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Response to John H. Arnold's review of **Karen Sullivan**, *Truth and the Heretic: Crises of Knowledge in Medieval French Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. xii + 281 pp. Notes, select bibliography, index. \$35.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-226-78169-0.

Response by Karen Sullivan, Bard College.

I am grateful to *H-France Review* for allowing me the opportunity to respond to Professor Arnold's review of *Truth and the Heretic*. Professor Arnold has read the book carefully and insightfully, and he summarizes its arguments with remarkable accuracy in the first part of the review. When he raises concerns about some of the book's claims, I invariably agree with him, and, indeed, thought that the book was agreeing with him as well, despite the contrary arguments he sees it as making. Given the similar views about medieval heresy Professor Arnold and I ultimately seem to have, it is possible that what he sees as our differences in substance are actually due to differences in emphasis. All good literary scholars consider the importance of context, just as all good historians consider the importance of the text, but, as a literary scholar, I may well have stressed the internal logic of a work, whether a troubadour *canço* or an inquisitor's manual, over the external environment within which this work was produced, to a degree that causes Professor Arnold unease. Because my choice of what to emphasize appears to have led Professor Arnold to think that I hold certain views on medieval heretics and inquisitors that I do not hold, I am happy to have the chance to clarify here what I was and was not trying to argue in the book.

First, it was never my intention to identify Occitan or French literature of the Middle Ages with Catharism. It is true that I opened one chapter by stating that "One might expect ... that courtly love would be regarded as heretical" (p. 151) and that I then mentioned the adulterous and idolatrous nature of courtly love relationships as potentially suspect from the ecclesiastical point of view. Though I wanted to acknowledge those aspects of courtly love that have led some scholars and belletrists to deem it heretical in the eyes of the church, I thought that I had made clear I did not number myself among these writers. I noted, for example, that, though Etienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris, condemned Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* in 1277, no ecclesiastic is recorded as having taken action against any vernacular literary texts. "Harsh toward the authors and defenders of heresy, medieval clerics were lax toward the poets of courtly love" (p. 184), I observed. Similarly, it is true that, in the footnote Professor Arnold references, I wrote "One might be tempted to relate Tristan and Iseut's denial of free will to the Cathars' similar rejection of this Catholic doctrine" (p. 154, fn.7) and that I then cited various scholars and belletrists who had made this connection. Yet, later on in the same footnote, I referred back to my early discussion of arguments for and against a Cathar influence upon troubadour lyric (pp. 84-89) and affirmed, "Once again, the rebutters of the Cathar thesis have tended to conclude the debate.... The context of Tristan and Iseut's deviation...appears to be more Celtic than Cathar." When I wrote that "One might expect..." or "One might be tempted ..." to connect medieval literature with Catharism, I did not think that my readers would interpret me as making such a connection myself; on the contrary, I thought that they would deduce from these phrases that I was setting up what "One might expect" or "One might be tempted" to think precisely in order to tear it down.

If Professor Arnold therefore reads *Truth and the Heretic* as "apparently entertaining suggestions" of a historical link between medieval literature and Catharism and of engaging in "a certain flirtation" with such a link, it may be because I appreciate to the extent to which Denis de Rougemont and his fellow proponents of the Cathar thesis recognized the importance of secretiveness in literary works of this time

period, even if I myself do not trace this secretiveness to any single, positively-constituted “secret,” let alone to the secret of a heretical faith, as they did. As I write of the troubadours, in a manner that applies to other literary authors I address, “My purpose is not to argue that the troubadours had been persuaded or even influenced by the heterodox faith but, rather, to suggest that they came to share the fascination with secretiveness that permeated their culture” (p. 88).

As I did not intend to identify Occitan and French literature of the Middle Ages with Catharism, I did not intend to demonize the Catholic clerics who pursued the Cathars and other heretics. I entirely recognize that these clerics represented and, no doubt, understood themselves as playing a pastoral rather than punitive role in the lives of these subjects. According to virtually all accounts of inquisitorial procedure, the inquisitor sought not so much to release heretics to the secular arm but, rather, to bring about their repentance and, hence, their salvation in body and soul; even the most dangerous heresiarchs, such as Raimon Gros, Sicart de Figueiras, and Rainier Sacconi, were welcomed back to the Church as penitents. Regarding the saying “God...does not want a sinner to die” which I cite (via Bérout and, by extension, Ezekiel), I entirely agree with Professor Arnold that “this concern drove much of inquisitorial technique.”

At the same time, insofar as inquisitors and their precursors functioned as physicians of souls, tending to the spiritual illnesses of their flock, I would argue, however, it was far more to the community as a whole than to its individual members. If one considers the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, Guilhem Pelhisson, Peter of Verona, Bernard Gui, or Nicholas Eymerich, to name only some of the best known pursuers of heretics, all of these clerics stress, not how to bring about repentance in the heart of a guilty heretic, but, rather, how to expose this heretic’s guilt to the eyes of skeptical observers. (Dominic de Guzmán is the important exception here.) In one example I cite, Gui acknowledges that the inquisitor might suffer pangs of conscience if he condemns accused heretics who have not confessed or been proved guilty, but he affirms, “It causes even more anguish to the mind of the inquisitor...if by their wily astuteness they escape punishment” (pp. 215-16) because their success in outwitting learned Catholics will strengthen them in their heresy and weaken observers in their orthodoxy. While Gui may not have wanted a heretic to die, still less did he want a heretic to escape exposure and, in doing so, to spread his heresy. I entirely agree with Professor Arnold that, in approaching the inquisitor, one’s purpose should not be to condemn him, as nineteenth-century Protestant historians tended to do, but “to understand him and his discursive context.” One might sympathize with the felt need of inquisitors to approach heresy not as a private sin, which the individual might be persuaded to overcome, but as a public scandal, which his or her spectacular burning might sometimes help eradicate. As Francisco Peña, the sixteenth-century commentator of Eymerich’s inquisitor’s manual explains, “The first end of the trial and the condemnation to death is not to save the soul of the accused person, but to procure the public good and to terrorize the people.”^[1] Still, this laudable effort to avoid condemnation should not, it seems to me, lead to a neglect of those aspects of the Inquisition which seemed disturbing in the Middle Ages (as the numerous assaults upon inquisitors and uprisings against their power suggest that they did), let alone in the modern era.

Finally, in opposing literary and didactic discourses in the Middle Ages, my purpose was not to oppose “folk” and “official” cultures, let alone to romanticize or homogenize them. It is difficult to generalize about the culture from which literary authors of this time period derived. The troubadours I addressed hailed from the highest classes (as does Guilhem IX) and from the lowest classes (as does Bernart de Ventadorn). They included laymen like Peire Cardenal, a partisan of the Occitan resistance to the Albigensian Crusade and perhaps of the heresy that provoked its onslaught, and ecclesiastics like Folquet de Marseille, the bishop of Toulouse and avowed opponent of this resistance and this illicit creed. Clerics composed the historical, theological, pastoral, and inquisitorial works condemning heretics that I address, yet, as I note (p. 11), they also composed many of the literary works celebrating the epistemological instability with which heretics were identified. Because the focus of the book was upon the representation of heretics, I did not spend much time addressing the self-representations of the

clerics who pursued them, to a degree that Professor Arnold finds objectionable. (I am currently completing another book-length project on the spiritual lives of inquisitors which is meant to serve as a complement to this study.) The opposition I am trying to advance in the book is not that between two populations (clerical versus lay, “official” versus “folk”) but, rather, between two discourses, one didactic and the other literary, in which the same population and, indeed, the same people might participate at different moments.

Like Professor Arnold, I too would appreciate “more evidence linking circles of literary production with the kinds of ecclesiastical discussions that note epistemological crisis.” If I have not provided more such evidence, it is, in part, because we know so little about “circles of literary production” during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the vast majority of literary works are either anonymous or semi-anonymous, with nothing known about the authors besides their names. Yet it is also, in part, because I am not sure what such evidence would prove, given that the important contrast is, for me, again, not between populations but between discourses. As I do not believe that the literary authors of this time period belonged to a secret, heretical sect, neither do I believe that they celebrated epistemological uncertainty in a way that their contemporaries did not. If literary texts of the Middle ages express a different attitude toward characters who provoke such confusion than non-literary works of this time do, as I argue is the case, it is not because literary authors differed essentially from non-literary authors but, rather, because literature, with its celebration of playfulness, indeterminacy, and the multiplicity of meanings, differs essentially from other forms of writing. Whether literary scholars likewise differ from historians I will leave for others to judge.

NOTES

[1] *Directorium inquisitorum F. Nicolai Eymerici Ordinis Praedicatorum: cum commentariis Francisci Peniae sacrae theologiae ac iuris vtriusque doctoris: in hac postrema editione iterum emendatum et auctum, et multis litteris apostolicis locupletatum, ad exemplar Romanum diligenter denuo editum: accessit haeresum, rerum et verborum multiplex, et copiosissimus index* (Venetiis: Marcus Antonius Zalterium, 1595), p. 432. Peña is speaking of the inquisitor’s treatment of madmen here, but his words are generally applicable.

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