Inquisition Retold by the Doat Project

The Doat Project

This exhibition is presented by the Doat Project, in collaboration with the York Minster Library. The Doat Project is dedicated to editing and studying medieval inquisition records. In its first configuration, the York group was funded for two years by the AHRB (Arts and Humanities Research Board). This resulted in a 1000 page publication, *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc. Edition and Translation of Toulouse Inquisition Depositions, 1273-128*, edited by Peter Biller, Caterina Bruschi and Shelagh Sneddon (Leiden, 2011). In its current form its scholars – Peter Biller and Shelagh Sneddon from the earlier team, now joined by Lucy Sackville – are being funded for five years by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) to edit and study the earliest inquisition registers from Languedoc. See the website for more information: www.york.ac.uk.res/doat

Inquisition Retold

In part the exhibition showcases this project. Doat is the name of a man who also managed to get funding, but a long time ago: in the 17th century and from one of the ministers of King Louis XIV of France, Jean-Baptiste Colbert. His massive project was the copying of documents in southern France. These included inquisition registers from the middle ages – those originals do not survive, but the copies do. They went into Colbert's library and have ended up in the French National Library. It is these that the York Doat Project is editing and studying. An image of a leaf from one of them can be seen in the middle of the top shelf in Case 1. To its right is displayed a copy of the 2011 edition, showing a transcription of the Latin text on the left-hand side and our modern English translation to the right.

The exhibition also showcases the general history of the inquisition. The story usually begins with foundation in the early 1230s by Gregory IX (in fact the pope was transferring the job of dealing with heresy from bishops to mendicant friars, especially the Dominicans), and it continues with the rise of the Spanish inquisition in the later 15th century, and the mythologizing of inquisition in popular culture.

While re-telling an often told story, and doing this mainly through texts, the exhibition uses two intertwined threads: two persons the visitor to the exhibition can follow, the Dominican Bernard Gui (1261/62-1331) and a woman from Toulouse interrogated and eventually executed for heresy.

The most famous of all medieval inquisitors, Gui wrote a treatise on the *Practice of Inquisition*; a photo of one of its manuscripts, now in the British Library, appears in the book displayed in Case 3. Although the records of his interrrogations do not survive, a manuscript containing his sentences does. A collaboration between the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) and the Dutch Remonstrant theologian Philipp van Limborch (1633-1712)

brought the manuscript of these sentences to publication in 1692, as a massive appendix to Limborch's *History of the Inquisition* (see Case 2).

On p. 3 of Limborch's edition there is Gui's sentence of condemnation on Philippa Maurel (Case 1, left of lower shelf). Her earlier involvement in heresy is alluded to in a deposition copied in a Doat manuscript (Case 1, middle of top shelf), and her earlier interrogation was edited from this Doat manuscript in 2013 (Case 1, right on top shelf).

Bernard Gui's image is widely diffused in modern culture. His *Practice of Inquisition* was ironically plagiarised in Umberto Eco's novel *Name of the Rose* and in the subsequent film adaptation he was scripted and acted by F. Murray Abraham as a figure of terrifying power and cruelty (Case 3, lower shelf).

Telling the story through texts, the exhibition is also making a point. While the most obvious manipulation of reality is to be found in the images of inquisition put over in polemical religious histories, gothic novels and modern popular culture, it is not confined to these. Thoughts and actions were inserted into theological and legal categories of heresy, in a long line of texts proceeding from the generalities of canon law via interrogations to the final sentence on Philippa Maurel: this was also a process through which reality was coloured and shaped.

Further Reading

There is a magisterial general account of inquisition in Edward Peters's *Inquisition* (New York and London, 1988). Though Peters specialises in the middle ages, the later parts of his book (chapters 6-9) are the sanest and most instructive accounts available of the black legend of the inquisition and its hold in the modern imagination. Francisco Bethencourt's *The Inquisition. A Global History, 1478-1834* (English edition, Cambridge, 2009), aimed at a more academic readership, contains precious material on later study and 'representations' of inquisition (pp. 3-15 and chapter 9).

More specialised on medieval inquisition in France is Walter L. Wakefield's *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250* (London, 1974), and inquisition documents are made accessible in translation in *Heresy and Inquisition in France, 1200-1300*, ed. John H. Arnold and Peter Biller (Manchester, 2016).

The theme of Lucy J. Sackville's book and its applicability tio the textual theme of this exhibition is manifest in its title, *Heresy and Heretics in the Thirteenth Century: The Textual Representations* (York, 2011).

A fuller guide to reading (including inquisition in novels!) can be found on the Doat Project website at www.york.ac.uk.res/doat

Exhibition captions

Inquisition is a word that, to the modern mind, conjures images of a sinister tribunal, whether those of Goya's terrifying inquisition pictures or the farcical rendering of the Monty Python sketch, 'Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!' But it was in text that its power lay, as a tool of repression, and as a symbol for later commentators. This exhibition explores the different ways in which medieval inquisition has been made through text, from the creation of the original witness statements in the middle ages, to the competition over its meaning in the early modern period, to the modern narratives that surround it, both historical and fictional.

Case 1

In a tale from the 1230s an inquisitor puts a text on the head of a woman, and by magic can make her confess anything. In the high middle ages the Church's 'inquisition into heresy' (Latin 'inquisitio' = 'enquiry') became a specialised affair and one shot through with texts. Collections of canon law provided the legal basis. There were portable instruction manuals, where inquisitors could find templates of oaths, interrogations, abjurations and sentences. The answers they extracted generated further texts, for they were taken down in Latin by a notary and written up as 'depositions'. Depositions and sentences were re-copied into 'books of inquisition'. In Languedoc these were stored in inquisition archives in Toulouse and Carcassonne - carefully guarded, for they were feared by locals! Thinking about how they were produced, we can see that the few texts that do survive do not give us simple and unproblematic glimpses of the past.

Top shelf, left to right

***Decretales Gregorii IX* (1561)**
Pope Gregory IX (1227-41) replaced earlier episcopal inquisitions with one controlled by the papacy. His compilation of canon law, *Five Books of the Decretals* (1234), contains a section on heresy and its repression.

Leaf from Ms Doat 25
Very few original manuscripts containing heresy depositions survive. In this early modern copy of depositions from the 1270s, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Collection Doat 25, the scribe has expanded the abbreviations in the medieval text.

***Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc*, ed. Biller, Bruschi & Sneddon (2011): interrogation of Philippa Maurel**
Philippa Maurel, questioned here, was the daughter of the Fabrissa mentioned on the leaf from MS Doat 25. Her deposition comes from from the same manuscript - seen here in a modern edition.She initially denies everything, but gradually admits to more involvement.

Bottom shelf, left to right

Limborch, *Liber Sententiarum*: sentence condemning Philippa Maurel
Philippa's sentence was relatively mild - reflecting her guilt. Later, however, she relapsed, and was sentenced to death. We know that the inquisitor, Bernard Gui, consulted the earlier records. For the story of the 17th-century edition of these sentences, see case 2.

***Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, vol. 5**
This inquisitor's manual from the 1270s gives a template for questioning suspects - its influence can be seen in Philippa's deposition. Inquisitors used it, but also tailored questions to individual cases. It is seen here in an early modern compilation.

Case 2

Early modern texts witnessed both myth and history. On the one hand the union of a medieval past and a contemporary Spanish institution gave birth to a *The Inquisition*, symbol of popery to Protestants and object of detestation to proponents of religious toleration. Through their vast diffusion and lavish illustrations, printed books detailing inquisitors' interrogations, tricks and tortures planted the black legend that still endures. At the same time theological conflict was historical, and history led to research. Seeing modern Protestants as 'heretics of old', Catholic writers turned back to evidence about heretics in inquisition trial records and treatises. Seeing heretics of old as 'witnesses to truth' - a precious line of martyrs linking the early Church and the reformers, thereby fulfilling Christ's prophecy of the perpetuity of the true Church - Protestant writers turned to the same texts. Both Protestant and Catholic scholars searched for old inquisition manuscripts and edited them. The massive folio volumes they produced became the foundations of the serious history of the inquisition.

Top shelf, left to right

***Catalogus testium veritatis*, Matthias Flacius Illyricus (Strasbourg, 1562)**
The 'Catalogue of witnesses to the truth who objected to the Pope' (1st edn Basel, 1556) of Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-75) – projected medieval heretics as Protestant fore-runners. Serious scholarship underpinned it, e.g. pp. 431-44, which contain the first edition of a treatise written around 1260 by the Anonymous of Passau, a Dominican inquisitor.

***Sundry subtill practices of the Inquisition*, Gonsalvus Montanus (Heidelberg, 1567)**
'Gonsalvius Montanus' was the pseudonym of a monk from Seville, Antonio del Corro (1527-91), who fled Spain, converted to Protestantism and published a book on inquisition in 1567; here in the English translation of 1625. Its devastating account of *Sundry subtill practices of the Inquisition* made it a foundation text of the black legend of inquisitors' fiendish techniques.

***History of the Inquisition*, Paolo Sarpi (1615)**
Inquisition practices got very frosty treatment from the nominally Catholic Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623) in his *History of the Inquisition* (English translation 1639). He argued for the subordination of inquisition to the state, and the need for the Venetian Senate to maintain a tight rein over inquisition officials and procedures.

Bottom shelf, left to right

***A Letter Concerning Toleration*, John Locke (1690)**
'Mutual toleration among Christians … I regard as the chief distinguishing mark of a true church'. The Minster Library's copy of John Locke's revolutionary *A Letter Concerning Toleration* is the corrected second edition of 1690. Neither the Latin nor English editions of 1689-90 show the author's name.

John Locke's gratitude to a friend, who saw the first edition of the letter on toleration through the press in Gouda in 1689, was expressed in the encrypted dedication on the title-page, whose last letters 'L.A.' conceal the identity of [Philip van] L[imborch of] A[msterdam]. See the last caption to the right for Locke's help of Limborch in his work on the history of inquisition.

***Histoire des Variations*, J.-B. Bossuet (Paris, 1688)**
In Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet's (1627-1704) polemic demonstrating the variation of Protestant positions, book 11 is devoted to the history of medieval heresies. It rests upon Bossuet's remarkable knowledge of inquisition texts. Here he is using a treatise by the inquisitor 'Renier' (the Anonymous Dominican inquisitor of Passau), which had been edited by Flacius and later by the Jesuit Jacob Gretser.

***Historia inquisitionis*, P. van Limborch (Amsterdam, 1692)**
John Locke helped get the original manuscript of the inquisitor Bernard Gui's *Book of Sentences* to Philip van Limborch, who produced an immaculate edition of them. This was a 400 page appendix of 'proofs' to his sober and precise *Historia inquisitionis*: a masterpiece and the foundation of serious history of the inquisition.

Case 3

Modern views of inquisition are in many ways the heirs of the early modern tradition. 19th and early 20th century histories told the story of Protestant 'witnesses', and made inquisition texts, such as the sentences of Bernard Gui, available to the reading public. Recent scholarship continues the concern with inquisition texts, not least through edition and translation enterprises (like the Doat Project). That concern is also informed, though, by awareness of the layers of retelling laid down over the intervening years. All of this was sober and serious. Alongside it, however, inquisition was recast as a chamber of horrors. 18th-century gothic novels, and 19th-century works lavishly illustrated with pictures of inquisitors at their grim work catered for the public's more ghoulish tastes. Now, heretics and inquisitors go into a heady mix with the Holy Grail and Templars, producing novels such as Kate Mosse's *The Labyrinth*, and fictional retellings in film and television. The 'black legend' of the inquisition, satirized so neatly by Monty Python's Spanish Inquisition, now occupies the forefront of the public imagination.

Top shelf, left to right

Back

Selection of recent volumes on heresy and inquisition, all available in the Minster Library (R-L: Sennis; Leff; Runciman; Peters; Lambert; Turberville; Sackville; Moore)
The last forty years have seen a new upsurge of interest in the methods of the inquisitors, though here the focus has been on understanding the effects of those methods on the texts they produce, and what we can therefore know about inquisition.

A. L. Maycock, *The Inquisition, from its establishment to the Great Schism; an introductory study* (1926)
Though not explicitly an apologist for inquisition, Maycock was interested to show the close relationship between inquisitions and political authority through the ages.

Front

G. G. Coulton, *Inquisition and Liberty* (1938)
For Coulton, the practices and outlook of the medieval inquisition also provided a window onto political power. But here that relationship presented a pointed and timely reminder of the dangers of totalitarian state machinery.

V. de Féréal, *Les Mystères de l'inquisition*
Several illustrated volumes on inquisition were produced in the 19th century; this is one of the most heavily - and, to the modern sensibility, distastefully - illustrated. To spare the viewer, only the title page has been selected, showing the romanticised symbols of inquisition.

Bottom shelf, left to right

***Je suis Cathare*, volume 1, 'Le parfait introuvable'**
The conflict between inquisitors and heretics has been remade as a story of resistance and regional identity in the south of France, in a thriving tourist industry and in graphic novels such as this one, in which inquisitors are remade as the malefactors.

Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (1980)
Press photo from the filming of The Name of the Rose (1986)
Was Umberto Eco's plagiarising of Bernard Gui's model interrogation in his novel *The Name of the Rose* an exercise in post-modernist irony? If so, the irony did not survive in the film version of 1986, dominated by F. Murray Abraham's terrifying caricature of Bernard Gui.