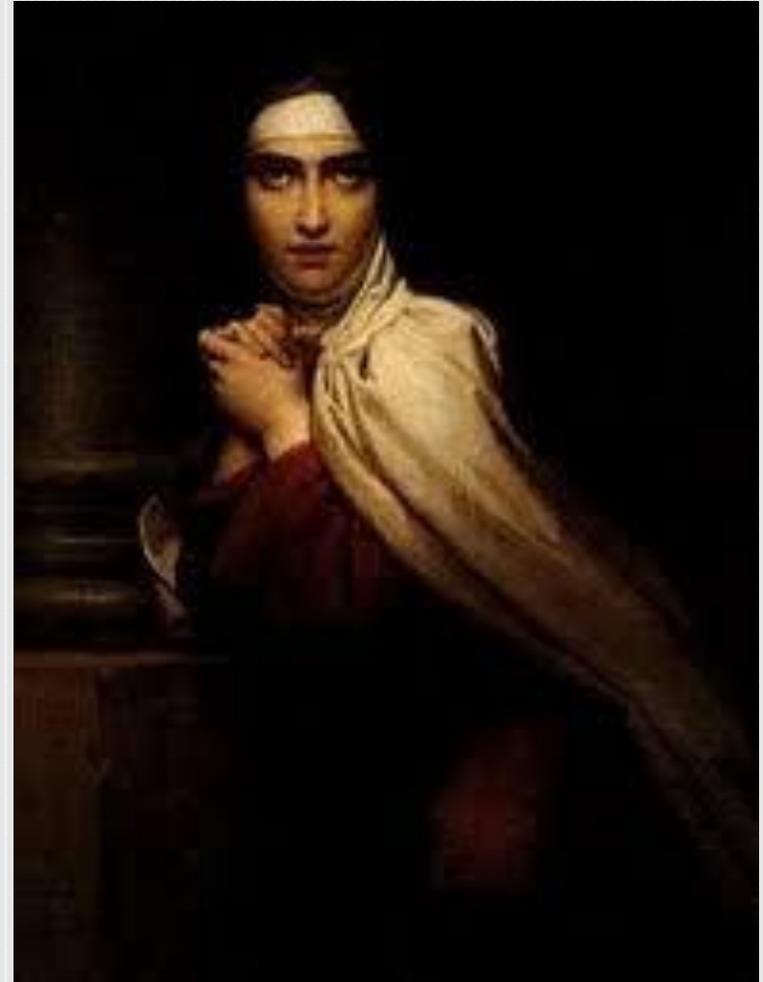


Comparison: Modern self injurious behavior & medieval mystics



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Comparison: Modern self injurious behavior & medieval mystics (1)

- Adolescent or young adult, usually female.
- The self-injury is done in a heightened state of emotional arousal with the goad of achieving altered consciousness.
- There is an important public component— the wounds are displayed and in turn society responds— simultaneously caring for and protecting as well as denigrating the person.

Comparison: Modern self injurious behavior & medieval mystics (2)

- The person is considered not fully responsible for the behavior because of dissociative (modern) or ecstatic (medieval) state.
- Individual therapists (modern) and hagiographers (medieval) claim to understand the inner struggle of SIB; while house staffs (modern) and church/family authority (medieval) interpret the behavior as mental illness or chicanery.
- Society provides symbolic meaning by societal values: passage to adulthood (modern) or otherworldliness (medieval).

Comparison: Modern self injurious behavior & medieval mystics (3)

Two distinctions... sort of:

- The experience of the medieval person was guided by the image of the crucified Christ; the modern person is haunted by the image of a violated child.
- The medieval ascetic self-mutilated to remove mental and physical interference to union with God. The modern patient self injures to interrupt painful affect, flashbacks, or auditory hallucinations (in the same way an substance abuser with PTSD might self medicate).