and she told people that Jesus Christ pressed the fingers himself, as to sign her sanctity.[97] She had also received revelations, in which Saint Francis, Saint Anthony, Saint Jerome and the angels of light appeared to her, but she also saw visions of the Trinity.[98] At the age of seven, she fled to a cave outside of her village to "to make a holy life there"[99], but the following dawn she woke up at home without knowing how she got there. [100] In 1504, around the age of 17, Magdalena entered the convent of Santa Isabel de los Ángeles in Córdoba, and by that becoming a professed nun to the Order of Saint Claire which ultimately connected her to the Franciscan Order.[101] From around 1520, she started to become known as a prophet.[102] Among her famous predictions appearing in the sources we find

[95] García Silva García S and J.M.M. de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', in *Relación de Las Causas Mas Notables Que Siguió El Tribunal de La Inquisición, Contra Los Que Se Decian Brujos, Hechiceros, Mágicos, Nigrománticos, y Aliados Con El Demonio : Entre Los Que Se Refieren La Del Famoso Mágico Torralba, Falso Musico de Portugal, Monja de Córdoba Fingida Santa, y Otras de Mucha Nombradía* (Sevilla: Imprenta del Porvenir á cargo de D. Juan J. Franco, 1839), 74, http://www.bibliotecavirtualdeandalucia.es/catalogo/es/consulta/registro.cmd?id=1014112.: "nació de padres humildes"

[96] Graña Cid, '"Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje,"' 204.

[97] 'Proçesso de Madalena de la Cruz. Sacosse este proçesso de uno que tenia el licenciado Copones, ynquisidor de la Sta Ynquisiçion, rresidente en Sevilla' (manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1700 1601), Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10515436h f. 248v.

[98] Graña Cid, "Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje,"', 204.

[99] Jesus Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras edition, Biblioteca de Visionarios, Heterodoxos y Marginados (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977), 53.

[100] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, p. 53.

[101] *para hacer allí santa vida,* S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 74.

[102] Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de la Cruz, santa viva y abadesa (h. 1487-1560)'.

her statements that regarded her religious order or the royal family: just like she predicted the election of Francisco Quinones to the position of the Cardinal General of The Franciscan Order or the marriage of the King of France to the sister of Emperor Charles, the dowager queen of Portugal[103]

Just as in her childhood, Magdalena had claimed forms of sanctity that was expressed through her body. She claimed to have been a stigmatic, bearing the wounds of Christ on her hands, feet and on her side. Her body also became a living relic, she had given out parts of her skin, hair, blood to people. One instance she had claimed that she got a wound on her chin, as she fell on the street as she was helping "Christ that she saw walking with the cross"[104], at a different time she peeled off some skin from her feet, wrote on it and the distributed it among people as it supposedly had healing power.[105]

Purgatory was a recurring motif in Magdalena's life. She had claimed to have travelled there. She had been also giving accounts of visions of occurrences in the Purgatory, like one time she shared that she saw the souls of sixty friars leaving Purgatory; at another time she published that "she had seen thirty thousand souls that were going to hell and two thousand to Purgatory"[106]. Not only that, but she proclaimed that through her intercession people could escape Purgatory and have their souls redeemed. At the same time, the monastery was also given a role in the redemptive ability; she placed sanctified thorns among the tombs of the monastery, and those who would be buried there would have their souls saved.[107]By being

[103] Graña Cid; S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 77.
[104] *a Cristo que le vido yr con la cruz* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 252r.
[105] 'BNF, Ms. 354' ff. 249r-253v.
[106] *Y otra vez dixo y publico por mílagro que avía visto treynta míll anímas que yban al ynfierno y diz míll al purgatorio,* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 251r.
[107] There are two different narratives in her confessions how she reveived the thorns, in 'BNF, Ms. 354' f. 253v Magdalena talks about her journey with Christ to the desert where the thorn stucks in her feet, and that it was taken out by Saint Jerome himself; followed by the declaration of what powers it holds at being buried by the tombs, without specifying where are those tombs located; however in; 'BNF, Ms. 354' f.262v, she tells a story of a vision, that she had imagined herself seeing the Virgin Mary espacing to the Egyptian desert with the child Christ, where the thorn stuck; here she also talks about breaking it into three parts, putting it among the tombs of the monastery but without stating its redemptive purpose.

venerated as a saint, she rose to a level of prestige she could not have had acquired based on her background as a simple village girl.

While she enjoyed the admiration of the outside world, she also reached to higher levels in the hierarchy of her convent; in 1523, she was elected as a member of the discretorium, and in 1533, she was elected as an abbess, which was followed by her re-election in 1536 and 1539.[108]

One of the witness accounts given for Magdalena's trial draws a detailed image about what an illustrious circle of influential supporters she attracted as an object of admiration. The testimony lists:

> Her good reputation, because it was so public and so widely and approved of by all, for a long time moved me to desire to know her, because I heard things that caused me admiration, and I saw that all the people spoke of nothing else but her sanctity, and not only the people, but people of quality, as well as cardinals, archbishops, bishops, dukes, counts and very important lords, scholars and religious of all orders; and in particular I saw that the cardinal of Seville, Don Alonso Manrique came to visit her from Seville, and in his letters he called her *his most precious daughter*, and commended himself to her prayers; and that the inquisitors of Cordoba always called her *my lady*; and I saw that the general of the fathers of St. Francis visited her, it being a constant fame that the principal reason for coming from Rome was to see and address Sister Magdalena de la Cruz: and then I saw Don Juan Reggio, the nuncio of His Holiness, who came to visit her.[109]

As it can be seen from the quote, Magdalena's admirers include influential members of the Spanish clergy, as well as intellectuals and members of the aristocracy. The Cardinal General of the Franciscan Order whom the testimony mentions were Cardinal Francisco Quiñones. Graña Cid argues that the spread of Magdalena's fame came around a time when the Observant

[108] Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de la Cruz, santa viva y abadesa (h. 1487-1560)'.

[109] *Su buena fama, por ser tan pública y de todos aprobada, por mucho tiempo me movió á desearla conocer, porque oia cosas que me causaban admiración, y veia que todo el pueblo no trataba de otra cosa que de su santidad, y no solo el pueblo, sino personas de calidad, así como cardenales, arzobispos, obispos, duques, condes y señores muy principales, letrados y religiosos de todas órdenes; y en particular ví que el cardenal de Sevilla , don Alonso Manrique la vino á visitar desde Sevilla, y en sus cartas la llamaba muy preciada hija suya, y se encomendaba á sus oraciones; y que los inquisidores de Córdoba siempre la llamaban mi señora; y ví que el general de los padres de san Francisco la visitaba, siendo, fama constante que el principal motivo de venir de Roma era el de ver y tratar á sor Magdalena de la Cruz: y después ví á don Juan Reggio, nuncio de Su Santidad, que vino á visitarla,* S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 75–76.

wing gained control over the Spanish Franciscan Order in 1517. Magdalena personified the form of feminine spirituality favoured by the Observant Franciscans. Moreover, she was a member of a convent that played an important role as a spiritual centre for Franciscan spirituality. Also, the Santa Isabel de los Ángeles convent was at the forefront of the centralizing institutional reforms which was one of the main ambitions of the observant movement. This could explain why the general of the Franciscan Order would associate himself with her. [110]

Magdalena's fame reached the Spanish royal court. This is perfectly illustrated by the fact that the Empress Isabel sent her portrait to have it displayed at her prayers[111]; in 1527 she sent the blanket of the newborn heir to the throne, the future Philip II, to have it blessed; and with the same purpose emperor Charles V sent her a flag as he was leaving for an expedition to Tunisia.[112] According to Graña Cid, Magdalena could also have been a kind of "emblem of orthodox religiosity" in the eyes of the monarchy at a time of struggle against Lutheran and heretical ideas.[113] In addition to the royal family, the Holy See was also aware of her activities, as the "the pope asked her to pray for the Christian world".[114]

As Graña Cid points out, Magdalena showed an excessive individualism, which was realized in the fact that she went beyond the usual role of a female saint and endowed herself with sacerdotal qualities. She also undermined the authority of other priests. She made the priest's role in the communion unnecessary, as she claimed that the Sacramental Host miraculously flew into her mouth. He also had the ability to judge whether the priest was in sin. She also took on a role as an agent of salvation, as she was saving souls from the Purgatory.[115] As an abbess

[110] Graña Cid, "Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje," 211, 215.
[111] S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 76.
[112] Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de la Cruz, santa viva y abadesa (h. 1487-1560)'.
[113] Graña Cid, 'En torno a la fenomenología de las santas vivas', 753.
[114] *el papa le pedía que rezase por el mundo cristiano*, Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de la Cruz, santa viva y abadesa (h. 1487-1560)'.
[115] Graña Cid, 'La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz.', 112.

she ordered the novices to confess to her every night. [116] Furthermore, "she said to another person that if she did not confess to her, she would not be forgiven".[117] She imposed severe forms of self-mortifications on the nun of the convents, claiming that the practices of the ordinary penance were not sufficient. The penitents had to oblige to such forms of punishments as wearing iron kneepads or iron belts with spikes; lying down on the threshold of the refectory to be stepped on by the entering nuns; at one instance she even forced a nun to wear a crown of thorns during the meal.[118]

Beyond a certain point, Magdalena made statements that represented a defiance of the rules. There were instances of her ordering someone to eat meat on a forbidden day, and others to work, because she claimed it was better than doing nothing. At other times he claimed that monks and abbots had affairs with frivolous women, but that it was not a sin in the eyes of God. She also stated several times that she did not need to go to confession nor needed to take communion, "for they had their backs well protected"[119]. Her over-ambitious pronouncements include, for example, her mystical pregnancy, and that on Christmas Eve she gave birth to the child Jesus.[120] She withdrew from the community to be alone in a hermitage in the courtyard of the convent. She claimed to have given birth to the Christ child there, who disappeared a few days later, which explained why Magdalena returned by herself from her seclusion.[121]

Because her activity generated controversies, she lost the support of the nuns and she fell from her position; after her third term of being an abbess, she was not re-elected for a fourth time in 1542. According to one account of her case what led her opponents to doubt her sanctity was her alleged fasting for 11 years, during which period she supposedly only sufficed on the

[116] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 252r.
[117] *dijo a otra perssona que si no se confesaba con ella no la avía dios de perdonar.* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 252r.
[118] Maurice Garçon, *La vie exécrable de Guillemette Babin sorcière: suivie de Magdeleine de la Croix, abbesse diabolique*, ed. Meurger (J. Millon, 2010), 194–97.
[119] *pues bien seguras tenían las espaldas,* Graña Cid, "La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz" 112.
[120] Graña Cid, "La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz" 112–13.
[121] Garçon, *La vie exécrable de Guillemette Babin sorcière*, 183–84.

Eucharistic bread. They insisted on exposing Magdalena and disproving this claim, and when the falsity of it was discovered, they reported it to their superiors, such as the confessors, the guardian and the provincial; but they were unsuccessful. Magdalena did not face any repercussions, but instead her accusers were punished.[122]

2.2. The breakdown of the saintly image: confessions and the inquisitional process

A letter written by a fellow nun from the Santa Isabel de los Ángeles convent, written in 1544, January 3, explains how Magdalena drew the suspicion of her companions until her confession to the official of the Inquisition.

The letter tells the events of two years earlier, in 1542, by the time when Magdalena was no longer an abbess. The first parts of the letter disclose the problematic episodes which led the abbess and fellow nuns of the convent to notify the Provincial to put her on supervision. The first issue that is addressed is the mishandling of the alms received by the convent, as Magdalena was "giving it away to those she wished."[123] Only after that, suspicious events are discussed that made the community question the true nature of the supernatural in her life. Two instances are told here, first being that one-night nuns saw suspicious figures in her room[124] but Magdalena dissolved their concern by saying these were souls asking for her help. The next time a similar episode occurred, she could not avoid its consequences. A nun saw a black man in her cell, which scared her, but Magdalena tried to calm her saying it was just an angel. However, the nun reported what she saw to the provincial, who punished Magdalena with

[122] S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 78: it is not clear what happened to them, as the source only mentions that the officials 'treated the whistleblowers badly'; *tratáron mal á las delatoras* .

[123] *porque ya se había mostrado lo que era ella visto las limosnas que hacían los grandes la Casa davalo a quien quería,* Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 43.

[124] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras* ,44.; in the letter the expression "cabrones negros" are used which can be understood as 'black bastards' or 'black billy goats' either way it can be seen as a reference as a malicious being that had no place to stay in a revered nun's cell

incarceration in her cell, and after that Magdalena fell ill. One night the nuns saw her in the choir of the monastery but upon running back to her cell, they found her in her bed which she claimed she had never left. This instance was reported to the confessor and then a doctor advised to Magdalena that as she seemed to die from the illness, that she should make a confession, which she agreed to do. But as the confessor came, she started to shake from fever. The priest returned two more times, but the same scene was repeated both times. Finally, the priest decided to conjure Magdalena, and as a result a demon responded from her mouth, who claimed to have been in Magdalena's life since childhood. This was followed by more confessions and conjurations, during which the demon revealed himself to be named Balban, who with his companion, Patonio have been helping Magdalena de la Cruz to deceive everybody about being a saint.[125]

In December 1543, Magdalena signed her confession, and she was taken to the cells of the Inquisition in the following January, in 1544. She was convicted in May 3, 1546 on a public auto-de-fe where her verdict was read out loud on a podium in front of the Cathedral of Córdoba.[126] Magdalena was condemned as a heretic who made a diabolic pact and with the help of her familiars and feigned her sanctity.[127]

In her Inquisitional documents it is revealed how the demon approached her and how she and her familiar tricked the public about her sanctity. Magdalena claimed that the demon first appeared in her life when she was five years old, but in the form of the angel of light, and at an instance, appearing as the crucified Christ, he told the girl to follow his ways and to crucify

[125] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras,* 44–48.
[126] S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 80–86.
[127] Graña Cid, 'Magdalena de la Cruz, santa viva y abadesa (h. 1487-1560)'.

herself; and she did so. Being crucified on the wall, he told her to follow him, which she did, resulting in that she fell from the wall and broke two of her ribs.[128]

Magdalena insisted that until the age of 12 she was deceived by the demon, as whenever he appeared to her, he took the form of an angel or some saints (such as Saint Francis or Saint Anthony).[129] It is obvious that Magdalena wanted to paint an image of herself as being a victim to deception – as by saying that as a child she was devoted to her faith, that is why the demon could deceive her in the forms of the saints, as she had such reverence for them.

At the age of twelve, the disguise of divine revelations ended, and a diabolic pact was made. A group of demons appeared to Magdalena in the "form of black bulls and dishonest man"[130], and one of them offered a pact to her, which she only accepted with the condition that she would not be condemned. To see that she would really do anything that the familiar tells her to do, he appeared with a naked black man, but Magdalena took fright, made the sign of the cross and fled. This angered the demon, but they resolved it by saying that whatever they ask from each other, they must do it as long as Magdalena "was not condemned."[131]

The ways she tricked the public is discussed in the Inquisitional documents. The sentence of Magdalena lists her most significant miracles and how they were faked. It mixes elements of simple deception - such as putting a wafer in the mouth when no one was looking; with demonic interference - such as the claim that Magdalene's prophecies were told to her by the demon; or that when she pretended to have a vision she was actually communicating with the demon.[132]

The verdict, before presenting the punishment, states that given that Magdalena's expressed repentance in her confession and the fact that she was a confessed nun to the Franciscan Order,

[128] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 257v.
[129] 'BNF, Ms. 354' f. 258r.
[130] *en figuras de toros negros y de hombres deshonestos* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 258r
[131] *con tal que no se condenasse* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 258r.
[132] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 53–60.

she should not receive punishment of death.[133] Rather, she was sentenced to exile to the Poor Clare convent of the town of Andújar. Strict rules were imposed to her in her new convent: she could not wear the veil as part of her habit; she could not have active nor passive voting rights in the convent; she had to eat every Friday in the refectory like those who practiced penitence; she could not take communion in the first three years of her exile – although it would have been authorised if she had fallen seriously ill. She also was banned from talking to anyone without the permission of the Inquisition. Under these conditions, Magdalena spent the rest of her remaining life in the convent of Andújar, until her death in 1560.[134]

In observing what led to the fall of Magdalene it should be noted that in 1542, when Magdalena was imprisoned by order of her Franciscan superiors, the Observant wing no longer held the control in the Order. At the same time, the Observant attitude towards charismatic women had radically changed. Instead of support, their activities were increasingly viewed with suspicion.[135]

Graña Cid points out that it seems that Magdalena had accomplices within the convent whom "she raised in her own cell"[136]. They helped her in deceiving the public about her sanctity, and they were crucial in the success of maintaining the saintly image. However, the excessive individualism of Magdalena created a divide between her and the nuns, and with the loss of their support, that image has collapsed.[137]

Recognizing that exposure was inevitable, Magdalena confessed to a demonic connection, knowing that by presenting herself as a victim of deception, she could reduce her personal responsibility for the charges against her. In any case, the Inquisition could not be expected to

[133] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 60–61.
[134] S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 86–87.
[135] Graña Cid, "Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje," 217–18.
[136] *que ella criaba en su celda,* Graña Cid, "La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz," 113.
[137] Graña Cid, "La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz,"113–20.

admit that lone a woman had constructed and executed this level of deception. She also attempted to gain the forgiveness of the community by reporting a demonic connection, thus ruling out the possibility of her accomplices' identities being revealed. However, this attempt to reconciliation failed.[138] The letter of the nun reporting the events of Magdalena's confession, tells that when Magdalena was being taken away from the convent, she seemed to have no shame but bore herself with strength. As she was leaving, she asked if anybody wanted to hug her, but no one did.[139]

2.3. Creation of the 'living saint': Catherine of Siena and Bridget of Sweden as a source of inspiration

2.3.1. Comparison with Catherine of Siena

In her article about the living saint phenomenon presented through early modern Andalusian cases, María del Mar Graña Cid argues that Catherine of Siena served as one of the models to be emulated for Magdalena de la Cruz to build her image as a living saint. As Graña Cid argues, Magdalena reproduced episodes from the life of Catherine. Such points of contacts were bodily signs, prophetic ability or thaumaturgic activity.[140] Here I will look at the confessions and the verdict of Magdalena, looking for episodes and motives that could have been inspired by the *Legenda maior* of Raymond of Capua. Taking in mind that Catherine of Siena was just one of the examples of influential female mystics that could have influenced Magdalena, my aim is to search for episodes that show such similarities that it could be suggested, that the inspiration could have come from the life of Catherine, but not ruling out the possibility to be coming from the life of other mystics who are not dealt with in this thesis. It is also important to highlight that the name of Catherine is not mentioned at all in the confession of Magdalena in any way.

[138] Graña Cid, "La Santa/Bruja Magdalena de La Cruz," 118.
[139] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 48–49.
[140] Graña Cid, "En torno a la fenomenología de las santas vivas", 740–54.

My aim is to see as to what extent Magdalena imitated Catherine in the aspects of their lives that show similarities.

The translation and dissemination of the *Legenda maior* in Castile was part of the project of Cardinal Cisneros to print "devotional literature" to promote models of female religiosity aligning with the Observant ideals to be established in the Spanish convents. This reform was initiated by Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. The *Legenda* that was published in Castile in 1511 was translated by the Dominican Fay Antonio de la Peña, the same person who also had a pamphlet published in Spanish which praised Lucia Brocadelli da Narni.[141] It is important to keep in mind that under the supervision of Cisneros, the publishing of the life of Catherine in Spanish did serve the intention to treat her as a model to imitate. The Castilian version of the Life of Catherine was based on an early version of Raymond of Capua's text.[142] Acosta-García highlights a dialogue between Catherine and Christ from the *Legenda* that justifies Catherine's mission as a prophetic teacher regardless of her concerns about gender constriction; being a woman who is not supposed to teach men and who would not be listened to. Here Christ says that in his eyes there is no difference between man or women, peasant, or noblemen when it comes to whom he chose to share his words with. [143]

Already in the miraculous occurrences during the childhood of Magdalena, we can find similarities with Catherine. In the life of Catherine, Raymond writes that, inspired by the examples of the holy Fathers of Egypt living as hermits, Catherine fled her city and settled in a cave. However, it was revealed to her that God did not intend her to live life of seclusion, therefore she was keen to return home. Not knowing the way back, she was transported in air

[141] Herzig, *Christ Transformed Into a Virgin Woman*, 243–44.
[142] Pablo Acosta-García, 'On Manuscripts, Prints and Blessed Transformations: Caterina Da Siena's Legenda Maior as a Model of Sainthood in Premodern Castile', *Religions* 11, no. 1 (January 2020): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010033.
[143] Acosta-García, " On Manuscripts, Prints and Blessed Transformations " 1–2.

through God's will, back to her city gate.[144] Similarly, Magdalena, as a child, at the age of 7, decided to retreat to a cave to live a holy life.[145] When recounting this story, she points out in her testimony that she came to this decision after reading the life of St Mary of Egypt.[146]

Another significant point in the early life of the two women that they shared was their professed commitment to Christ. From the life of Catherine, we learn that at seven years old, she prayed to the Virgin to have her son, Jesus Christ as a spouse. To be worthy to such blessing, she made a vow of perpetual virginity, for which the Mary granted her wish.[147] In the confession of Magdalena she states that as child, when she did not know that she was tricked by a demon, she believed that the crucified Christ appeared to her, who "endowed her with perpetual virginity,"[148] and to prove that it was really Christ himself appearing, he pressed the two little fingers that later was venerated as a bodily sign of sanctity, so that they would never grow over the first joint. Magdalena follows this story by claiming that as a child, she was convinced that a demon would not be able to do such thing with her fingers, so as it was used for her argument to say that she a victim of diabolical deception.[149]

In Catherine's life, prolonged fasting was one of the most prominent aspects of her holiness, according to which the Blessed Sacrament was the only nourishment she needed.[150] Magdalena also proclaimed her miraculous fasting, claiming that she had eaten nothing for 11 years, living on Eucharistic bread, although her Inquisition case revealed that during this 11-year period she had lived on bread and water supplied by the nuns who guarded her cell for the first 7 years,

[144] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, trans. Conleth Kearns, 3rd edition (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, Inc., 1980), 30–32.
[145] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 53.
[146] 'BNF, Ms. 354' f. 259v.
[147] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 34–37.
[148] *la dotto de perpetua virginidad* , BNF, Ms. 354', f. 259r.
[149] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f.259r.
[150] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*.

and for the following 4 years she had eaten other types of food.[151] Catherine had a special relationship with the Sacramental Host, regarding which relationship some elements can be traced in Magdalena's testimony.

Sometimes Catherine received visions during the Eucharist, as the form of the Host changed into various figures. Sometimes she would see in the hand of the priest an infant Christ or at other instances, "of a growing youth"[152] or fire with which the priest merged as he took the Sacrament to himself. [153] Magdalena had also confessed that sometimes the form of the Sacrament had changed in front of her eyes, taking the form of Christ as an adult man, or crucified[154] but the indictment also states that she claimed to see it in the form of a crucifix, or an infant or surrounded by angels.[155]

Raymond devotes a separate chapter in Catherine's biography to the miracles of the Host. Catherine frequently received Communion, and sometimes when she went for a period of not taking it, it was manifested in physical symptoms, that showed how much she suffered from its absence. At one instance, Raymond was in the process of consecrating the Host on a private mass that he was holding for Catherine. As he saw her radiating face upon to joy of the forthcoming communion, he had a sudden intuition to think about the following words "Come, Lord, to your spouse"[156], at which moment he saw the Eucharistic host flying from the altar to the paten that was in his hands. In a later part of the chapter, he also writes that several people witnessed how the host flew from the hands of the priest and into Catherine's mouth.[157] Magdalena made a great deal in deceiving people to think that the host had miraculously

[151] S and de E, 'Proceso de La Monja Magdalena de La Cruz, Que Se Finjió Santa', 77; Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 56.
[152] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 175.
[153] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 175.
[154] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f.260v.
[155] 'BNF, Ms. 354' f. 255r and f.260 v.
[156] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 292.
[157] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena* , 291–98.

appeared to her as well. She tricked others by putting a non-consecrated host in her mouth when she was in mass or when she was alone in her cell[158]. She also made a scene during mass as she secretly put a piece of host into her mouth, then crying out loud for the attention of her fellow nuns, to show them that the sacrament flew into her mouth from the altar.[159]

The outstanding relationship with the body of Christ also manifested in another way, namely by sharing his suffering and wounds. Catherine received the stigmata of Christ, but as she tells Raymond, she prayed that it would not be visibly shown. She claimed to see a vision of the crucified Christ. From his wounds, five blood-red rays emanated towards Catherine's feet, hands, and heart, but upon her wish to receive invisible marks, the light turned bright white before reaching her body. Upon hearing this story, Raymond asked her if one of the lights reached her right side, as she supposedly had to have an invisible stigma on her side as well. Catherine replied to this question by saying that a ray of light from Jesus' side indeed came to her heart, confirming the absence of an invisible side wound. She also disclosed that she felt the pain of those wounds. Chest pain appears elsewhere in Catherine's life as she used to say that greatest pain for Christ on the Cross was in his chest, and in connection to sharing the Passion of Christ, she herself felt her chest pain was the sharpest amongst all her pains. Also, it was the only source of constant pain, as elsewhere in her body it would come and go.[160] Magdalena also claimed to have shared the Passion of Christ, as in the indictment it is revealed that she was making wounds on her hands, feet and side to fake the stigmata of Christ. [161] In her confession Magdalena claimed that the demon told her that she would receive the wounds of Christ but also a "crack in her heart"[162], which caused her such a pain that she would faint. At the same time, she also got a wound on her hand. The wounds appeared periodically on her

[158] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f.249v.
[159] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 55.
[160] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 185–201.
[161] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 249r.
[162] *una grieta en el coracon*, BNF, Ms. 354', f. 258v.

body for 12 years, but never at the same time, and were usually visible on holidays and the Holy Week.[163] For some reason, her sentence did not include the part about the heart but replaced it with the side wound being the one that appears and disappears to not to be seen at the same time as the wound on her hand.[164]

There are also minor miracles with less significance that share similar attributes that I believe are worth looking at. First, a food-related miracle – Catherine wanted to bring eggs to a poor man who renounced all earthly goods to lead a pious life. As an act of charity Catherine put the eggs in a bag that was sewn to her dress. On her way to the man, she took a stop at the church where she fell into trance, lying on her side where the bag was, but as a miracle of God the eggs remained intact.[165] In the indictment Magdalena is accused of publicizing as a miracle that one day when she was carrying eggs to feed others, the eggs fell on the ground but did not break.[166] In her confession, she admitted that it was due to the quality of the surface that those eggs did not break, but as witnesses were claiming that they saw a miracle, she let them believe it.[167] Then there are some stories where Catherine healed people by touch; here I would like to highlight the one with her confessor. Raymond was suffering from the plague, and Catherine drove the disease out of him by covering his forehead with her hands and praying.[168] According to her sentence, Magdalena had also claimed to heal someone in a similar manner; one day she went to a different monastery for help a sick, and she put her hands over his head to heal, and the sick man confirmed that later, on another day he got up from the bed.[169] The last miracle I intend to include here has a similar theme – struggles on the sea - which can be considered specific, that it can provide possibilities in trying to see a connection between them. Raymond

[163] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 258v.
[164] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 55.
[165] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 134.
[166] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 253r.
[167] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 264v.
[168] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 240.
[169] Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras*, 60.

recounts the story that she one time he was travelling with Catherine and others on the sea. At one point the wind, that was supposed to keep the boat in direction died down, and the captain had to decide to change routes, but upon the prayers of Catherine, the favorable wind came back to take the passengers to their destination.[170] Magdalena also supposedly came to the aid of those who were struggling at sea, as sailors summoned her to calm the storm they were facing.[171] The indictment is not talking about an apparition, but that Magdalena claimed that she went to the sea with the Virgin Mary to accompany some people, and that they saved one person from the storm, and helped others.[172]

The examples brought up in this subchapter supports the theory of María del Mar Graña Cid that one of the models of imitation for Magdalena de la Cruz to build an image of a living saint was Catherine of Siena. By looking at the *Legenda maior* by Raymond of Capua and at the sources from the Inquisitional trial of Magdalena, in the latter documents the name of Catherine is not mentioned among the saints that Magdalena connected to the narrative of receiving revelations or being inspired by them. It also seems like that Magdalena did not replicate the miracles in their entirety, but the similarity in their themes, some patterns and manners cannot be denied.

2.3.2. The mystical pregnancy – comparison with Bridget of Sweden

One of the most striking 'miracles' Magdalena proclaimed about herself was her mystical pregnancy, as she claimed that she has given birth to the child Christ on Christmas Eve. As Graña Cid argues, Magdalena, just as other charismatic mystics, expressed miracles both

[170] Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, 91.
[171] Graña Cid, "Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje," 213.
[172] *Y otra vez dixo que nuestra Senora y ella avían Ydo por la mar encompanía de zierta perssona y otra que avían librado a zierta perssona de una tormenta y faborezido a ottros* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 252r.

according to a Christological and Marian model. [173] The mystical pregnancy draws the strongest parallel between Magdalena and the Virgin Mary, and here I would like to compare it with the Nativity visions of Bridget of Sweden to see if it could have provided a basis for reference in Magdalena's construction of her own mystical pregnancy narrative.

Motherhood in Bridget's career as a living saint was overall an important narrative. She had already built a connection to the maternal figure of the Virgin as a child as she lost her mother when she was 11 years old. Combined with her own experience of motherhood, as she gave birth to 8 children, the appreciation of the motherhood of the Virgin Mary is prevalent in her theology.[174]

From the 12th-13th century, the motherhood of the Virgin Mary and the devotion around this started to gain increasing recognition for itself. Subsequently, the search by female saints and mystics for ways to gain access to the child Christ first took the form of visions; the Virgin and the child appeared to them in visions but also some of them reported that they sensed the presence of the infant Christ around them. For example, Marie of Oignies, who felt as if the baby Christ were on her chest, but also reported visions of seeing the infant Christ to be breastfed by his mother. Early examples of mystical pregnancies appeared from the 14th century, with women claiming they had been impregnated by the Holy Spirit. Some even reported that they felt physical sensations which indicated their mystical pregnancy; a Franciscan tertiary from the late 13th century, Agnes Blannbekin, felt a swelling in her womb at Christmas time; and a Dominican nun from the 14th century reportedly reproduced childbirth pains.[175]

[173] Graña Cid, "Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje," 223.
[174] Stjerna, 'Birgitta of Sweden and the Divine Mysteries of Motherhood', 31.
[175] Klaniczay, 'The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherine', 169.

Bridget's mystical pregnancy took the form of a vision; one Christmas she felt as if the baby Jesus were in her heart and she could feel him spinning around.[176] Avoiding accusations of demonic interference, sources point out that Bridget's confessors credited the divine origin of the vision. Salmesvuori argues that Bridget's mystical pregnancy served to confirm her position as God's chosen saint, even though as a widow she could not claim the virtue of virginity. But with this miracle she could draw a parallel between herself and the Virgin Mother.[177]

Given the difference in nature of the two mystical pregnancies – as Bridget received a vision feeling the child in her heart while Magdalena claimed that she has indeed undergone the pregnancy and proceeded to give birth to the infant Child, I will look at the Nativity vision from Bridget's book of revelation for comparison. Bridget received this vision in 1372 during a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, and it is written down in the seventh book of the Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden.[178] The vision starts with the description of how the Virgin prepares to give birth to her son. Her physical appearance is described, as she was wearing a white mantel and a light gown, but during the preparation, the Virgin is taking off the mantel to reveal her hair that "spread out like gold over her shoulders"[179] The birth process happens in a flash of a light, and the physical-medical aspects of childbirth itself are neglected in the story:

> The birth of the child was so instant and sudden that I was unable to see or discern how or even with what part of her body she gave birth.[180]

The moments after the birth also show the mixed human and divine qualities of the scene; the child appears and lies on the ground in spotless purity, the placenta lying curled up beside it.[181]

[176] Klaniczay, The Mystical Pregnancy of Birgitta and the Invisible Stigmata of Catherin*e*, 168–70.
[177] Salmesvuori, *Power and Sainthood*, 169–70.
[178] Bridget Morris, ed., *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume III: Liber Caelestis, Books VI–VII*, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195166279.001.0001/acprof-9780195166279.
[179] Morris, "The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden," 250.
[180] Morris, "The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden," 251.
[181] Morris, "The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden," 251.

The presence of the medical elements associated with childbirth, such as the placenta, and the mention of the umbilical cord, as Stjerna states, helps Bridget to relate the experience as she had to meet with such dealt with elements in her own life experiences.[182] However, she could only partly identify with it, as she goes on to describe Mary's condition.

> In giving birth, the Virgin experienced no change in color nor any sickness. She suffered no loss of bodily strength as is normal for other women at childbirth. The only difference was that her swollen belly subsided to its earlier state, in which it was before she had conceived her child.[183]

The extraordinary nature of Mary's birth is further reinforced by the dialogue between Bridget and Mary in the next chapter, in which Mary herself recounts the experience.

> …you can be sure that the way in which I gave birth was on my knees, praying alone in the stable, as you saw just now. I brought him forth with such joy and exultation of soul that I felt no pain or discomfort as he left my body. … Despite the attempts of people to assert that my Son was born in the ordinary way according to their human way of understanding, you can rest assured that it is undoubtedly more true that he was born as I have told you elsewhere and as you have now seen for yourself.[184]

It shows Mary did not physically experience the burdens of childbirth in the way a birth should have been. The supernatural aspect of birth is most evident through the processes that take place with Mary's body, such as the absence of pain, the feeling of joy, the fact that her belly immediately drops back to its pre-pregnancy size, the fact that the birth itself is accomplished in an instant, while there is no mention of how the process of birth itself is technically accomplished.

Magdalena's mystical pregnancy intended to reproduce the Nativity of Jesus; the question is however if it showed any similarity with this particular account described by Bridget. The sentence of Magdalena contains her feigned miracle of publicizing on the day of the

[182] Stjerna, 'Birgitta of Sweden and the Divine Mysteries of Motherhood', 33.
[183] Morris, "The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden,"251–52.
[184] Morris, "The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden," 252.

Assumption of the Virgin that she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit and that she gave that the following Christmas Eve she "gave birth to a son"[185], but here I will rely on the testimony and the indictment for a narrative. The story described in the confession starts with saying that Magdalena desired to experience the joy the Virgin Mary felt when giving birth to her son. Upon this wish the demon or as he is usually referred to in the documents, "the said figure told her that he had obtained from God that mercy so that she would feel that joy."[186] From the day of the Immaculate Conception, the belly of Magdalena started to swell, and it stayed like this until the baby was born on Christmas eve.[187]

> The swelling was removed and it seemed to her that she saw the baby Jesus born in front of her and she was very happy that she was holding him in her hands and that she was covering him with her hair, although later she saw that it was not hers but someone else's, as she told many people.[188]

This narrative also lacks the physical aspects of the birth-giving process and, contrary to the verdict, does not use the term 'gave birth' but can be perceived as a vision: Magdalena did not experience the birth, but only saw Jesus being born. Just as in Bridget's vision, no mention of pain is seen here and bodily changes that is witnessed here is the disappearance of the swollen belly. Regarding the hair, while the testimony only says that Magdalena wrapped the baby in hair that was not hers, the indictment holds more details. There it is stated that Magdalena was "saying moreover that the same night very long blond hairs were born to her, with which she covered the child Jesus"[189], she cut this hair and gave away to people as relics.[190] Although the blonde hair appears in Bridget's vision, no implications can be drawn from this. At another point

[185] *pario un niño,* Imirizaldu, *Monjas Y Beatas Embaucadoras* 59.
[186] *la dicha figura le dijo que avía recavado de dios aquella merced que ella sintiese aquel gozo* 'BNF, Ms. 354', 262r.
[187] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 262r.
[188] *se le quito la hinchazon y le parecio y ttubo por muy cierto que vio el nino Jesus nacido delante dessi y ella muy alegre que le ttenía en las manos y que con sus cabellos lo cubria aunque despues vió que no eran los suyos sino de otra persona lo qual conto a muchas personas* 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 262v.
[189] *diziendo mas que la mísma noche le avían nacido cabellos rubios e muy largos con que cubrió al nino Jesus* 'BNF, Ms. 354', 251r.
[190] 'BNF, Ms. 354', 251r.

in her confession Magdalena likened her visual experience in the Purgatory to the paintings she had seen in Church[191], implying that she was inspired by the images that she saw in Church and used them for her visions. Also, Magdalena uses the hair to wrap the baby in it to later distribute it as a relic, while in Bridget's vision the Virgin uses linen and woolen cloth.[192] Hair as a tool is an important element for Magdalena to prove the reality of her mystical pregnancy and the birth of the child Jesus.

Magdalena also uses also uses the vulnerability of the human body and the female bodily experience[193] in this persuasion, as in the indictment and in the confession we can both see that she claimed that she had tears on her breasts because of a mystical birth, just like mothers with newborn babies tend to have.[194]

Considering this, we can see that Magdalena's mystical pregnancy was a departure from the mystical pregnancy examples that preceded her, in that she wanted her audience to believe that she had undergone both a full-term pregnancy and childbirth by re-enacting the Nativity scene. From this observation, it cannot be seen that Bridget of Sweden's mystical pregnancy inspired her to incorporate elements to her own narrative. Looking at whether Bridget of Sweden as a defining mystical example might have influenced mystical pregnancy in other ways, her vision of the Nativity scene was also compared. While some small details show similarities, they are not elements that are unique, proving the connection between the vision and Magdalena's illusion. And in one crucial aspect there is a difference - while in Bridget's vision Mary's body does not in any way suffer the burden of childbirth Magdalena wanted to confirm her claim

[191] 'BNF, Ms. 354', 263r.
[192] Morris, "The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden," 251.
[193] Graña Cid, "Magdalena de La Cruz, de Santa Viva a Hereje," 223.
[194] 'BNF, Ms. 354', f. 251r.

with the tears on her breasts. For her, the scars of the ordinary female body were a point of legitimization to strengthen her claim.

2.4. The failure of a mystic – comparison with Lucia Brocadelli da Narni

Magdalena de la Cruz and Lucia Brocadelli were two mystics who enjoyed the attention and esteem of being living saints. This mode of sanctity became increasingly popular from the 15th century onwards.

A defining part of their saintliness, followed by the public, was to follow patterns taken from the life of Catherine of Siena. In Lucia's case, her biographers confirm that Lucia considered Catherine as an example even as a child. She became a Dominican tertiary and followed a rigorous ascetic practice. She was also a stigmatic, claiming to receive bleeding wounds to prove the veracity of Catherine of Siena's invisible stigmata. Magdalena de la Cruz also reproduced the miraculous deeds of Catherine in many ways during her life. As we have seen in Catherine's legend, numerous miracles could be found as an underlying pattern for the numerous miracles of Magdalena, although they were not exactly copied.

The fame of the court mystic of Ferrara and the holy abbess of Córdoba extended beyond the boundaries of the cities that served as their home. Pamphlets extolling the sanctity of Lucia Brocadelli reached Central Europe and Spain. Magdalena's sainthood was also celebrated at the Spanish royal court and the Holy See gave an account of her faith, exemplified by the Pope's request that she should pray for the Christian world.

Both women enjoyed the support of men with authority and power. Lucia, as being under the patronage of the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole d'Este, enjoyed special attention and privileges. Magdalena did not have the same type of patron, but leading Spanish ecclesiastics, and the

general of the Franciscan Order associated themselves with her. As we can see in the case of both women, the attention of these powerful patrons was only temporary. Such losses of connection – in the case of Lucia the death of her patron Ercole; and with Magdalena the narrative - shift of religious politics - revealed that those women could not count on the support of their community.

As E. Ann Matter and María del Mar Graña Cid have pointed out in their respective research about the two women, they did not have the backing of their immediate environment, their convent community. Lucia could never have obtained it, due to the forced recruitment methods, her lack of charisma to lead the convent, and the resentment her sisters felt towards her, fueled by jealousy and resentment. As with Magdalena, her excessive individualism and ambition created a rift between her and her nuns, some of whom had been partners in maintaining the façade. An interesting fact is that in both cases there was a problem with the corrupt management of the convent's alms. The tension in Lucia Brocadelli's convent was used to discredit her by the Dominican superiors. She was accused of faking her stigmata, relying on a rumor that some sisters allegedly had seen her making the wounds. In Magdalena's case, those nuns who were disappointed in her reported her suspicious activities to the Franciscan officials. Their first attempts were unsuccessful; however, Magdalena was not re-elected as an abbess, which was a major setback to her status. Finally, as the Observant leadership was losing its control over the Order, the condemnation of charismatic women gave way to complaints from nuns which ultimately led to her investigation and confession to a diabolic pact, which could have been a way to downplay personal responsibility.

Finally, in both cases, we can see that these women were followers of trends within their own order that did not fit in with the religious-political climate by the time their career started to decline. Just as Tamar Herzig showed, Lucia was dedicated to the ideas of the Savonarola movement which was compromising for the Dominican Order. Even though Lucia's stigmata

were officially acknowledged by repeated investigations, she was accused of having falsified the stigmata. As for Magdalena, we can see that in Spain from the 1520s, the Spanish Church started to question the sanctity of charismatic mystics, to control the spiritual activity of women. However, Magdalena's values aligned those of the Spanish Observant Franciscans, which had allowed her to have personal contact with leading figures of the order. But just as the Observant Franciscans were losing control, Magdalena's decline began. Together with all this, it can be seen that these two mystics who had previously enjoyed widespread attention became a burden to their Orders, and their veneration as former saints could not prevent their downfall.

Conclusion

As previous research have shown, Magdalena de la Cruz, the once acclaimed holy abbess of Córdoba, had implemented patterns and narratives from the lives of successful female mystics, like Catherine of Siena, to deceive the public and to present herself as a living saint. She could maintain this image for decades before doubts have arose about the genuineness of her sanctity, which eventually led to her confession to a diabolic pact and her condemnation as a heretic. In this research I aimed to understand more clearly what examples she could have taken from the life of Catherine of Siena, and if her claimed mystical pregnancy was in any way influenced by Bridget of Sweden. I also compared her case to another emulator of Catherine of Siena, Lucia Brocadelli, to understand the context of the failure of a once revered mystic.

The first chapter started with theoretical introduction into the living saint phenomena, discussing why being a living saint provided voice and authority for women in the religious sphere. Gabriella Zarri's typology of female living saints in sixteenth century Italy had an important role here. Then moving to the Spanish context, it was important to see how the political situation allowed the rise of charismatic women saints, attributing much to the influence of Cardinal Cisneros. Then the life of Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena was discussed to see what made them outstanding examples of female mysticism.

The second part of the first chapter dealt with the negative perception of the activities of female mystics. Discernment of spirits, as the evaluation process of whether a mystic was divinely gifted or acted upon diabolic possession articulated the anxieties over female sanctity. Jean Gerson and Johannes Nider provided influential works that voiced concerns regarding female mysticism, with misogynistic remarks on why women due to their nature were more prone the diabolic possession. Going forward with the discussion on Spain, not much after the death Cardinal Cisneros, affective female spirituality and the popularity of mental prayer generated

anxiety in the clergy, adding to the struggle with heterodoxy and Lutheran ideas. Charismatic women who once enjoyed public admiration became subjects of suspicion and faced charges by the Inquisition. The sixteenth century also brought the shift from the discourse of the discernment of spirits to feigned diabolic possession and feigned sanctity that was deliberately designed by someone to deceive the community. The final parts of the chapter dealt with the issue of false stigmatics and the controversy regarding the invisible stigmata of Catherine of Siena to later to highlight the importance of the stigmatization of Lucia Brocadelli. Then I dealt with the life of Lucia Brocadelli, the court mystic of the duke of Ferrara, to give an understanding of her case as an object to comparison.

The second chapter dealt with Magdalena de la Cruz. First, her life as a successful living saint was presented, to understand the nature of saintly activity such as a prophet, a miracle-working saint, a living relic, and an agent for the salvation of the souls. Her influence and connections to prestigious ecclesiastical men, but also her ties to the Spanish royal court were presented to understand the length of her fame. Then, based on the theory of María del Mar Graña Cid, it was important to see how her overly ambitious individualism, such as the refusal to confession and communion, imposing severe penitential practices on the nuns or forcing them to confess to her, created an environment of resentment against her in the convent. Then her confession to a diabolic pact and her condemnation as a heretic were discussed, before going onto the comparison. First, I compared Inquisitional documents from the case of Magdalena – the indictment, the confession, and the sentence – with the Life of Catherine of Siena written by Raymond of Capua, to see if elements of Magdalena's feigned sanctity were drawn from the Catherine's life. Several examples of similar miracles could be found that underlines the *Legenda Maior*'s role as a source of inspiration, but it is important to mention that we cannot speak of a complete adoption of the miracles but rather of themes and patterns. Then seeing if the mystical pregnancy of Magdalena were influenced was previous tradition of mystical

pregnancy, it could be seen that in Magdalena's case, she claimed to re-enact the Nativity scene. As to whether Bridget of Sweden's revelation of the Nativity could have a same impact as the *Legenda maior*, the comparison did not show evidence for such a claim, as similarities seemed too general. Finally, with the comparison of Lucia Brocadelli to see the similar patterns that contributed to their disgrace, it could be seen that for both the lack of support from their communities was significant aspect. While both of them once enjoyed the admiration of powerful men of authority – for Lucia, the patronage of Ercole d'Este, for Magdalena her connections to men of higher ecclesiastical position – in the wake of the loss of such connections, they faced repercussions for their questionable activities. Also, in the case of both women, it can be said that they aligned with religious movements that were not accepted by their respective religious superiors.

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