CHAPTER 4

The Construction of Information in the Records of Medieval Canonization and Heresy Inquests: a Methodological Comparison

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1 Introduction

Until the early thirteenth century, both sanctity and heresy were dealt with in a somewhat ad hoc manner at the local level due to a lack of legal guidelines. A significant turning point in the histories of saint making and eradication of heretics came when the papacy assumed a more active, centralized, and legalistic role. The canonization of saints became a papal prerogative in 1234, and papally mandated heresy inquisitors started their work around the same time.[1]

Prompted by developments in the sphere of law, the inquisitorial legal process began to be utilized for the investigation of sanctity and heresy.[2] The adoption of *inquisitio* by secular and ecclesiastical courts took place in the context of an unprecedented intensification of documentary culture. Written documents quickly became a prevalent tool for governing officials, and the

1 Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 119–21; James B. Given, *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 13–15; Finucane, *Contested Canonizations: The Last Medieval Saints, 1482–1523* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 13–14; R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 126.

2 Bengt Ankarloo, "Postface: Saints and Witches," in *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge: Aspects juridiques et religieux*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay (Rome: École française de Rome, 2004), 365; Henry Ansgar Kelly, "The Fourth Lateran *Ordo* of Inquisition Adapted to the Prosecution of Heresy," in *A Companion to Heresy Inquisitions*, ed. Donald S. Prudlo (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 75–85; Gábor Klaniczay, "The Inquisition of Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes," in *Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes: Structures, Functions, and Methodologies*, eds. Christian Krötzl and Sari Katajala-Peltomaa (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 43; Finucane, *Contested Canonizations*, 14, 27; Roberto Paciocco, "The Canonization of Saints in the Middle Ages: Procedure, Documentation, Meanings," in *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, eds. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, Jenni Kuuliala, and Iona McCleery (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 60–62; André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

church stood at the forefront of these developments, consolidating the efficiency and reach of its power through the implementation of bureaucratic innovations.[3] Inquisitorial legal processes relied principally on the production and use of written records. Both canonization and heresy tribunals accumulated information that was supplied by witnesses, and they appropriated this spoken information, processing and recording it into its official, written form. This information was subsequently used to reach a legal decision about the sanctity of a putative saint or the guilt of a suspected heretic.[4]

Records of canonization and heresy inquests survive to this day. Historians have eagerly made use of this material as a source for religious and social history due to the access it provides to people otherwise invisible in medieval sources.[5] Despite the high level of similarity between these documentary genres, the bodies of scholarship devoted to their study have developed along mostly separate but parallel trajectories. Taking a preliminary step toward the systematic comparison of canonization and heresy inquest records, this chapter first evaluates the current state of source critical methodology in both historiographical traditions and then, through a comparative reading of selected cases, explores the process through which these sources were constructed, evaluates the epistemological implications of this construction process, and gestures toward methodological principles that can be utilized in the future.

The empirical element for this chapter is provided by canonization and heresy inquest records from the middle of the thirteenth century, which constitute early iterations of what these types of documents would later evolve into. The canonization process used is that of Italian hermit John Buoni (Giovanni Bono, b. 1168, d. 1249). Buoni came from a wealthy family but lived as a traveling performer after the death of his father. His life changed course when he survived a difficult illness in 1209 and decided to dedicate himself to God. From then on, he lived as an ascetic hermit near Cesena, and by 1225 a group of followers known as the Zamboniti had formed around his example. Before his death, Buoni migrated to his native Mantua and died there, which led to disputes

3 Paul Bertrand, *Les écritures ordinaires. Sociologie d'un temps de révolution documentaire (1250–1350)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015); Markus Friedrich, *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge*, trans. John Noël Dillon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 17–28; Given, *Inquisition*, 1, 25–26, 91.

4 Cf. Didier Lett, *Un procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge. Essai d'histoire sociale. Nicolas de Tolentino, 1325* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 5–6.

5 Finucane, *Contested Canonizations*, 15; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Jenni Kuuliala, "Practical Matters: Canonization Records in the Making," in Katajala-Peltomaa et al., *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, 100. See also Michael Goodich, ed., *Voices from the Bench: The Narratives of Lesser Folk in Medieval Trials* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

regarding the possession of his relics. Miracles began happening around Buoni already during his lifetime and continued after his passing. The proceedings for Buoni's canonization were opened only a couple of years after his death in 1251 by Pope Innocent IV, who, however, had doubts about the legal implementation of the first inquest, leading to a subsequent investigation into the candidate's faith and miracles carried out between 1253 and 1254 in Mantua and Cesena. Despite his saintly reputation in the Romagna region, Buoni was never successfully canonized and thus joined the growing cadre of unofficial saintly figures.[6]

The records of Buoni's canonization proceedings are compared to records of interrogations conducted by heresy inquisitors in Languedoc in the 1240s. This material is (primarily) drawn from the Bibliothèque nationale de France's Doat collection, which contains thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century documentation related to inquisitorial activities in southern France. The Doat records are copies produced in the 1660s by scribes working for a royal commission charged with copying archival holdings from the Languedoc area. Even though these records are later copies, scholars agree that the material has not been deliberately tampered with, thus making available a faithful representation of the now-lost medieval originals.[7]

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6 Paolo Golinelli, "Social Aspects in Some Italian Canonization Trials: The Choice of Witnesses," in Klaniczay, *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge*, 171–73; Mario Mattei, *Il processo di canonizzazione di fra Giovanni Bono* (*1251–1253/54*) *fondatore dell'Ordine degli eremiti* (Rome: Institutum historicum Augustinianum, 2002), 25–89; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 52–53, 54 n. 78, 195, 392, 432–33, 514, 517. Buoni's canonization process is accessible as an 1858 edition in the *Acta Sanctorum* (*Processus Apostolici Auctoritate Innocentii Papae IV Annis 1251, 1253, et 1254 Constructi de Vita, Virtutibus et Miraculis B. Joannis Boni Mantuani*, AASS, Oct. IX, 768–885). Due to limited time and resources, the original manuscripts could not be consulted when writing this chapter, and all references are made to the edition, which has also been used by other scholars. In addition to Mattei, *Processo* and Paolo Golinelli's work on religion in medieval Mantua, Buoni's canonization records have only received sporadic treatment from historians. Works citing evidence from Buoni's canonization records include, e.g. Roberto Paciocco, *Canonizzazioni e culto dei santi nella* christianitas (*1198–1302*) (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2019); Donald S. Prudlo, *Certain Sainthood: Canonization and the Origins of Papal Infallibility in the Medieval Church* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes 1125–1325* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005). On eremitical sainthood in general, see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 329–36.

7 On the Doat collection, see e.g. Laurent Albaret, "La collection Doat, une collection moderne, témoignage de l'histoire religieuse méridionale des XIII^{e} et XIV^{e} siècles," *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 49 (2014): 57–93; Peter Biller, Caterina Bruschi, and Shelagh Sneddon, eds., *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc: Edition and Translation of Toulouse Inquisition Depositions, 1273–1282* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 3–4, 20–33, 117–21.

2 Historiography of Medieval Inquest Records and the Methodological *Status Quaestionis*

The value of medieval canonization and heresy inquest records as historical sources is generally accepted, even though historians acknowledge the epistemological challenges posed by the material. Source critical issues have been discussed at length by representatives of both fields, but different aspects have been emphasized due to differences pertaining to the contexts from which these records originate. Deponents in heresy trials were suspects who were physically and psychologically coerced to confess their transgressions and ran the risk of being sentenced. In contrast, personal survival was not at stake when giving testimony about miracles to a canonization commission. Perhaps because of the more obviously hostile and distorting nature of inquisition records compared to those of canonization processes, the tradition for serious epistemological engagement is longer and more riddled with heated debates in this field of study. However, similar points of contention have also emerged among canonization scholars, who have begun moving toward increasingly critical and sophisticated approaches.[8] This being said, it is worth noting that these source critical traditions have developed largely in isolation from each other. Some methodological cross-fertilization has taken place – mainly in the direction of canonization scholars borrowing ideas from those who have studied inquisition records – but there is a somewhat surprising lack of systematic methodological comparison. While some have explicitly gestured toward the potential benefit of taking steps in this direction, few historians have heeded these calls.[9]

8 On source critical historiography, see e.g. Caterina Bruschi and Peter Biller, "Texts and the Repression of Heresy: Introduction," in *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy*, eds. Caterina Bruschi and Peter Biller (York: York Medieval Press, 2003), 6–18; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Christian Krötzl, "Approaching Twelfth- to Fifteenth-Century Miracles: Miracle Registers, Collections, and Canonization Processes as Source Material," in Krötzl and Katajala-Peltomaa, *Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes*, 9–15; Saku Pihko, "The Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records: A Methodological Reconsideration," *I quaderni del m.æ.s.*, 22(1s) (2024): 167–70, doi.org/10.6092/issn.2533–2325/19030; L. J. Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics in the Thirteenth Century: The Textual Representations* (York: York Medieval Press, 2011), 2–9.

9 For tentative combinations and comparative discussion, see e.g. Ankarloo, "Postface"; Elliott, *Proving Woman*; Michael Goodich, "*Mirabilis Deus in Sanctis Suis*: Social History and Medieval Miracles," in *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church*, eds. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 135–56; Didier Lett, in this volume.

Despite the separation between these two bodies of scholarship, methodological ideas concerning the use of inquest records as sources have developed in a somewhat parallel direction. Historians using canonization and inquisition records emphasize the inherent constructedness of these documents and argue over the extent to which the information therein relates to the historical realities they purport to describe. Emphasis on the ways in which the context and procedures of their production mutate and distort their information content has placed the veracity and trustworthiness of the evidence under question. Scholars seem to agree that a thorough understanding of the process through which canonization and inquisition records were constructed is of paramount importance for an epistemologically warranted use of the material.[10]

While consensus on this basic methodological principle has emerged, interpretations of the epistemological implications of the constructedness of inquest records have been divided along a similar spectrum among historians of both source critical traditions, although this division is perhaps more discernible in the debates that currently define the study of inquisition records. Historians influenced by the ideas of Carlo Ginzburg have adopted an optimistic approach. They argue that the historian's task is to sift through the material in search of revealing discrepancies and excess or surplus elements that can, despite the filtered nature of the sources, be deemed as an authentic survival stemming from the deponents. Thus, they advocate focus on this excess at the expense of the more repetitive and formulaic sections of the records. Other historians inspired by postmodern ideas about discourse and power have taken a more pessimistic view in arguing that the mutations and distortions imposed on the records by their creation cannot be undone, and that this obstructs the historian's access to the talk of the deponents in the interrogation and to the events described in the records. Nevertheless, they do not advocate discarding these sources, and they have developed a variety of reading strategies that allow for sustained engagement with canonization and inquisition records despite their epistemic constraints.[11]

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10 Katajala-Peltomaa and Kuuliala, "Practical Matters," 100; Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records," 167; Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 2–6.

11 Recent works opting for adapted versions of what might be called a Ginzburgian approach include (but are not limited to) Caterina Bruschi, *The Wandering Heretics of Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Laura Ackerman Smoller, in this volume. In contrast, e.g. John H. Arnold, *Inquisition and Power: Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); and Lett, *Procès de canonisation*, place emphasis on the discursive power structures that condition the evidence and delimit the historian's epistemic access to the deponents prior to the creation of the records. For discussion concerning similar divisions and debates in the

Most historians (including those mentioned in the previous footnote) probably identify as sitting somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, which admittedly simplifies a more nuanced debate. Nonetheless, the contrast between these opposing positions regarding the perceived possibilities and limitations of inquest records reveals what I think is a general ambiguity haunting the methodological *status quaestionis* of both source critical traditions.[12] While these debates have raised important points about the nature of trial records as historical sources, both extremes seem ultimately unproductive if taken to their logical conclusion. Thus, acknowledging the value of these discussions and working towards a theoretically sophisticated middle ground is needed. Here, merging the fields of canonization and inquisition scholarship and adopting a comparative approach to these sources may prove a fruitful way forward.

3 Comparing Miracles to Murder

In the thirteenth century, general legal principles and more specific legislation related to canonization and heresy inquests provided a template for carrying out both types of investigations. However, there was less regulation concerning the actual practicalities of interrogation and record-keeping. The extant documentation reflects this lack of codification, as the historian finds a lot of variety in the content and level of detail of recorded depositions, which, despite general uniformity, range from short and formulaic summaries to longer narratives rich in anecdotal color.[13] This chapter compares depositions from John Buoni's canonization proceedings and Languedocian inquisition records with an eye for what they reveal about the ways in which the information extant in them was constructed. These examples are used to highlight the dynamics and implications of information flow from the past into the records to elucidate the general epistemic predicament of using them as sources. *Mutatis mutandis*, many of the following observations are applicable to the material at large.

historiography of Early Modern trial records, see Raisa Maria Toivo, "Discerning Voices and Values in Finnish Witch Trials Records," *Studia Neophilologica* 84 (2012): 143. See also David Zbíral and Robert L. J. Shaw, "Hearing Voices: Reapproaching Medieval Inquisition Records," *Religions* 13, 1175 (2022), doi.org/10.3390/rel13121175.

12 Cf. Goodich, "*Mirabilis Deus*," 136–37; Antonio Sennis, "Questions about the Cathars," in *Cathars in Question*, ed. Antonio Sennis (York: York Medieval Press, 2016), 9–10.

13 Bruschi, *Wandering Heretics*, 14–15; Katajala-Peltomaa and Krötzl, "Approaching Twelfth- to Fifteenth-Century Miracles," 17–20; Katajala-Peltomaa and Kuuliala, "Practical Matters," 78–80; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 4–5.

In 1251, a few years after John Buoni's death, two noblemen charged with petitioning the pope to canonize the miracle-working hermit were sent to Rome on behalf of the episcopate and commune of Mantua. Pope Innocent IV was sympathetic to their request and appointed the bishop of Modena to head the canonization tribunal. The first *inquisitio in partibus* concerning Buoni's life and miracles was conducted in Mantua shortly thereafter, and a further supplementary inquest was conducted in Mantua and Cesena in 1253–54. According to Paolo Golinelli's count, the records of Buoni's canonization proceedings entail a total of 232 depositions given by both religious and lay witnesses, which recount several miracles both during Buoni's lifetime and after his death. The investigation also emphasized the hermit's reputation and orthodoxy.[14] While there seems to have been some concern over legal issues pertaining to the first investigation that led to additional hearings, Buoni's canonization process stands out among many other early canonization inquests by virtue of its form and thoroughness. For example, while no separate list of *articuli* is extant, the officials clearly utilized standardized control questions drawn from the recently issued *Testes legitimos* formulary, which are noted in the opening section of the documentation and are also referenced in many of the depositions.[15]

In this chapter, I have chosen to explore a series of interrelated depositions concerning a miraculous transformation of water into wine that settled doubts harbored by some of Buoni's fellow friars about the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.[16] This kind of miracle with a clear biblical precedent was of obvious legal and religious interest to the tribunal. Transforming water into wine made Buoni seem Christ-like, and stories about the miracle were probably a significant element in the construction of his *fama sanctitatis* that acted as a catalyst for the canonization proceedings. Thus, information about the miracle was recorded in detail. However, the extant documentation about miracles

14 Golinelli, "Social Aspects," 166, 171–73.

15 AASS Oct IX, 772. On the 1232 *Testes legitimos* formulary, known also as *Interrogatorium*/*Forma examinandi testes*, see, e.g. Katajala-Peltomaa and Krötzl, "Approaching Twelfth- to Fifteenth-Century Miracles," 18–19. On the variety of questions asked in different canonization processes, see Katajala-Peltomaa and Kuuliala, "Practical Matters," 90–93.

16 On the Eucharist in the Middle Ages, see e.g. Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall, eds., *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). For discussion on doubts concerning the Eucharist and the doctrine of transubstantiation, see e.g. John H. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 140, 217, 222–25. See also Didier Lett, "Des miracles incroyables. Doutes ou intérêt social et politique dans les procès de canonisation des XIII^{e}–XIV^{e} siècles," in Krötzl and Katajala-Peltomaa, *Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes*, 177–93.

was always the result of conscious selection that favored the agenda of the investigation.[17] In this regard, Donald S. Prudlo has noted that references to the Eucharist in Buoni's canonization process reflect an emerging papal emphasis on religious orthodoxy, which, in turn, is explained by the contemporary challenge posed to the church by heresy.[18] Several depositions refer to the same miracle, although it remains unclear whether the officials posed specific questions about this miracle to the deponents, or if some of them simply reported information about it when questioned about Buoni's miracles in general.[19]

Turning to the evidence, the first and most detailed reference can be found in the 1251 deposition of friar Jacobus,[20] who was one of Buoni's hermits. This long record describes the candidate's holy lifestyle and recounts several miracles ranging from cures for the ailing to exorcisms of demons. Heavily paraphrased, one section of the record reads that once a novice of their order by the name of Nasinbenus had some doubts concerning the Eucharist and did not believe that Christ was truly present in the bread and wine consumed at the altar. Nasinbenus had asked the deponent to arrange an opportunity for him to speak with Buoni, and the deponent claimed to have informed Buoni about this. When Buoni and the novice met, Nasinbenus spoke of many things but said nothing about his doubts. Then, the record quotes[21] their conversation, during which Buoni told the novice not to conceal the truth and revealed that

17 Finucane, *Contested Canonizations*, 14–15; Katajala-Peltomaa and Kuuliala, "Practical Matters," 87–89; Gábor Klaniczay, "Speaking About Miracles: Oral Testimony and Written Record in Medieval Canonization Trials," in *The Development of Literate Mentalities in East Central Europe*, eds. Anna Adamska and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 365; Laura A. Smoller, "Miracle, Memory, and Meaning in the Canonization of Vincent Ferrer, 1453–1454," *Speculum* 73.2 (1998), 432. On miracles in medieval theology, see e.g. Michael E. Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150–1350* (London: Routledge, 2007), 8–28.

18 Prudlo, *Certain Sainthood*, 139–40. See also Mattei, *Processo*, 50–51.

19 Cf. Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 4–5.

20 When citing the names of individuals mentioned in the records, I use the Latinized versions of their names instead of attempting to guess the vernacular version. An exception to this is individuals for whom there exists a standard Anglicized name used widely in scholarship (e.g. John Buoni and Raymond VII). For arguments against translating names from medieval legal records, see Didier Lett, "Les noms des hommes, des filles et des épouses dans les Marches d'après le procès de canonisation de Nicolas de Tolentino (1325)," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge* 119/2 (2007): 401–13.

21 On the function of direct quotations in canonization records, see e.g. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, *Gender, Miracles, and Daily Life: The Evidence of Fourteenth-Century Canonization Processes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 249–51; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, "Narrative Strategies in the Depositions: Gender, Family, and Devotion," in Krötzl and Katajala-Peltomaa, *Miracles in Medieval Canonization Processes*, 247.

he was aware of his doubts about the Eucharist, which Nasinbenus admitted. Buoni told the friars to come back once he called them. After a while, the deponent, Nasinbenus, and two other friars returned to Buoni and gathered by a nearby font. There, Buoni took a goblet, prostrated himself in prayer, filled the goblet with water, and placed it on the edge of the font. He prayed some more and made the sign of the cross over the goblet. After this, he handed the goblet to Nasinbenus and told him to accept the gift of God to whom everything was possible, emphasizing that what had happened was of no merit to himself but only to God, who was omnipotent. The friars who were present all drank from the goblet and tasted good, fragrant, and flavorful wine of a gold-like color. The record goes on to quote Buoni telling the doubting novice to see and to believe, because just as the Lord had turned the water in the goblet into wine, he could similarly turn bread and wine into his body and blood whenever it pleased him. Moreover, the record states that the novice was thus reassured and reinforced in his faith and no longer held doubts.[22]

More information can be found in the subsequent *item*. According to Jacobus's testimony, similar events transpired on the morrow, when friar Nicolaus heard what had happened and began to wonder and doubt, saying he would not believe unless he saw it for himself. When this was relayed to Buoni, he sent for Nicolaus, who went to meet him with another friar. Once again, Buoni took a goblet and went to the font. There, as the record states in a condensed and summary manner, he did similarly as before. When Nicolaus drank from the goblet, he is quoted as saying that what he had been told was really true. He, too, was thus reassured and reaffirmed in his faith and no longer doubted. After this, the record states that the deponent was asked control

22 AASS Oct IX, 777–78: "Dicit praetera idem testis quod cum quodam tempore quidam frater, nomine Nasinbenus, novitius in ordine supradicto, dubitaret de Corpore Domini nostri Jesu Christi, non credens quod esset vere Corpus Christi ille panis, et illud vinum quod conficiebatur in altari, dixit ipsi testi quadam vice quod faceret ipsum loqui cum fratre Joanne Bono. […] Tunc fr. Joannes Bonus accepit quemdam scyffum novum; et ivit ad eos, et prosternens se in oratione juxta fontem, accepit de aqua fontis cum ipso scyffo quem portavit, et posuit scyffum cum aqua super oram fontis; et iterum oravit, et fecit signum crucis super ipsam aquam, quae erat in scyffo. Et accipiens scyffum, porrexit illud fr. Nasinbeno; et dixit ei: Frater, accipe donum Dei, quia omnia possibilia sunt apud Deum; et non credatis quod ego fecerim istud, sed Deus fecit, quia potest omnia facere. Et tunc ille frater bibit, et omnes fratres, qui illic aderant biberunt, et gustaverunt bonum vinum, et odoriferum, et saporosum; et habebat quasi aureum colorem. Et dixit ipse fr. Nascinbeno in praesentia aliorum fratrum, qui illic aderant: Vide, frater, et crede, quia sicut de ista aqua Dominus fecit vinum, ita de pane et vino, potest efficere Corpus et Sanguinem suum, quandocumque placet ei. Et sic dictus frater fuit confirmatus et roboratus in fide, et dixit quod de caetero nullatenus dubitaret."

questions regarding how he had come to know what he reported (he claimed to have been present and tasted the wine), who had been present (he supplied the names of six friars, including himself), when this had happened (he said it had been six years ago on the first and second day of April), and whether there was *publica fama* about the events (which he denied, claiming to have himself prohibited it to be divulged outside of their convent but adding that it was public knowledge among the friars).[23]

Depositions in medieval inquest records are informational abstractions that were produced as the result of the oral interaction between the deponent who gave testimony and the officials in charge of the interrogation who prompted this testimony through questioning. The relative degree of abstraction imposed upon the record by its creation varies from deposition to deposition, and even between elements within individual depositions.[24] Looking at the record of Jacobus's deposition, a lot of seemingly unique details related to the miracle can be discerned. Nevertheless, even a colorful deposition such as this was conditioned by the variables that influenced the flow of information from the past into the record. It cannot be taken as an unproblematic representation of the deponent's talk in the interrogation or the events it purports to describe, as the information remembered and reported by the deponent in response to questioning was appropriated by the notary and transformed into standardized and summarized legal evidence extant as Latin writing embedded in the material medium of the record. Moreover, already prior to giving his statement to the tribunal, the deponent's interpretations of the events and discussions about them in his fraternal community, the reconstructive nature of his memory,[25]

23 AASS Oct IX, 778: "Item dicit idem testis, quod in sequenti die quidam alius frater qui vocabatur Nicolaus, de eodem ordine, audito quod fr. Joannes Bonus per invocationem Domini Jesu Christi prima praeterita die converterat aquam in vinum, coepit mirari et aliquantulum dubitare, dicens, quod non crederet hoc, nisi ipse videret illud idem. […] Et tunc fr. Joannes Bonus accepit quemdam scyffum ligneum novum, et accessit ad fontem cum ipso fr. Nicolao, et cum ipso teste, et quodam alio fratre qui vocabatur Ubertus; et fecit similiter sicut prius. Et cum bibisset dictus frater de optimo vino, quod factum fuerat de aqua, dixit: Revera sunt vera, quae mihi de isto negotio dicebantur. Et ita fuit confirmatus et corroboratus, quod de caetero nullatenus dubitavit." For further eyewitness testimony on the same case, see ibid., 817. See also ibid., 773 for testimony on a similar miracle that, based on the dating provided by the deponent, seems to have transpired on a different occasion.

24 Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records," 170–83.

25 On the inherently reconstructive and malleable nature of human memory, see e.g. Jonathan K. Foster, *Memory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Endel Tulving and Fergus I. M. Craik, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). On memory in the context of canonization and heresy trials, see e.g. Irene Bueno, "*Dixit Quod Non Recordatur*: Memory As Proof in Inquisitorial

and internalized patterns and *topoi* of miracle stories influenced the way in which he remembered, understood, and subsequently reported information about the miracle to the commissars. Thus, the record can be thought of as a selective amalgamation of information from many different sources, which is not easy to pick apart retrospectively.[26]

This fluctuation of abstraction becomes especially evident when we look at other depositions that entail accounts of the same miracle. For example, a short reference near the end of friar Moroëllus's 1253 deposition, which summarizes the deponent's knowledge regarding Buoni's *fama* and miracles in response to questioning, simply states that he had not personally witnessed miracles but had heard that God in response to Buoni's prayers had made wine from water, and that he had also heard of many other miracles.[27] The contrast between this hearsay deposition and the eyewitness deposition analysed above shows how the position of a given deponent in relation to the investigated events and the needs and objectives of a given phase of the investigation dictate the nature of the information available to the historian.

The extent and complexity of the flow of information from the past into the extant records is further highlighted by one section of the 1251 deposition of friar Michaël, a Veronese priest who had joined Buoni's eremitical order. The record describes how Nasinbenus, who had doubts about the Eucharist met with Buoni and how Buoni asked him whether he would believe if the Lord showed him a certain sign, to which the novice conceded. Then, Buoni took him and certain other friars to the font and performed similar actions as were depicted in Jacobus's deposition, after which the friars drank from the goblet. However, this deposition adds details that were not recounted by Jacobus – namely, by quoting the words of Buoni's prayer by the font. This deponent, however, had not been present. When asked how he knew about this, he claimed to have heard about it both from Buoni and from other friars who

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Trials (Early 14th Century France)," in *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lucie Doležalová (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 365–93; Katajala-Peltomaa, *Gender, Miracles, and Daily Life*, 247–87; Lett, *Procès de canonisation*, 219–35, 270; Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records," 179–81; Smoller, "Miracle, Memory, and Meaning."

26 Goodich, "*Mirabilis Deus*," 143; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, *Demonic Possession and Lived Religion in Later Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 17–18, 178–79; Katajala-Peltomaa, *Gender, Miracles, and Daily Life*, 20–21; Katajala-Peltomaa, "Narrative Strategies," 227–32, 250–51; Katajala-Peltomaa and Kuuliala, "Practical Matters," 93–99; Klaniczay, "Speaking About Miracles," 368, 393; Lett, *Procès de canonisation*, 217–18, 257–65, 270, 408; Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records," 178–79, 181–82; Zbíral and Shaw, "Hearing Voices," 4, 8–10.

27 AASS Oct IX, 815. For similar short hearsay references, see ibid. 793, 821, 822, 823.

had witnessed the miracle, and he also claimed that there was *publica vox et fama* about this among their order.[28] Thus, the record makes explicit that what the historian is privy to is a summary of information that the deponent had acquired from many different sources over time, and which was later appropriated by the officials in charge of the canonization proceedings.

These methodological observations concerning miracle narratives in canonization processes resonate with the study of inquisitorial documentation. Languedocian inquisition records from the thirteenth century mainly deal with people who had been in contact with the so-called good men. They were a group of ascetic ritual-working preachers whose teachings, exemplary lifestyle, and promises of salvation attracted considerable lay devotion. The church, in turn, saw them as dangerous heretics and deployed inquisitors to eradicate them from the area. Historians have traditionally known them as Cathars, but this terminology is now heavily contested in scholarship.[29] Just like canonization records, inquisition records were documentary tools serving the investigative agenda of the tribunals. The information that they contain is thoroughly conditioned by the inquisitors' legal prejudice and goal of finding and condemning the guilty. Thus, the records emphasize suspicious activities at the expense of unorthodox beliefs. They primarily document evidence about, for

28 AASS Oct IX, 783: "cum quidam fr. Nascimbenus [...] dubitaret de Corpore et Sanguine D. N. Jesu Christi et quadam vice staret cum ipso fratre Joanne Bono ad cellam ipsius, idem fr. Joannes Bonus dixit ei: Ego scio, frater, quod tu dubitas de Corpore et Sanguine Jesu Christi. Et ipse dixit ei: Verum est, domine. Et tunc dixit ei fr. Joannes Bonus: si Dominus ostenderit tibi aliqua certa signa, crederes tu bene de caetero? Et ipse dixit quia crederet, et libenter videret. Et tunc fr. Joannes Bonus duxit eundem fr. Nascinbenum, fr. Jacobum, et quosdam alios secum ad quondam fontem, qui erat ibi prope, portans secum quondam sciffum de ligno novum, et implevit ipsum de aqua ipsius fontis, et dicta oratione, cujus verba sunt haec, scilicet aequipollentia: Domine Jesu Christe, ad hoc ut iste frater crederat verum Corpus et verum Sanguinem Christi, quod conficitur in altari, ostende misericordiam tuam, ut ista aqua convertatur in vinum. Et his dictis statim scifum plenum de optimo vino porrexit dicto fratri Nascimbeno, dicens ei: Bibe, frater, de vino Domini. [...] et tunc dictus frater respondit dicto fr. Joanni Bono: De caetero de Corpore et Sanguine D. N. Jesu Christi nullatenus dubitabo. Interrogatus quomodo scit, dicit quod audivit pluries ab ore dicti fr. Joannis Boni, et a fr. Jacomello, et a fr. Bulgarello, et a pluribus aliis, qui ibi praesentes extiterant quando praedicta facta sunt. [...] Interrogatus si tunc temporis de hoc erat publica fama per contratam illam, dicit se ignorare, sed tamen per ordinem ipsorum erat publica vox et fama de hoc."

29 On the alleged heresy of the Languedocian good men, see e.g. Malcolm Barber, *The Cathars: Dualist Heretics in Languedoc in the High Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2013). On the current debate concerning the nature and existence of so-called Catharism, see e.g. Antonio Sennis, ed., *Cathars in Question* (York: York Medieval Press, 2016). On medieval heresy in general, see e.g. Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

example, participation in heretical rituals, hearing heretical preaching, and providing material support to alleged heretics. Inquisitors also had a keen interest in facts, such as the names of people involved in heretical activities, as this afforded possibilities to widen the potential scope of investigations.[30]

The majority of Languedocian inquisition records from the middle of the thirteenth century adhere to this general scheme. In certain cases, however, their repetitive form breaks, making unique details visible and allowing for comparison with the depositions drawn from canonization records analysed above. One example of this are depositions that deal with murder. Violent opposition against heresy inquisitors in medieval Languedoc culminated in May 1242, when mendicant inquisitors William Arnold and Stephen of Saint-Thibéry came to Avignonet after carrying out investigations in the Toulouse area. They settled in the castle of the comtal *bayle*, but this proved to be a fatal miscalculation as the *bayle*, possibly at the behest of the Count of Toulouse Raymond VII, informed heretical sympathizers about their presence. In response, a host of armed men was assembled and sent to Avignonet, where they slaughtered the inquisitors and their entourage and looted their belongings. Evidence suggests that this was done with the intention of ending heresy inquisitions in the area, but this proved to be a naïve hope, as inquisitorial activities reassumed shortly thereafter.[31]

Investigating the slaying of their martyred brethren was of obvious interest to the inquisitors who followed them. Murder, however, was not a standard theme of inquisitorial scrutiny, and the level of detail in the depositions related to this case is thus well above average. Moreover, while canonization records routinely entail several depositions regarding the same event, this is surprisingly rare in inquisition records, making the Avignonet case a noteworthy exception. Another key difference between canonization and heresy trials pertains to who was called upon to give testimony. The selection of witnesses was an important variable in the construction of canonization records, and testimony from those higher up in the ecclesiastical and social echelons was often favoured.[32] Inquisitorial tribunals, however, operated according to the investigative logic of a criminal investigation and were thus quite open to

30 Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, 201–2; Arnold, *Inquisition and Power*, 98–107; Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records," 170; Sackville, *Heresy and Heretics*, 128–35.

31 Barber, *Cathars*, 176–86; Yves Dossat, "Le massacre d'Avignonet," *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 6 (1971): 343–59; Walter L. Wakefield, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France 1100–1250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 169–71. For discussion on popular opposition against inquisitors in Languedoc, see e.g. Given, *Inquisition*, 111–40.

32 Golinelli, "Social Aspects"; Katajala-Peltomaa and Kuuliala, "Practical Matters," 81–87, 99.

hearing anyone who was suspected of transgressions or was otherwise thought to be privy to relevant information.

From the series of interrelated depositions that deal with the grim episode at Avignonet, I have chosen to focus on the deposition of Imbertus de Salis given to inquisitor Friar Ferrier in 1244, as it is an eyewitness account spanning the entire sequence of events. The record of his deposition begins with the standard oath, which obliged the deponent to tell the truth about himself and others, the living and the dead, regarding the crime of heresy and Waldensianism. However, instead of listing standard interactions with alleged heretics, the record begins *in medias res* by describing how a certain man brought letters from the Avignonet *bayle* to the commander of the Montségur fortress in the Pyrenees, where the deponent was residing. He claimed to not know what the letters contained but told the inquisitor that men were assembled and the commander called upon them to follow him in doing something of great profit. Agreeing, they headed out of the fortress toward Avignonet and were joined by others along the way. Just like canonization commissars, heresy inquisitors, too, were interested in gathering the names of all those involved in the events they investigated, and Imbertus – most likely in response to explicit questioning – readily supplied the tribunal with the names of all the men in the group that he could remember. Once closer to their target, a section of the force peeled off and advanced while others, including their commander, stayed behind. The deponent went with the vanguard, and when they approached Avignonet, a man came out of the village to make contact, had some words with them, and then returned to find out what the inquisitors were up to. He went back and forth a couple of times, first informing the group that the inquisitors were drinking and later reporting that they had gone to bed. Seeing it was time to strike, the assailants approached the village gate opened by locals. Entering Avignonet, they met with the traitorous *bayle* and more armed men.[33]

After this build up, the record states in a somewhat laconic inquisitorial fashion that they went to the castle, broke down the door of the inquisitors' quarters, and killed everyone inside. The deponent, however, claimed that he remained outside and only entered later when told to do so. Inside, he found the dead bodies of the inquisitors and their entourage. Then, the record entails another long list of the names of people who were pillaging the wares of the tribunal and a short reference to the deponent admitting that he, too, had taken some petty items from the crime scene. The record also meticulously documents who had taken what and summarizes the deponent's recollection

33 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Collection Doat 24, fols. 160r–163v.

of certain individuals bragging about their role in the massacre, even quoting some boastful remarks. The assailants retreated and regrouped with their commander, who is quoted as voicing his irritation for not having received the head of the slain inquisitor, from which he would have liked to drink wine. The deponent also heard that a cavalry segment had been on standby to kill the inquisitors on the road later in case the assault had failed and that the man who brought the letters to Montségur had been rewarded a stolen horse for his troubles.[34] After this long and unusually detailed section, the rest of Imbertus's deposition documents events and activities at the hilltop fortress of Montségur, which was one of the last strongholds for the good men and their lay supporters in Languedoc.[35]

Refraining from being overwhelmed by the drama of Imbertus's deposition, observations similar to those drawn from Buoni's canonization records regarding epistemic constraints and affordances can be made. The information extant in the record was supplied to the tribunal by the deponent, who admitted certain aspects of his role when questioned, but what the historian is privy to constitutes a selective abstraction of this orally reported information appropriated by the authorities and transformed into written evidence. The extent of this abstraction fluctuates, shifting constantly between singular details, such as purported quotations from the culprits, and more summary segments, like the extensive lists of names that were used to incriminate those involved. Thus, while the content of this deposition is unusual, the general form and rhythm of the record are close to standard issue.

It is also noteworthy that the sequence of events leading up to the bloody climax and its aftermath was clearly of interest to the authorities and was documented in detail, but – just as was the case with miracle descriptions – the narrative is almost completely extracted from its wider context due to the selection imposed on the record by the deponent and by representatives of the tribunal. The historian can never know that which the deponent chose not to divulge, nor that which the notary deemed unnecessary to write down. Moreover, the record obscures the dynamics of dialogue and exchange in the interrogation. The inquisitor's questions remain hidden under the smooth surface, although certain sections suggest something about the ways in which the deponent negotiated the information and strove to diminish his own guilt, for example, by claiming to have remained outside during the actual killings.

34 BnF, Collection Doat 24, fols. 163v–167v. For an English translation, see John H. Arnold and Peter Biller, eds., *Heresy and Inquisition in France, 1200–1300* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 359–74.

35 BnF, Collection Doat 24, fols. 167v–181v.

This serves as a reminder that the historian must understand (both types of) inquest records as the result of the combined information production efforts of the deponent, the inquisitor, and the notary.[36]

As was the case with the miracle depositions, the varying level of abstraction and the tendency to standardize evidence within and across depositions become even more evident when taking a brief look at other records that refer to the Avignonet massacre. On one hand, some of these depositions are on par with the level of detail extant in Imbertus's deposition and share many elements with it, such as the arrival of the letters to Montségur, the horse that was promised to the messenger, and the commander of the assailants wanting to drink from the inquisitor's severed head. On the other hand, some depositions only make brief references to the murders, demonstrating how investigative priorities again define the topics of discussion in the interrogation and the information that was recorded for posterity.[37]

The evidence also suggests that similarly to miracles, significant occurrences like the murder of inquisitors aroused talk in the local communities. For example, while his deposition does not make this explicit, it can be assumed that a deponent like Imbertus, who had participated in the events, reminisced about them privately and socially, which influenced his own memories and contributed to the construction of a collective understanding of what had happened. This kind of narrative standardization taking place already prior to the interrogations and the creation of the records is also suggested by the shared, story-like elements across many of the depositions.[38] This is not to claim that none of what the deponents recounted had taken place. Rather, it simply reminds us of the fact that the notary working for the tribunal was not the only player involved in standardizing the information extant in the records. That information about these events circulated in Languedoc and was subsequently funneled into the records via this talk is explicitly revealed by a further deposition given to the same inquisitor by the wife of the man who brought the letters to Montségur. The deposition contains many details about the plot

36 Cf. Katajala-Peltomaa and Krötzl, "Approaching Twelfth- to Fifteenth-Century Miracles," 9; Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records," 172–74, 181; Zbíral and Shaw, "Hearing Voices," 4–8.

37 For more references to the Avignonet murders, see, BnF, Collection Doat 22, fols. 11r–v, 129v–131v, 256r–258r, 284v–287r; Collection Doat 24, fols. 67r–68r; Collection Doat 25, fols. 148v–149r, 250v, 298v, 309r; Toulouse, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 609, fols. 37r–v, 54v, 55r, 76v, 86r, 90v, 91r, 140r–v.

38 Cf. Bruschi, *Wandering Heretics*, 40. See also Katajala-Peltomaa's chapter in this volume.

that ultimately brought about the murders – all of which she claimed to have heard from her husband.[39]

4 Conclusions

Methodologically, historians working with the records of canonization and heresy inquests face similar challenges, and representatives of both source critical traditions have much to learn from each other. Shared methodological innovations combined with novel thematic perspectives guarantee that these documentary genres maintain their relevance for historians of medieval religion and beyond despite their extensive use. The time has come to blur the somewhat artificial boundary between the historiographical traditions dealing with medieval canonizations and heresy inquisitions and to move forward at scale. Methodological cross-fertilization paves the way toward systematic comparisons that incorporate evidence from both types of records. Much low-hanging fruit and more ambitious research programs await the historian who is willing to take the first step. One promising direction that can benefit from a comparative approach is the study of medieval lived religion. Depositions in canonization and inquisition records provide evidence, for example, on beliefs, rituals, and religious communication of the laity. The fact that this material comes from the opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum and illuminates similar phenomena from different perspectives only increases the potential of one type of inquest record complementing the other.

Any comparative analysis that one might embark upon requires a unified reading strategy. Responding to the division that currently defines methodological discussions regarding the possibilities and limits of knowledge about the past through medieval inquest records, this chapter took preliminary steps to conceptualize the fundamental methodological problem in terms of information flow with an emphasis on the epistemological implications of the stages, actors, variables, and dynamics that influenced the creation of the extant evidence. From this perspective, inquest records appear as materially embedded abstractions of information shaped and conditioned by a multi-stage sequence during which several historical actors acquired, processed, and transmitted information. This flow of information from the past into the records began in the lifeworld of the deponents when people perceived and interpreted events and occurrences related to sanctity and heresy and formed memories about

39 BnF, Collection Doat 22, fols. 293v–295v.

them. As was evident with both cases analysed, a degree of subsequent reinterpretation in the form of private reminiscence and collective discussion further influenced the form and content of these memories. Then, often years later, people were confronted by canonization commissars or heresy inquisitors whose questions prompted them to reinterpret what they remembered about certain aspects of their past from the perspective of the highly particular and often emotionally loaded situation of the interrogation. After the interrogation, the authorities appropriated the information reported by the deponents and transformed selected elements from this vernacular talk into the written Latin evidence that served the investigative agenda of the tribunal. At each step of this process, information was selectively discarded and replicated, and it moved from one material modality to another – that is, from memory to talk and from talk to writing. The historian who reads the records of canonization and/or heresy inquests interfaces with the end product of this elongated sequence of information flow. The transformations imposed upon the information by the variables influencing its construction result in a necessary, albeit varying degree of abstraction that defines the evidence and thus conditions the historian's epistemic predicament.

This being said, it is of paramount importance to understand that while the process through which information in medieval inquest records was constructed constrains their epistemic potential, it simultaneously affords the possibility of engaging with the past. Standardized Latin entries in the records do not equal the talk of the deponents, nor can they be seen as unproblematic descriptions of events prior to the interrogations, but when it comes to the information they convey, it seems clear that these records are not something entirely separate from the world from which they stem. However much the variables that influenced the flow of information from the past into the records transformed it along the way, the information extant in them was constrained and afforded by information available to the different historical actors involved in the creation of the records. Thus, a degree of informational overlap between the record and the past remains even in cases where notarial appropriation was taken to an extreme. This makes the idea of searching for a distinct and authentic excess or surplus from the records untenable as a methodological guideline, as this would unavoidably lead to arbitrary value judgments that diminish the pool of potential evidence. The extant records constitute a weave of abstracted information from several sources that is impossible to disentangle or separate clearly from information that preceded it. Rather, the historian's task is to understand the evidence in relation to its complex process of creation and to calibrate knowledge claims accordingly. Here, working out the extent of accountable informational overlap between the extant record, talk in

the interrogation, and the historical phenomena that precede them becomes the central methodological question for historians using canonization and inquisition records, as information in these sources is our only point of empirical access to the past.[40]

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40 See Pihko, "Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records" for a more detailed discussion of these methodological ideas in the context of inquisition records.