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Questions about the Cathars

At the heart of this volume there is the aspiration to tackle in a comparative perspective an issue which is highly controversial and hotly debated among scholars: the existence of a medieval phenomenon which we can legitimately call ‘Catharism’. Traditionally regarded as the most radical challenge to orthodox Catholicism in the medieval West, Catharism proposed that marriage is evil, just as the God of the Old Testament was evil and indeed different from the one of the New Testament, and that Christ never died in the flesh.[1]

One of the main issues at stake is the question whether what the inquisitors called 'the heresy' was an entity with a continuous existence over the years and with international dimensions spreading from the Balkans to Italy, to Southern France. Historians are more or less in agreement that what those repressing authorities described were largely localised, geographically and chronologically, phenomena. Was heresy, therefore, just a multiplicity of local, unconnected unorthodoxies? Or, on the contrary, can we indeed find a historically grounded connection between Catharism and a Balkan heresy such as Bogomilism, so that it is actually possible to talk of dualist dissent as a distinct movement in the central Middle Ages?

Words like ‘Catharism’ and ‘Bogomilism’ have obviously to be correctly understood and the problem of what these sects and their members were actually called in thirteenth-

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[1] The historiography on the Cathars is comprehensively cited by all the authors in this volume. Here, for Southern France, a reference to the best interpretive synthesis will suffice: M. Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Harlow, 2013). A stimulating insight into religious deviance in medieval Italy and elsewhere is provided by the essays collected in *L’eresia medievale*, ed. O. Capitani (Bologna, 1971), especially R. Morghen, ‘L’eresia nel Medioevo’, pp. 61-120; R. Manselli, ‘L’eresia catara come problema storiografico’, pp. 121-142; C. Violante, ‘Eresie urbane e eresie rurali in Italia dall’XI al XIII secolo’, pp. 157-184.

century sources is central to all the papers in this volume. The authors also share a specific interest in understanding the extent to which the integrated world of twelfth and thirteenth century Europe was reflected in the existence of a connected network of heretical groups or if, as recent historiographical trends have suggested, what we are confronted with are instances of local dissidence which responded to local needs and were shaped by local aspirations and cultural models.[2] Finally, the organisation of the Cathars, their Churches, has been the target of a strong critique in the past decades.[3] Many of the papers offer their view on the existence, or lack of, of a structured hierarchy of religious management and control.

As is well known, Robert Moore's recent book *The War on Heresy* argued that a structured 'Cathar' church did not exist before the early thirteenth century and that, as a consequence, Catharism as a phenomenon - and indeed the activity, even the very identity, of its followers and the specificities of its creed – were largely the product of medieval inquisitors, on the one hand, and of modern historians, on the other.[4] According to this view, Cathars and Catharism were therefore a construct of their persecutors, and the radical views attributed to them are no more than a myth. The inquisitors, who were obviously far from neutral in their observation of local realities, invented the phenomenon of Catharism by imposing a sharp set of preconceived labels on what in reality was a dynamic and complex amalgamation of local practices (religious and other). They did so in order to establish the conditions for, and legitimation of, repression and persecution. A corollary of this has been the calling into question of the Balkan influence of Bogomilism in Western Europe and the re-discussion of

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[2] See, for example, J.-L. Biget, *Hérésie et inquisition dans le midi de la France* (Paris, 2007); A. Siegel, 'Italian society and the origins of heresy, in *Heresy and the persecuting society in the Middle Ages. Essays on the work of R.I. Moore*, ed. M. Frassetto (Leiden, 2006), pp. 43-72.

[3] For example, C. Vilandrau, 'Inquisition et "sociabilité cathare" d'après le registre de l'inquisiteur Geoffroy d'Ablis (1308-1309)', *Heresis*, 34 (2001), 35-66.

[4] R.I. Moore, *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe* (London, 2012).

some key aspects of the political, cultural, religious and economic relationships between the Balkans and more western regions of Europe in the Middle Ages.[5]

Further to this point, alongside the works of Mary Douglas, which clearly inspire much of the discussion, readers might be reminded of the suggestions put forward by another anthropologist, Jean-Loup Amselle. He argued that nineteenth- and twentieth-century French ethnographers imposed sharp and rigid classificatory distinctions on the rather nuanced West-African social groups they were observing. In the long run what they imposed influenced, and in more than one sense determined, those groups' self-identity and customs.[6]

Reduced to its essentials, the argument of those who reject the early existence of a series of organised, interrelated, mutually aware groups of dualist heretics (Cathars) is that what we are actually talking about is a very dynamic, magmatic and diverse cosmos of dissidence (religious, social and political), devoid of any structured and uniform system of thought, with no shared texts and recognisable doctrines. As such, these groups of dissidents were very difficult to fight. This is why, according to this approach, the persecutors constructed and categorised those dissident beliefs in a structured and fairly rigid way, so that it would be easier for them to refute them.

With different perspectives and nuances, the chapters by Robert Moore, Mark Gregory Pegg and Julien Théry-Astruc structure their argument along the lines I have just mentioned.

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[5] On the influence of Bogomilism in Western Europe, see B. Hamilton, 'Wisdom from the East: the reception by the Cathars of Eastern dualist texts', in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, ed. P. Biller and A. Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 38-60.

[6] J.-L. Amselle, *Logiques métisses. Anthropologie de l'identité en Afrique et ailleurs* (Paris, 1990). Translated into English by Claudia Royal as *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and Elsewhere* (Redwood City, 1998). Among the works by Mary Douglas, particularly important for this discussion are: M. Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (London, 1987); M. Douglas, 'Rightness of Categories', in *How Classification Works: Nelson Goodman among the Social Sciences*, ed. M. Douglas and D. Hull (Edinburgh, 1992); M. Douglas, *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers* (Sheffield, 1993).

Robert Moore is interested, among other things, in finding a way in which the gulf between 'traditionalists' and 'sceptics' (he qualifies his use of the two terms in his chapter and, for clarity and convenience, I adopt them here and in the following pages) can still result in a coherent, and useful, picture of high and late medieval religious dissent. However, first of all there are issues of chronology. Moore states very clearly that the evidence for organised dualistic heresies is abundant and substantial after the mid-thirteenth century. For southern France the watershed seems clearly to be the Albigensian crusade (1209–29). From the inquisitorial records it seems that, when witnesses refer to the situation before the crusade, heresy was much more spread, common, public, and it was not so odd to see *boni homines* preach and discuss in public. In a sense, it is almost as though the witnesses said, about that past, that everybody was at one point of their daily lives in contact, one way or the other, with a heretic, and that made individuals less guilty, because they simply did what everybody did. By contrast, testimonies referring to the period after the Albigensian crusade described a much more private, secluded, secret set of behaviours, for example a preaching taking place not in public, but in woods, vineyards, isolated fields; not during the day, but at night.[7] Moore suggests that the traditional narrative – from the 1140s medieval heresy was increasingly dominated by dualism and this process culminated in the Albigensian crusade – makes little sense if we look at the evidence available for the twelfth century. He therefore suggests that the presence of organised dualistic groups in Europe after the mid-thirteenth century must be explained without presuming that they were the direct heirs of twelfth-century predecessors.

Mark Gregory Pegg begins by offering an historiographic overview, in order to frame what he sees as misapprehensions produced by a chain of academic and intellectual filiations that would explain the history of dissent. His views are as clear as his prose: on the one hand,

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[7] On this, see also M.G. Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245-6* (Princeton, 2001). (Princeton, 2001), p. 90.

twelfth- and thirteenth-century Church intellectuals (and inquisitors) looked at some areas of southern France and labelled as heresy tout court what were mainly local, at times dissensual, social, political and religious practices; on the other, they never categorised those forms of dissent as Catharism, in the formalised and organic way in which the term has been understood by historians since the nineteenth century. Where the traditionalists see the Cathars as structured groups of heretics who uniformly accepted theological dualism, Pegg sees local holiness, local circumstances, local customs; where the traditionalists see a long-standing Cathar hierarchical organisation (in other words a Church), he sees informal networks, precepts and influence, which only began to coalesce and structure, but not as formally defined Catharism, during the Albigensian crusade as a consequence of persecution.

Julien Théry-Astruc sees heresy in the Albigeois as an element of a more articulated discourse of dissent and protest against clericalism. According to him, while it was invariably labelled as heresy, this dissent did not necessarily imply the adoption of an alternative, heterodox system of religious thought. In his view, the major factor for religious dissent in the area was not so much the circulation of deviant theologies but, rather, dissatisfaction with, and hostility towards, clerical control.

These are very important points. Heresy always contains instances of social discontent and protest, and the critical and alternative appropriation of the evangelical message as a strategy of resistance and opposition to the ideas of the dominating groups is a constant in popular, as well as in learned, religion.[8] In a sense, heterodoxy can be seen in fact as an act of resistance and where social protest, discontent or resistance occur, the conditions for deviating from the religious norm are created, although this does not necessarily mean that heretical thought is invariably generated. The existence of houses of heretics, and the possibility that

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[8] G.G. Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori nella società piemontese del Trecento : con l'edizione dei processi tenuti a Giaveno dall'inquisitore Alberto de Castellario (1335) e nelle valli di Lanzo dall'inquisitore Tommaso di Casasco (1373)* (Turin, 1977), p. 60.

villagers had to visit them, seems to indicate that the choice between a church and a house of heretics often depended more on local practice than on firm belief. It is also true, though, that going to visit a house of heretics was also meant as a way to make a point, locally, as opposed to going to church. During the inquisition of 1245-1246 in the Lauragais, Domina Hyrlanda declared that she had stopped believing the heretics when one of them had tried to convince her that it would have been better for her to burn the candle that she had prepared for a vigil in the house, rather than at the local church.[9]

At the opposite end of the spectrum readers will find the chapters by Pete Biller, Jörg Feuchter and (perhaps to a lesser extent) John Arnold. Biller argues that, far from being a projection on local dynamics of views elaborated centrally, in some intellectual strongholds of Catholic orthodoxy such as the University of Paris and Cistercian monasteries, heresy in southern France was a reality, which was at least as worrying for the papacy as any instance of political discontent. This heresy was characterised, according to Biller, by a dualism that drew clear inspiration from the East and by a hierarchical structure, a doctrine and a complex of rituals which were in place since at least the third quarter of the twelfth century.

Jörg Feuchter does not focus on dualism *per se*, but is more interested in the dynamics of religious dissent in medieval Languedoc - the very region which is at the heart of the sceptics' revision. According to Feuchter, the evidence at our disposal clearly points towards the existence of an organized, self-consciously dissident religious group in the region. Self-consciousness, organisation and religious are key terms here, because with them Feuchter

[9] Toulouse, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 609 (henceforth MS 609) fol. 108r: '...audivit dici a Ramundo Gros heretico de quadam candela quam i[dem] t[estis] fecerat quam volebat portare ad vigilandum ad ecclesiam de Rocovila cuius festum fuit illa die quod melius esset ei si comburabat eam in domo, et propter hoc ulterius noluit cre[dere] h[ereticis].' On this manuscript and on the possibilites of analysis that it offers, see Y. Dossat, *Les crises de l'inquisition Toulousaine au XIIIe siècle (1233–1273)* (Bordeaux, 1959); Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels* (esp. pp. 20-27 for codicological details). A typescript of MS 609 is available online at http://jean.duvernoy.free.fr/text/listetexte.htm (this is the one I have used for this chapter). See also P. Biller, in this volume at p. 00 n.34.

challenges some of the cornerstones of the sceptics' interpretive framework. Some of the sources on which he bases his argument have been, until now, practically unknown.This is the case of the set of charters pertaining to the Baziège family, and in particular to a woman called Ava, which Feuchter brought to the attention of scholars for the first time at the UCL conference in April 2013, and which he discusses in depth in this volume. The prospect of the impact that these discoveries will have on our understanding of medieval religious dissent is exciting to say the least.

John Arnold acknowledges that orthodox observation (and the need to control and repress deviance from the norm) does play a part in the definition of heresy and even in how heretics ended up perceiving themselves. However, he is also clear in arguing that this does not mean that medieval Cathars were simply local dissidents to whom a religious label was applied. They were dualists, and their organisation and belief were not simply the invention of their persecutors but, at least in part, the product of the circulation of texts, ideas and practices throughout Europe.

As I have already mentioned, the issue of the existence and dissemination of texts and ideas is another very important point of contention. The filiation of Cathars ideas from the Balkans to southern France is strongly dismissed by the sceptics, for whom the non-existence of the connection between the two regions is a corollary of the non-existence of Catharism in southern France. The chapters by Bernard Hamilton,Yuri Stoyanov and David d'Avray aim to demonstrate the plausibility of these connections, and of the debate between different heretical groups within a largely integrated twelfth- and thirteenth- century Europe. According to Hamilton, texts and practices travelled from one region to the other, just as people did. He also shows that, with regard to the structure of the hierarchy itself, western European dualists were inspired by Balkan heretics. Adopting a purely text-oriented perspective, Yuri Stoyanov also argues for a clear connection between East and West. According to him, pseudoepigraphic,

parabiblical and parascriptural narratives of western Christian dualism present clear signs of imported dualist beliefs.

Another point of discussion, which derives from the sceptics' dismissal of Cathar doctrines as a pure invention of orthodox persecutions, is whether there might have been space for doctrinal variety, even dissent, within the heretical movement itself. On the basis of non-Catholic sources, David d'Avray's chapter argues that dualist heretics were actually engaged, in the very first decades of the thirteenth century, in a heated debate among themselves about creation. In brief, there was strong disagreement about whether the evil principle was the symmetrical counterpart of the good God, or an originally good being who had fallen. This resonates with the fact that, as Hamilton points out, since they rejected the historical books of the Old Testament, they could not underpin an event so central to their belief system with any authoritative text. However, they were all in agreement that marriage and procreation were evil. According to d'Avray, this shows that western European dualism was a strong and varied reality.

A relevant part of the debate, and of the disagrement, is centred on the existence and relevance of specific texts from which to infer the peculiarities of different heretical groups, in terms of doctrine and organisation. Caterina Bruschi's chapter on Ranier Sacconi's treatise on the Cathars sheds light on the extraordinary experience of a heretic turned inquisitor. There is one aspect of Bruschi's analysis which I think deserves special mention: her firmness in arguing that heresy is, after all, a matter of individual faith which, at times, can cut against the grain of group allegiances, family ties and community bonds. The re-evaluation of the importance of individuals and of their freedom of thinking in shaping social, political, economic and religious dynamics is something that all historians should always take into account. Brushi's interest for this issues resonates with Pegg's and Arnold's focus on the importance of agency and practice in the shaping of religious belief.

Moneta of Cremona's *Summa adversus catharos et valdenses* is another text which is central to any discussion of thirteenth-century religious dissent, as it is one of the few comprehensive discussions of heresy surviving from this period. As Lucy Sackville points out, Moneta was also one of the few to use the term 'Cathari' to describe the dualist heretics against whom he was writing. The way in which Moneta described those heretics makes it clear that, in his view, Cathars constituted a variegated group, but one which was unified by a set of common ideas and practices which set it apart from other heretic entities, such as the Waldensians. In more than one sense, Sackville argues, we can say that Moneta was describing a widespread and varied group whose doctrines and religious behaviours were however unified by a common intellectual and textual agenda.

The importance of texts like the treatises by Ranier Sacconi and Moneta of Cremona for grasping how churchmen understood heretical dissent is even greater if we think that, as Rebecca Rist argues in her chapter, papal letters, while expressing clear awareness of the existence in the south of France of different heretical groups, are often rather generic in labelling that local religious deviance ('heretics' is the term commonly used for southern French dissidents). This, according to Rist, constitutes evidence of the fact that, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the popes were not deliberately reshuffling the cards in the attempt to control a local disobedience that was mainly political in nature.

The problem of the name (Cathars? Heretics? Good Men?) remains one of the most difficult issues left to us by the surviving evidence.[10] Traditionalists and sceptics agree that 'Cathars' was used very rarely (the sceptics would say not at all) in the twelfth and early

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[10] The historical validity of the term 'Cathars' is, for example, dismissed by U. Brunn, *Des contestataires aux 'Cathares'. Discours de réforme et de propagande antihérétique dans les pays du Rhin et de la Meuse avant l'inquisition* (Paris, 2006), but see P. Biller, at p. 00 in this volume.

thirteenth centuries. But 'heretics' was indeed used, and what did that term mean to those men and women and those churchmen who were snooping around their lives? Claire Taylor's paper investigates various possibilities and concludes that even the terms 'good men' and 'good women', were very rarely employed by these heretics to signify belonging to their group. Here traditionalists and sceptics remain distant from each other: while the former suggest that 'Cathars' is, in the end, better than nothing, just as we say 'Franciscans' or 'Dominicans', the latter reply that nothing is better.

It seems to me that there is a basic consensus among the authors of this volume in a shared emphasis on the idea that religious views and practices are part of a complex of mechanisms that regulate political and social dynamics according to relationships of force. We are talking about conflicts here. The series of acts performed by the protagonists of a conflict, and the ideological tools they deploy in order to prevail over their opponents, generally provide an insight into how they view their world. Obviously, those acts are not straightforward reflections of the daily lives of individuals; even the members of highly litigious social groups do much more than spending all their time arguing with each other. However, conflicts do emphasise some of the key values which operate within a community and through which, among other things, the relationships between individuals and groups are expressed and ideas about the right ordering of society are conveyed. Analysing them can therefore disclose fundamental aspects of the principles that regulate power dynamics within groups, whether or not they are formalised institutions.[11] The differences start to emerge when we try to understand

[11] *Conflict in Medieval Europe*, ed. W.C. Brown and P. Górecki (Aldershot, 2003), especially pp. 276-282. See also N. D'Acunto, 'Considerazioni introduttive', in *Papato e monachesimo ''esente'' nei secoli centrali del Medioevo*, ed. N. D'Acunto (Florence, 2003), pp. 3–5. In using concepts such as social group – or, more broadly, society – I take into account the call for caution made, for example, by F. Barth, 'Towards greater naturalism in conceptualizing societies', in *Conceptualizing Society*, ed. A. Kuper (London and New York, 1992), pp. 17-33 (especially pp. 18-21).

what this actually meant for those people who were accused of being heretics and for their accusers.

For the sceptics, where traditionally we saw men and women engaged in the formation and development of heretical religious views, we are now confronted with local dissidents, inhabitants of peripheries that the hegemonic centre endeavours to dominate through, among other things, the strategic use of local inquests and interrogations. Because the hegemonic centre was constituted by churchmen, social norms and customs were transformed by the expectations of the interrogator and turned into rigid, and deviant, religious doctrines in order for them to be refuted, and for their proponents to be crushed.

In the case of the conflict between inquisitors and local dissidents, the relationship of force was quite unbalanced: this was a conflict between those dominating- who could impose create and enforce notions of what constituted good (and bad) religion - and the dominated who, at best, could develop forms of resistance and find strategies to channel that resistance. From a formal, normative point of view ecclesiastical élites were indeed able to exercise that control also, if not exclusively, through a carefully structured *mise par écrit* of local narratives. This is not surprising: clerics were the ones who wrote about all sorts of things, and they knew about the power of writing. A complex and transnational system of values, inspired by oriental doctrines and enriched with anachronistic contaminations from late antique dualistic heresies was therefore attributed to those local communities.

Fundamental points are at play here. It is important to stress that this view is the result of an interpretation of what constituted the hegemonic ruling culture, and of how freely this culture could be imposed, which has to be proved and tested in its regional and chronological specificites. It seems to me beyond doubt that, as Pegg argues, the *inquisitio* had an impact on

how the villagers reflected on themselves.[12] By equating the habits of individuals to their adherence to, or at least knowledge of, heresy, the inquisitors applied a model of consequentiality which forced lives into a rigid grid. But this model of consequentiality was not at all alien to the inhabitants of those villages. When deponents claimed that they did not believe the heretics even if - out of fear or convenience - they had adored them, this seems to me to indicate clearly that, among the villagers themselves, a habit, a gesture, signified adherence and complicity, to the point that one could pretend, in order to save one's face or to save even more. Social pressure could be confronted, and strategically resisted, precisely because that model of consequentiality was not alien to the mentality of the villagers.[13]

There were obviously limits to how far a deponent could go, in order to save himself or herself from the accusation of complicity with the heretics. Even though they knew that those gestures would implicate them quite heavily in dissidence, villagers could only play them down to a reasonable, and credible, extent. To my knowledge there are no instances of deponents who try to minimise their gestures by saying something like, 'Yes, I did adore these good men, but this is just what we all do to everyone in the village'.

There is also a lot to agree with in the notion that those communities' elaborate and structured codes of behaviour were open to the interpretation and manipulation of outsiders. This is probably true even more with regard to the specific words that those individuals actually said to their interrogators. It is clear that the transition - not so much from vernacular to Latin, but from the mouth of a deponent to the pen of an inquisitor - affected the way in which thoughts and acts appear to us, modern readers. So, even when a deponent testified that she

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[12] See Pegg's paper in this volume and, more in detail, Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, pp. 114-125.

[13] For example MS 609, fol. 146r: 'Poncius de Roire …nunquam cred[idit] nec unquam adoravisset eos nisi esset pre timore amicorum pred[ictorum] her[eticorum]... nec cred[idit].'

believed that John the Baptist was the devil, the appellation *beatus* was used.[14] And one only needs to notice, just to give another example, how pope Sylvester, the great sinner in the eyes of the heterodox for having elicited Constantine's donation and ended the Church's evangelical poverty, seems to have been invariably called *beatus* by witnesses who, at the end of the fourteenth century, allegedly coined the almost paradoxical (for us, evidently, not for those who wrote it) expression 'beatus Sylvester papa (...) unus diabolus dampnatus in inferno'.[15]

Can we therefore retrieve at all the voices and experiences of the local individuals? Or, on the contrary, are those voices audible only through the amplifier of the inquisitor, an amplifier that distorts them to the point of rendering their sound unrecognisable and their meaning elusive?

Here we have to avoid the risk of pushing the interpretation too far. Traditionalists and sceptics are in agreement that most of the people who were interrogated were facing the prospect of suffering some form of abuse if it was proved that they were dissidents. Inside their own community things might have been rather different, since some of them belonged to a dominant elite which was, almost certainly, itself prone to bullying those of lesser status.[16] But in front of the inquisitors they were all potential victims of outside persecutors. To a large extent their summoning itself was a form of coercion: they had very little choice but to go to be interrogated and any resistance would hardly go unnoticed or be excused.[17] They also very little choice with regard to what was going to happen once they arrived in front of those churchmen: they had to answer (mostly hostile) questions in the formulation of which they had

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[14] MS 609, fol. 142v: Item dixit quod cred[idit]. ...et beatus Iohannes Babtista erat diabolus.
[15] Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori*, p. 40, Tavola 8.
[16] The bibliography concerning the relationships between lords and peasants in medieval Europe is enormous. In order to grasp the *status quaestionis* and its regional variations, two excellent points of depart are: *Señores, siervos, vasallos en la Alta Edad Media.* XXVIII Semana de Estudios Medievales (Pamplona, 2002); *Pour une anthropologie du prélèvement seigneurial dans les campagnes médiévales. Réalités et représentations paysannes*, ed. M. Bourin and P. Martinez Sopena (Paris, 2004).
[17] Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 41.

no negotiating power. And nothing, or so it seems, could they do about how their answers were put into writing. Thomas Bisson has suggested that, compared to the interrogations that went on at Montaillou or in Menocchio's Friuli, the Catalan memorials of complaint that he analyses, presents fewer distortions of evidence because the inquirers and scribes who compiled them, one the one hand, were not hostile to the grievances they were hearing; and, on the other, were familiar figures in their localities. [18]

However, we must not forget that, however weak they might have been when confronted with the power of those hostile and unfamiliar inquisitors, those villagers tested for heresy were not passive recipients of an invented model: they were still talking about their own lives. Moreover, the self-image of the elites always contains some concessions (for example, in the case of the inquisitors, the use of a pastoral language) which, however rhetorical they might be, create an arena for the conflict. Subordinates can make political use of this small rhetorical space.[19]

That those dissidents' gestures were given written form invariably and exclusively in terms of the outsiders' own categories, is not necessarily true. An analysis of the *melioramentum* (*melhoramen* in the vernacular) - the form of salutation that had to be performed when meeting a Cathar perfect - will hopefully help to clarify my point. Traditionalists and sceptics are determinedly distant from each other in their views of what this set of repeated genuflections accompanied by a structured formula actually meant. For the former, the *melioramentum* was clearly a set of codified gestures that marked acceptance of and signified belonging (however temporary) to a heretic sect. For the latter, it was an element

[18] T. N. Bisson, *Tormented voices. Power, Crisis, and Humanity in Rural Catalonia. 1140-1200* (Cambridge MA, 1998), pp. 117-118.

[19] The point of reference here is J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990) (p. 18 for a discussion of rhetorical concessions). On local strategies of resistance within small medieval communities, see C. Wickham, 'Gossip and resistance among the medieval peasantry', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), 3-24.

of a wider repertoire of village acts of pious *cortesia* towards people who were perceived as holy. It acquired heretic connotations only when it was placed in the interpretive and punitive framework of the inquisitors who - significantly but, it has to be said, not invariably (Geoffroy d'Ablis is a case in point), called it *adoratio* rather than *melioramentum*. In other words, the sceptics argue that the *adoratio*, as described by the deponents, looks more like the expression of village courtesy and esteem, which the hostile inquisitors transformed into the performance of a specific ritual and into the explicit expression of belief in a dissident creed.[20] When deponents declared that they had never adored the heretics or seen anybody do so, this might indicate the awareness of the risk of being implicated in the adoration even by being simply a spectator, because that act had become even more significant, secretive, private, no longer public as it had been before the Albigensian crusade.[21]

There are some specific points about those gestures that make it problematic to consider them a series of widespread expressions of village courtliness. Whether they were acts of courtesy or strong statements of religious affiliation, they were definitely taught by those 'heretics' to some, not all, members of the community, and this complicates the argument that, whatever the villagers actually called it, what the inquisitors called *adoratio*, and sometimes *melioramentum*, was merely part of a shared repertoire of village gestures. When asked about this by the inquisitors at Saint-Sernin, Durand *de Bordis* testified that he and two of his friends had refused to perform the *adoratio* even though the four heretics they had just met had repeatedly showed them what to do.[22] It was also definitely used by villagers (even those already convinced by a heterodox way of life) as a way to identify someone unknown to them

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[20]See for example, in this volume, M.G. Pegg, at pp. 00 (with reference to M.G. Pegg, *A Most Holy War. The Albigensian Crusade and the battle for Christendom* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 28-49).

[21] Pegg, *The Corruption of Angels*, p. 90.

[22] MS 609, fol. 117v: '...sed non adoravit nec vidit, licet pluries dicti heretici monstrarent eis modum adorati[o]nis.'

as a 'heretic'. This should suggest at least a modification to the argument that these *boni homines* were charismatic men widely recognised as such by the members of the community. In November 1245, Aimergarda de Mazerolles remembered how, three years before, while riding her horse near Roumengoux, she had seen Jordan of Vilar adoring two men and from this she had immediately understood that they were (fellow) heretics. Since she was pregnant at the time, she had not been allowed to get down from her horse and did not adore them.[23]

That series of gestures was indeed a way to acknowledge the (religious) status of some members of the community. However, that status was not freely available and did not simply derive from the recognition of an individual's charismatic qualities, but depended on belonging to a specific (heretic) group. This makes the argument that we are, as the inquisitors were, in front of customary acts of courtesy shared by everybody in the village more problematic. Guilhelm de La Grasse confessed that he had been a heretic, because his father had long been one and he had raised him among them for some time, but stated that he had subsequently abandoned the group (*secta*) and accepted that it was bad and harmful. He also admitted that he had adored heretics so often that he could not remember how many times, and that he had been adored by many while he remained a heretic.[24]

Those gestures could also be subject to acts of negotiation and of true resistance within the community itself. People could try to get out of performing them, sometimes successfully sometimes not, and those who had done so wanted to let their interrogators know about it. A few examples will suffice. In 1245, Robert Aleman declared that, six years before, he had seen

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[23] MS 609, fols. 124r and 133r: '...invenerunt duos homines (...) quos vidit ibidem dictum Iordanum del Vilar adorantem, et tunc i[pse] t[estis] scivit eos esse hereticos, et quia i[pse] t[estis] erat tunc pregnans non descendit, nec dimiserunt eam d[icti] h[eretici] descendere de equitatura, et ideo non ad[oravit].'

[24] MS 609, fol. 133r: '...et i[pse] t[estis] fuit nutritus cum h[ereticis] bene per duos annos et dimidium, et fuit per quinquenniuum hereticus indutus, et postea recessit a dicto Bernardo Gras patre suo h[eretico] et ab aliis sociis suis h[ereticis]. Et recognovit sectam illorum esse malam et dampnosam. Et ad[oravit] tociens h[ereticos] quod non recordatur, et fuit adoratus a pluribus dum permansit hereticus.'

two heretics among other people in the house of Bertrand Aleman. At one point his hosts had shut the door of the room in which everyone was and had forced (*compulerunt*) him to adore them while they were doing the same.[25] Willelma Forneira said to the inquisitors that seven years before, in the house of Hysarn de Gibel, she had seen two men and had asked another woman who they were. The woman had said that they were heretics and had asked her if she wanted to adore them. When she had said she did not want to, she had been forced to do so.[26] Peter Berardi said that he had once happened to be in the presence of some heretics and that, in spite of the fact that they had tried to convince them to hear their preaching, they had refused to do so, and had immediately left the house, without adoring those men, and either eating or drinking with them.[27]

In talking about their efforts and intentions, Robert, Willelma, Peter and others who, like them, claimed that they had refused to adore the heretics, were most probably influenced by the circumstances of the deposition in front of the inquisitors. Their memories were certainly framed by the questions and by how they were asked. However, those stories can hardly have been invented by the interrogating churchmen, who had no reason to do so as part of their enquiry. It is indeed possible that the contrary is true, and that those men and women exaggerated, perhaps even altogether invented, their disdain for the dissidents in the attempt to find a gap in the dichotomy Catholic/heretic on which the inquisitorial framework relied and to save their reputations in this way. Their reluctance to acknowledge the charisma of those men was nevertheless perfectly credible insofar as it was manifested through those acts of petty

[25] MS 609, fol. 5r: 'Et tunc Bertrandus Aleman et dicta Austorga clauserunt hostium camere et dixerunt i[psi] testi quod adoraret h[ereticos], et compulerunt ipsum adorare predictos h[ereticos], et ipsi adoraverunt eos.'
[26] MS 609, fol. 32r: '...petiit a dicta Andreva cuiusmodi homines erant, et dicta Andreva respondit quod heretici erant et rogavit i[pse] t[estis] quod adoraret eos, et i[pse] t[estis] respondit quo\d non faceret, et tunc dicta Andreva compulit i[psum] t[estem] adorare.'
[27] MS 609, fol. 48r: '...licet d[icti] h[eretici] incitarent ipsum et alios ad audienda verba sua, tamen ipsi noluerunt nec adoraverunt nec comederunt nec biberunt, sed statim recesserunt.'

defiance, subterfuge, animosity which constituted part of the usual repertoire of social gestures that all the villagers had at their disposal, equally, to attempt resistance against outside powers and to fight their daily battles for local positioning.[28]

It is also difficult to ignore the fact that the *melioramentum* seems to be a series of acts strongly identified with heretical behaviour throughout Western Europe. In 1308, Raymund Autier of Ax told the inquisitor who was interrogating him that eight years before he was visited by two of his brothers, who were apparently returning from a period spent with heretics northern Italy. They taught him the ritual of the adoration which was clearly distinguishable from the normal forms of affection and courtesy (a kiss on the lips and a hug) to which Raymund was accustomed when saying hello or good bye to his fellow villagers.[29] True, this source is a later one, but it seems to me difficult to explain otherwise how a custom local to southern France would appear in northern Italy, where some southern Frenchmen would encounter it seemingly for the first time and then present it as a novelty to a member of the same community within which it would have been widely shared some decades before.

It is beyond doubt that, between the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries the discourse on heresy was ideologically framed by the Papacy to embrace as broad as possible a range of dissidence, not only religious but political. The aim was to establish the simplified equation heretic = enemy of the Church, whether on a doctrinal or a political level. Just as being a follower of a deviant creed meant being outside the Church, so did challenging the Church's *libertas*. In the heat of the struggle against the Italian cities, popes such as Honorius III explicitly framed their attempt to fight communal claims in terms of a fight against heresy.

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[28] A theoretical framework is offered by J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985). Medieval examples in C. Wickham, *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (Oxford, 2003).

[29] *L'inquisiteur Geoffroy d'Ablis et les cathares du comté de Foix*, ed. A. Pales-Gobilliard (Paris, 1984), p. 118: '...dixit quod edoctus per dictos hereticos in dicta domo adoravit eos flexis genibus ter, dicendo: 'Benedicite' et dicti heretici respondebant: 'Deus vos benedicat', et hoc dicebant in qualibet adoratione.'

This was not a complete invention. The first half of the thirteenth century was indeed the golden age of the heretical movements in northern Italy and heretics did create problems to the Church, in the dynamic and variegated world of the Communes. But the papacy interpreted heresy in the broadest possible terms and started to impose a view of the heresy that incorporated political dissidence. This rigid model was applied almost indiscriminately to the cities of northern Italy and this certainly caused confusion. In January 1225, confronted with a series of instances of political opposition in Brescia, pope Honorius III ordered the bishops of Rimini and Brescia to destroy the fortified houses belonging to a number of members of important families of the city (among them the Gambara, the Ugoni, the Oriani) who had been excommunicated for having allegedly conspired with the heretics. Only after those citizens had personally gone to Rome imploring the pope's pardon was the excommunication revoked (although at least some of the fortifications had already been destroyed). In reality, though, those men were not *prima facie* heretics (although some of them might have held deviant religious views). Rather, they were political opponents engaged in struggles for supremacy within the city. And this is what they tried to explain to the pope, as a way to justify their conduct. They explained that the city had long been divided into different factions and that if they had given protection to some fellow citizens who were accused of heresy, they had done so in the name of political allegiance, not because they shared their religious convictions. Faced with a paradigm which they did not recognised as valid to explain the dynamics and politics of their lives, these men reacted. In doing so, they resisted the construction of a discourse which absorbed into heresy any instance of disobedience to the policy of the Papacy.[30]

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[30] Monumenta Germaniae Historica, *Epistolae*, *Epistolae saeculi XIII e regestis pontificum Romanorum selectae*, 1, ed. C. Rodenberg (Berlin, 1883), n. 264, pp. 189-190; n. 275, pp. 197-198. On all this, see L. Baietto, *Il papa e le città. Papato e comuni in Italia centro-settentrionale durante la prima metà del secolo XIII* (Spoleto, 2007), pp. 38-63. See also D. Webb, 'The Pope and the Cities: anticlericalism and heresy in Innocent III's Italy', in *The Church and Sovereign~~i~~ty, c. 590-1900*, *Essays in Honour of Michael Wilks*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford, 1991), pp. 135-152.

The sceptics have, in my view, somewhat complicated our understanding of religious (be it orthodox or deviant) thought. This is obviously a good thing, because it forces us to rethink our assumptions. On the one hand, it has clouded our perception of how twelfth century heresies worked. Waldensians are 'in', nobody doubts their existence and the articulation of their structures and of their thought. But the Cathars are 'out', they never existed, nobody associated with heresy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the region between the Garonne and the Rhône was ever called a Cathar. They were called heretics, though, and who those people called 'heretics' were is not clear. On the other, the current discussion has greatly enriched our understanding of how orthodoxy works. Being orthodox was not simply adhering to a system or to a set of religious teachings, it was also declaring and performing obedience to a set of political and economic allegiances. Deviance from that complex set of allegiances is what worries the dominant.

However, the search for a structured counter-theology as a smoking gun for heresy (and of its absence as an indicator of the non-existence of a doctrine) should not make us forget that the challenge heretics brought to orthodoxy at a local level was not on a doctrinal level. Theological reflections and proposals (which did exist, as the traditionalists have convincingly argued) were indeed marginal compared to daily practice and customs. The main point of heretical experience was, more often than not, literal adherence to the simple, original evangelical message. The sophisticated, overcomplicated, seemingly corrupted orthodox piety was therefore subject to direct daily critique through words, gestures, acts of defiance and sarcasm.[31]

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[31] Merlo, *Eretici e inquisitori*, p. 52-53. The role of irony and sarcasm in expressing religious dissent still awaits a comprehensive analysis. For an insight on how, on the other hand, heretics could be derided in the framework of inquisitorial strategies, see Th. Scharff, 'Lachen über die Ketzer. Religiöse Devianz und Gelächter im Hochmittelalter', in *Lachgemeinschaften. Kulturelle Inszenierungen und soziale Wirkungen im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. W. Röcke and H.R. Velten (Berlin, 2005), pp. 17-31.

I think that the authors themselves, when reading this book, will find food for their thoughts. The sceptics will have to acknowledge that we cannot expect from a local dissident, lashing his or her animosity against Catholic beliefs, theological sophistication with regards to dualism. Their orthodox, Catholic fellow villagers would most probably not have been able to be more articulate on issues such as, say, transsubstantiation. They will have to recognise that, if the inquisitorial investigations have to be seen only (or mostly) as acts of domination (and, conversely, of resistance) then the problem of evidence is more subtle than simply the fact that the narrative is concocted, produced and kept by the elite for the elite. It is indeed likely that those subordinates (that is to say the heretics) in southern France played an active part in the production of a sanitised transcript, because this was a way for them to cover their tracks.[32] The sceptics will also have to appreciate that, when discussing the integrated world of twelfth-century Europe, the emergence in southern France of ideas that can be recognised as very similar to Balkan dualism does indeed point towards contact between those two regions. To a large extent we do not need specific, direct evidence of Bulgar missionaries in southern France. We have plenty of sources which indicate that people, goods, ideas had been travelling for centuries between Western Europe and the Balkans. Sceptics will also have to adjust their views of a centre able to impose almost everything onto its periphery. I am convinced that it is indeed possible that some, perhaps the main part, of the local dynamics were indeed quite confusing for the distant centre, for the papacy. We have seen how Honorius III demonstrated to have too rigid a view of the fragmented and lively world of the Italian communes. But this does not mean that he was then able to apply his categories indiscriminately, without resistance. It is also indeed possible that when it came to describing what those heretics believed in, churchmen ended up using late antique examples as artificial antecedents to those regional sets of beliefs. After all, this is exactly what Innocent III did, when writing in 1207 to the podestà

[32] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 87.

and citizens of Treviso, describing the heretics of the north-east of Italy as *Manichei* and contrasting their deviant views on marriage, creation and food with those expressed in Paul's first letter to Timothy. [33] However, it seems to me that the process has to be understood the other way round. It is the pope's need to categorise in patristic terms those dissenting beliefs that made him define those heretics *qui se appellant Catharos vel Patarenos* as Manichaeans, just as many churchmen were doing in the second half of the twelfth century. Disobeying the pope was considered as heresy already under Gregory VII, and the grounds and reasons for an individual to be considered heretic rapidly expanded after his death.[34] The tendency, on the part of churchmen, to present the political and social struggles typical of the dynamic world of the Italian communes as fights between heretics and Catholics therefore became the rule, not the exception.[35] As a result, in the course of the thirteenth century the identification of political dissidence with heterodoxy became almost a cliché in the communes of Northern Italy.[36]

On the other hand, the traditionalists will have to concede that the picture is indeed more complicated and nuanced than some have assumed, that the persecutors did often classify customs in terms that their victim found extremely difficult to negotiate explicitly, and they did so to be able to understand and dominate them better. They will have to recognise that power relations were extremely significant in shaping the way in which local people expressed their

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[33] *Die Register Innocenz' III., 10. Pontifikatsjahr, 1207/1208: Texte und Indices*, ed. Rainer Murauer and Andrea Sommerlechner with Othmar Hageneder, Christoph Egger, Reinhard Selinger, Herwig Weigl (Publikationen des Historischen Instituts beim Österreichischen Kulturforum in Rom, II. Abteilung, 1. Reihe, 10: Texte und Indices, Vienna, 2007), n. 54, pp. 85-87(21 April 1207). See also C. Thouzellier, *Hérésie et hérétiques. Vaudois, cathares, patarins, albigeois* (Rome, 1969), pp. 207-08.

[34] O. Hageneder, 'Die Häresie des Ungehorsam und das Entstehen des hierokratischen Papsttum', Römische Historische Mitteilungen, 20 (1978), 29-47; G.G. Merlo, '«Militare per Cristo» contro gli eretici', in Id., *Contro gli eretici* (Bologna, 1996), pp. 11-49.

[35] C. Violante, 'Le istituzioni ecclesiastiche nell'Italia centro-settentrionale durante il Medioevo: province, diocesi, sedi vescovili', in *Forme di potere e struttura sociale in Italia durante il Medioevo*, ed. G. Rossetti (Bologna, 1977), pp. 83-111 (esp. pp. 84 and 111).

[36] N.J. Housley, 'Politics and Heresy in Italy: Anti-Heretical Crusades, Orders and Confraternities, 1200-1500', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), 193-208.

belief and that any attempt to reconstruct that system of belief has to take this into account. By being verbalised, translated and written down, the experiences and ideas of those dissidents became a constituent part of the relations among people. This does not mean, obviously, that they became objective – that is to say empirically given – facts. It means, though, they that ceased to be purely formal and abstract entities and become subject to relations of meaning. And we have to take into account that meaning, as is well known, is the product of constructive and interpretive intentionality.[37] To say things a little more simply, this means that we should always keep in mind that individuals have the inclination, not necessarily devious, to construct meanings that suit them.

This is true not only for medieval clerics. Putting together, one after the other, the chapters included in this volume almost made me feel as if I was in the presence of those medieval disputants (and I am not at all being facetious here). The way in which they characterise each other's argument is, it seems to me, extremely honest and, at the same time, a powerful reminder that, now just as back then, whenever we characterise an argument which we want to refute, we select and construct a picture of it that suits our line of argument. At times we even emphasise aspects of the past that give an episode a completely different meaning.[38]

Since it is culturally specific, though, meaning takes shape within models that dictate what is socially acceptable and politically viable. Its construction is therefore not a completely free, boundless open play. To give an example related to our volume no traditionalist, however vehement and cunning a disputant he or she might be, would ever present, say, a sceptic's

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[37] J.K. Swindler, 'Normativity: From Individual to Collective', *Journal of Social Philosophy* 39/1 (2008), 116-130 (p. 126).

[38] See, for example, footnote 114 in Mark Pegg's paper and text preceding footnote 40 in Pete Biller's paper. They relate to the same episode, occurred during the conference held at UCL, but, legitimately, emphasise diametrically opposite aspects of it which suit their respective (and conflicting) arguments.

opponent views in such a distorted way that they would end up appearing to be partisans of the existence of Catharism. The same would obviously be true *vice versa*. As it happens with other social practices, the construction of meaning tends to be dominated by those who are provided with the best sense of the game.[39] Moreover, social forces are in place to control – anyone who has read Foucault even *en passant* would be tempted to say to discipline – the context in which meaning is constructed, accepted, contested. In this sense, the ways in which the materials (gestures, acts, rituals, beliefs etc.) that made up people's lives were organised and expressed can therefore be treated as discursive practices, as a grammar for personal experiences which, once they were reformulated in that specific cultural context, played an important role in determining the rules of the social game. This means that those testimonies can actually be analysed taking into account the fact that the language used to express them dramatically contributed to and influenced the logic of political and social relations.

Disagreement among scholars ran quite deep before our conference: it would be pointless to deny this. Disagreement, it seems to me, does not run much less deep in this volume. This is, however, one of the originalities of *Cathars in Question*. I decided not to edit out any sharpness in its various chapters not only because I abhor censorship, but also because the vivacity of the debate is reflected in the vivacity of the writing style of the various authors. The conference ended without consensus, and the volume reflects that. From a methodological point of view, it is interesting to see how historians of different convictions deploy a variety of tools to refute their opponents' arguments. In part, the disagreement has focused on specific empirical details which continue to be, it goes without saying, far from beyond dispute. For example, there has been an ongoing discussion over the credibility of a mention of an heretical

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[39] P. Bourdieu, *In Other Words* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 9-13, 63, discusses the notion of sense of the game, a simpler way of explaining his concept of *habitus* introduced especially in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 72, and *The Logic of Practice* (Oxford, 1990), p. 53.

book which, according to the testimony given in 1276 by Peire Perrin from Puylaurens, had been read, by some heretics *in Bulgaria*. According to the traditionalists, this indicates a clear a link between Balkan heresies and the dissidents in the south-west of France.[40] The connection has been dismissed by the sceptics as a fantasy due to the fact that this mention would be a *unicum* (this is, in my view, not a very strong point) and, more significantly, because the *Bulgaria* of the seventeenth-century Doat manuscript is a *lapsus calami* for *vulgaria*.[41] However, we should not forget that, even if this was true, this piece of evidence should not necessarily be dismissed at once, as *vulgaria* is a fairly common alternative spelling for Bulgaria throughout the Middle Ages.[42] Nonetheless, the sceptics' core demand – that we interrogate all our sources and inherited paradigms anew keeping in mind the instability of texts as they are read, re-read, transcribed and copied.– remains valid.

Alongside these, and others, specific empirical points, most of the discussion focuses on issues of interpretation and (at times) of ideology, and this is why it is so interesting. This collection of essays is a powerful reminder to all historians of a profound problem: what

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[40] See for example *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc. Edition and Translation of Toulouse Inquisition Depositions, 1273-1282*, ed. P. Biller, C. Bruschi and S. Sneddon (Leiden, 2011), p. 621 n. 3.

[41] See for example Pegg, p. 00 in this volume. For an overview of the mid seventeenth-century transcriptions of inquisitorial records included in the Collection Doat at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, see C. Sparks, *Heresy, Inquisition and Life Cycle in Medieval Languedoc* (York, 2001), pp. 14-15.

[42] Just few examples among many: *Annales Cavenses*, ed. F. Delle Donne, Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale - *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, series III (Rome, 2011), p. 11: '*...et in nono huius imperii anno gens Vulgarorum cum rege suo nomine Asparuch ingressi sunt in terram Romanorum, quae nunc Vulgaria dicta est.*'; F. Lošek, *Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Studien und Texte 15 (Hanover, 1997) p. 122: '*Interim exorta est inter illos aliqua dissensio. Quam Priwina timens fugam iniit in regionem Vulgariam cum suis...*'; R. Cessi, *Origo civitatum Italie seu Venetiarum (Chronicon altinate et Chronicon gradense)*, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 73, (Rome, 1933), p. 110: '*Mense Iulii 25 die interfectus est Nichoforus imperator in Vulgaria a Crumo principe Vulgaro.*' (*Vulgaria* appears in the thirteenth-century Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Cod. F 168); *Fundatio monasterii sancti Pauli in Carinthia*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, XV/2, (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1057-1060, at p. 1060: 'Hunc in reditum a Ierusalem defunctum et in Vulgaria sepultum...'.

constitutes both in qualitative and in quantitative terms, reliable evidence for the construction of a credible historical argument?

In a sense, there is a bit of one-upmanship among historians as to who has got the better evidence at their disposal (as if one could say that we will always be able to find someone who is just a little bit more 'early medievalist' than we are). More importantly, though, the issue is whether the inferences we can make are seriously undermined by the various filters that came into play when a set of depositions were elicited and then put in writing by an inquisitor. In other words, how much do our sources really tell us? The sceptics say, very little; the traditionalists say, quite a bit. This obviously does not mean that the latter should be accused of being naive, uncritical readers of their sources who accept unthinkingly any fragment of information that happens to come their way, quite the contrary. The point is to understand what we can infer from the available evidence and, in particular, how far back we can extend the information we find in a document. Here I have to climb down my editorial fence and say that, in my view, we cannot ask too much of our sources and of our deponents. Ideally, of course, we would all subscribe to Moore's suggestion that analyses and interpretations of, say, twelfth-century dynamics should be undertaken exclusively on the basis of evidence produced in the twelfth century. At times though, sources can be read retroactively, because it would be hard to imagine that the situation they illustrate sprung out of nowhere, all of a sudden. So, it is difficult to see why a 1232 copy of a charter issued in 1167 should not be taken as credible evidence that the Council of St. Félix de Caraman happened when, and how, is described in the document (obviously provided that, as seems to be the case, the copy from 1232 is considered genuine).[43]

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[43] On this, see *L'histoire du catharisme en discussion*: Le "concile" de Saint-Felix. (1167), ed. M. Zerner (Nice, 2001) as well as P. Biller and R.I. Moore, in this volume at pp. 00 and 00 respectively.

This is an old issue, central to the work of historians and to how historians relate to their own work and to each other. This volume constitutes an attempt to move the debate forward and also, hopefully, to be a source of ideas for future analysis. After all, even when disagreeing with each other, at times quite vehemently, the essays here collected all contribute to make medieval religious and political deviance emerge in all its complexity, richness and specificity. The series of religious and institutional crises which occurred in Europe at the cusp between the eleventh and twelfth centuries provide the backdrop to the stories and names, big or small, evoked in the following pages. On the one hand, popes such as Callixtus II, Honorius II and Innocent II reorganised the structures of the Church and, as a result, bishops were in general able to regain those privileges which, in previous centuries, had been gradually eroded by many monastic institutions.[44] On the other, the emergence, throughout Europe, of collective and individual uncertainties, of a general resentment towards centralised institutions, of the widespread quest for new forms of religious charisma which could be verified individually and locally, resulted in new ways of looking at Christianity and in original, subjective and instrumental ideas about salvation.[45]

In discussing the dynamics and the effects of this clash between the normative efforts of centralised institutions and the aspirations of individual, residual forms of religiosity, the various chapters of this volume address issues that are of key interest for historians of any period: what constitutes popular belief; how orthodoxy, in all its acceptations, is the result of a

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[44] G. M. Cantarella, 'Un problema del XII secolo: l'ecclesiologia di Pietro il Venerabile', *Studi medievali*, 3rd s. 19 (1978), 159-209 (especially pp. 159-164) with bibliography. See also G. M. Cantarella, 'Cluny, Lione, Roma (1119-1142)', *Revue bénédictine* 90 (1980), 263-287. On the institutional effects of the Reform, see *Il monachesimo e la riforma ecclesiastica (1049-1122). Atti della quarta settimana internazionale di studio, Mendola 23-29 agosto 1968* (Milan, 1971).

[45] O. Capitani, 'Eresie nel medioevo o medioevo ereticale?', in *Eretici ed eresie medievali nella storiografia contemporanea : Atti del XXXII convegno di studi sulla Riforma e i movimenti religiosi in Italia*, *Bollettino della Società di Studi Valdesi - Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire Vaudoise* 111/174 (1994), 5-15 (p. 15).

continuous process of conflict and negotiation; in what ways, and to what extent, societies are based on the suppression (whatever shape it might take) of dissidents; to what degree heresy, in its broader sense, can be seen as an invention. Ultimately, they bring back to the attention of readers the significance and meaning of the stories of people, beliefs and ambitions that, whoever, wherever and whatever they were, ended up being largely wiped out by repressing authorities.