

Franciscans in the Attic: The Strength of Material Ties Within Religious Dissident Networks^a

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Abstract

This essay analyses the practices of material support among the actors of the dissident network known as the beguins of Languedoc, which was persecuted and nearly dismantled in the first half of the 14th century. The reasons why inquisitorial machinery focused on these actions, sometimes even to the detriment of seemingly more pressing doctrinal concerns will be discussed in the context of the social mapping and disruption that was central to inquisitorial efforts against heresy. The contribution of women will also be explored as a particular form of religious dissent, one that will be situated within the framework of religious experience, underlining the need to broaden our views on the nature of religious dissent itself.

Keywords: Beguins of Languedoc, networks, women, inquisitors, heretical movements

Introduction

Alaraxis Biasse hid Franciscans in her attic. She was the great-niece of the controversial Franciscan theologian Peter of John Olivi, whose commentary on the Apocalypse, first condemned in a general chapter of the Franciscan Order held in Lyon in 1299 – only a year after his death – was seen for the following five decades as a corruptive influence that tainted with heresy everything it touched.¹ From rebel Spiritual Franciscans to communities of beguins across the western

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¹ Peter of John Olivi, born in Sérignan around 1247, joined the Order of St Francis at the age of twelve. His writings on the Virgin Mary were first censured in 1279, but it does not seem that his prestige as a theologian suffered much for it, as he was among the experts consulted during the preparation of Nicholas III's bull *Exiit qui seminat* that same year. Adding to his penchant for controversy, Olivi was one of the main theorists of the notion that Franciscan vows did not only include renouncing ownership but also committing to the *usus pauper* of worldly possessions. Moreover, his arguably most influential work, the *Lectura super Apocalipsim* or *Postilla super apocalypsism*, which he completed in 1297, was imbued with his take on the Joachite postulates that had become so popular among Franciscans over the thirteenth century. For a variety of approaches to the figure of Olivi, see the recently published Cusato and Park (eds.), *Poverty, Eschatology and the Medieval Church. Studies in Honor of David Burr*. Olivian apocalyptic views on the history of salvation pervade many of his writings; see, among others, Manselli, *La 'Lectura super Apocalypsism' di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi*; Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom*; Burr, "Olivi, Proux, and the Separation of Apocalypse from Eschatology"; and Boureau and Piron, eds. *Pierre de Jean Olivi (1248-1298). Pensée scolastique, dissidence spirituelle et société*.

Mediterranean, they were all allegedly led astray by Olivian “errors.” On 1 March 1311, as part of the debates leading up to the Council of Vienne, another Franciscan, Bonagratia of Bergamo, presented an appeal before Pope Clement V warning against certain groups born from Olivian doctrine who gathered in conventicles posing a great danger for the Church.² In May 1318, the first sentence to ever hand over Franciscan friars to the secular arm to be executed also blamed Olivi’s writings for their deviance.³ And as late as 1345, the bishop of Barcelona, Bernat Oliver, launched an inquisition to examine the, until then, seemingly orthodox community of beguin tertiaries of the nearby market town of Vilafranca del Penedès due to the suspicion that they were reading, and hiding, Olivi’s dangerous works.⁴ However, when Alaraxis Biasse was summoned before the inquisitorial court at some point between March 1325 and February 1327, the charges brought up during her interrogation had little to do with her support of the theological views of her great-uncle or the heretical beliefs for which apostate friars, beguins, beguines, and their supporters were being persecuted all over Languedoc and beyond.⁵ The main theme of her questioning was actually the fact that she was hiding Franciscans in her attic.

The following pages will analyse practices of material support among the actors of the beguin network in fourteenth-century Languedoc. The reasons why inquisitorial machinery focused on these instances, sometimes even to the detriment of seemingly more pressing doctrinal concerns, as the case of Alaraxis Biasse shows, will be discussed in the context of the social mapping and disruption that was central to inquisitorial efforts against heresy. The contribution of women will also be explored by situating it within the framework of religious experience, which will underline the need to broaden our views on the nature of religious dissent itself.

² The appeal is edited in Ehrle, “Anklageschrift der Communität gegen die Spirituales und im besondern gegen fr. Petrus Johannis Olivi (vom 1. März 1311),” 365–74.

³ The text of the sentence, issued by Michel le Moine, the Franciscan inquisitor of Provence, is extant in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms. lat. 4350. For a commented edition, see Piron, “Michael Monachus. Inquisitoris sententia contra combustos in Massilia. Présentation”; and Piron, ed., “Inquisitoris sententia contra combustos in Massilia.”

⁴ Barcelona, Arxiu Diocesà (ADB), *Processos* 3, fol. 9r: “Demanat si lo dit frare Francesch li dix en especial quines heretgies tenien los dits frares, respos que hoc so és assaber, que tenien que papa Johan no era papa, e que l’esgleya de Déu vagava, e que no y auia pastor en l’esgleya de Déu, e que tota aquela nit, frare Ramon Punyera sobre una caxa que li mostra ligia l’escriptura de frare Pere Johan.” [Asked whether the said brother Francesch told him which specific heresies the said brethren maintained, he answered that yes, that is, that they believed that Pope John was not the pope, that the Church of God was aimless and without a sheperd and that brother Ramon Punyera spent the night reading from the writings of Brother Peter of John on top of a box he showed him]. This quotation is extracted directly from the extant dossier. The inquisition is edited in Perarnau i Espelt, “Beguins de Vilafranca del Penedès davant el tribunal d’inquisició (1345–1346). De captaires a banquers?”.

⁵ The *culpa* of Alaraxis Biasse is recorded in Paris, BnF, Collection Doat, manuscript 28, fols. 216v–219v as part of the *sermo generalis* held in the market square of Carcassonne on 1 March 1327, which provides a terminus ad quem for her interrogation. As all the other individuals sentenced during that same event were interrogated at some point after the sermon of 24–25 February 1325, also held in Carcassonne, it seems reasonable to assume that Alaraxis was among them. Hereafter, all manuscripts in the Collection Doat will be referred to as Doat followed by their shelf number.

A Study in Blue: Alaraxis Biasse and the Fugitive Franciscans

One day, around Easter 1321, two friars arrived at a house in the village of Sauvian⁶ where Alaraxis Biasse lived with her mother, who was probably Olivi's niece.⁷ Alaraxis knew them from before and she welcomed them, even if they showed up in disguise, wearing blue tunics on top of their habits. They had been among the sixty insurrectionist friars of the convents of Narbonne and Béziers that John XXII summoned to Avignon on 27 April 1317.⁸ Deprived of all means of appeal, the rebels had been entrusted to their superiors while awaiting a verdict that ultimately forced them to swallow the directives of *Quorundam exigit*, which submitted them to papal authority in matters concerning the Rule of St Francis under the premise that "poverty is good, and chastity is greater, but obedience is the greatest of all if preserved intact."⁹ From then onwards, all Franciscans had to wear the same habit and maintain granaries and cellars for sustenance. Spiritual Franciscans, who had come to be known as the friars "who wore short and strict habits," were now to abide by the papal decision in terms of the standards for religious clothing.¹⁰ These material stipulations were, of course, but a symbol of a much more complex disagreement between the original Franciscan ideal of humility and the new reality of a widespread and influential religious order and the demands it entailed. This disagreement was at

⁶ Doat 28, fol. 219v: "(...) prædicta commisit per quatuor annos et citra ante confessionem de præmissis in iudicio factam." The date of Alaraxis's confession is unknown, but as noted in the previous note, all confessions connected to the *sermo* of 1 March 1327 took place between March 1325 and October 1326. Thus, "four years before her confession" would place the episode recounted here in 1321 or 1322. Cross-checking the details of Alaraxis's story with those in other depositions results in Easter 1321 being the most likely date for the arrival of the friars. I will come back to this point later on.

⁷ At the beginning of her *culpa*, Alaraxis is described as Olivi's *neptis*, a term usually reserved for granddaughters or female descendants (Doat 28, fol. 216v: "Alaraxis Biasse de Salviano diocesis Bitterrensis neptis fratris Petri Iohannis Olivi quondam ordinis Minorum"). At the end of the same *culpa*, Olivi is referred to as Alaraxis's *avunculus*, which could well mean that he was her maternal uncle, however, given the use of the word *neptis* and the age difference of almost fifty years — Olivi was born around 1247 — it is more likely that Alaraxis's mother was Olivi's niece and Alaraxis herself her great-niece (Doat 28, fol. 219v: "Interrogata de scriptura fratris Petri Iohannis quondam avunculi sui et de persona ipsius quid credit (...)").

⁸ The papal summoning is edited in Eubel, ed., *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 118–20. For a full account of the struggles of these Franciscans and the circumstances that led to their rebellion against their superiors, see Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans. From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis*, 168–77. For a more recent take on the issue of dissident trends within the Franciscan Order, see Montefusco, *Contestazione e pietà. Dissenso, memoria e devozione negli Spirituali francescani (XIII-XIV secolo)*.

⁹ Eubel, ed., *Bullarium Franciscanum*, 130: "Magna quidem paupertas, sed maior integritas; bonum est obedientia maximum, si custodiatur illaesa." For the full text of *Quorundam exigit*, see *ibid.*, 128–30.

¹⁰ In December 1325, Andreu Berenguer, from Montagnac, described Spirituals as "fratres minores portantes habitus parvos et strictos qui dicebantur Spirituales" (Doat 27, fol. 11r), while his wife Agnès used similar terms (Doat 27, fol. 12r) "sciens fuisse de illis portantibus habitum curtum." Raimon de Johan, a renowned Franciscan apostate allegedly related to Olivi, is described in the inquisitorial record with the following words: "de societate illorum Fratrum qui portabant habitum curtum et strictum et qui nolebant habere granaria et cellaria et nuncupabantur Spirituales" (Doat 27, fol. 35r).

the root of the involvement of the laity in the conflicts surrounding the friars.

While five Franciscans refused to comply with *Quorundam exigit* and died for it, those who were willing to submit were sent to remote convents with sealed letters that indicated how they were to be punished for their rebellion.¹¹ Needless to say, most of these friars ripped open the letters and upon seeing the fate awaiting them decided to take off their habits and flee, thus instantly becoming apostates in the eyes of the Church.¹² Two of them ended up in Sauvian, where they stayed from Easter to late June – “when wheat was reaped” – while Alaraxis and her mother saw to their needs.¹³ The friars explained to the women how the sealed letters included instructions to incarcerate them as soon as they reached the remote convents to which they had been sent.¹⁴ During that time, other Franciscans dressed in blue came and went, staying at the house for a while, and giving Alaraxis more blue cloth so that she and her mother could make more tunics to help other friars escape inquisitorial notice. As unusual as this colour scheme was for Franciscans, whose habit was made of undyed wool, blue dye was rather common in the region, which made it easier for the fugitives to blend in. After all, already in the fourteenth century, Toulouse and the Lauragais were centres of a thriving industry that had developed around the cultivation of woad, *Isatis tinctoria* L., the only source of blue dye indigenous to Languedoc.¹⁵ Wearing the tunics Alaraxis and her mother sewed for them, the friars would only need to let their tonsures grow – thus relinquishing their claim on religious authority – to become anonymous travellers.¹⁶

Some time later, two strangers arrived at Alaraxis’s door claiming to come from Sicily and asking about the fugitive friars. They offered to take them overseas, as they had allegedly done with others. Alaraxis, mistrusting their story, took on a day’s travel by herself to get information about them and make sure that it was safe to reveal

¹¹ The friars Johan Barrau, Guilhem Santon, Pons Roca and Deodat Miquel were executed by fire in the graveyard of the church of Notre-Dame des Accoules, Marseille, on 7 May 1318. A fifth friar, Bernard Aspa, was condemned along with them but recanted before the general sermon. His sentence was commuted and he died in prison.

¹² The friars that Andreu and Agnès Berenguer sheltered in their home told Andreu that they had been given *litterae clausae* addressed to their superiors who would send them to remote convents where they would be imprisoned. Therefore, they took off their habits and escaped. Doat 27, fol. 11r-v: “sibi dixissent quod quia datae fuerant eis litterae clausae per suos superiores quibus mittebant eos conventus et remotos et mandabantur incarcerari, dimiserant habitum suae religionis et aufugerant.”

¹³ Doat 28, fol. 217r: “(...) steterunt et remanserunt in dicta domo ipsius loquentis in dicto habitu seculari a festis pascalibus usque ad mensem Iunii tunc sequentem quo metebantur blada.”

¹⁴ Doat 28, fols. 216v–217r: “(...) qui fratres dixerunt ipsi loquenti quod sic ibant in habitu seculari quia noluerant ire ad conventus remotos ad quos mittebantur per eorum ministros, pro eo videlicet quia in litteris clausis quas portabant inspexerant et viderant quod eorum ministri mandabant eos incarcerari in conventibus ipsis ad quos mittebantur.”

¹⁵ Cardon, “Le pastel en Languedoc, une histoire qui ne finit jamais”; Marandet, “Le pastel en Lauragais à la fin du Moyen Âge : un état des lieux.” Both articles appeared in a special issue entitled *Retour au Pays de coccagne. Nouvelles perspectives sur l’histoire du pastel languedocien (XIIIe-XVIIIe siècle)*.

¹⁶ On the implications of letting the tonsure grow, see Mills, “The Signification of the Tonsure.”

the presence of the friars in her attic. To do so, she sought out Peire Trencavel, one of the most wanted fugitives of the beguin network.¹⁷ Originally from Béziers, about six miles to the north-west of Sauvian, Trencavel was then staying in Narbonne, but clearly Alaraxis was connected enough to know how to find him.¹⁸ Once Trencavel reassured her, she went back to Sauvian, where she welcomed the strangers into her home, gave them drinks, and helped them organize the escape for the whole group. Fifteen days later, on a Saturday night, the same two men, the friars she had been hiding in her attic, and four more boarded a ship to Majorca. Alaraxis would later learn from two of them who later returned to Sauvian, presumably to keep engaging in similar clandestine activities, that the group had reached the island safely.

We do not even know the name of Alaraxis's mother, a crucial actor in the beguin support network who was probably dead by the time Alaraxis appeared before the inquisitors, for it seems she was never summoned. As for Alaraxis herself, in terms of heretical doctrines, she was only accused of believing that the men and women burned at the stake, the ones who earned the movement the name of the "heresy of the burned beguins" that we find in the sources, were martyrs who had been unjustly condemned.¹⁹ Presenting herself as a gullible woman who would believe anything — "as women were bound to do" —²⁰ she admitted to what was in practice the most basic of allegiances to the beguin network.²¹ It is doubtful that inquisitors took Alaraxis at her word and attributed her behavior to gullibility. After all, she was a woman who risked embarking on a forty-mile journey

¹⁷ On the exploits of Peire Trencavel, see Burnham, *So Great a Light, So Great a Smoke. The Beguin Heretics of Languedoc*, 161–77.

¹⁸ This is the detail that more clearly places the action in 1321. The whereabouts of the elusive Trencavel can only be traced by carefully piecing together the eighteen testimonies that mention him at some point, most of them vaguely dated. Among them we find the deposition of Raimunda Arrufat (Doat 28, fols. 210r–211r) who confessed that her husband Peire and herself had received Trencavel in their house of Narbonne. As, according to the edition of the beguin martyrology edited in Patschovsky, ed., *Ein kurialer Ketzerprozeß in Avignon (1354): die Verurteilung der Franziskanerspiritualen Giovanni di Castiglione und Francesco d'Arquata*, 68–69, Peire Arrufat died at the stake in Carcassonne after the *sermo* of 13 June 1322, it seems unlikely that he was safe and sound at home and receiving visitors around Easter that same year, for usually months went by between arrest, interrogation and sentence. It is thus not unreasonable to situate Trencavel's sojourn in Narbonne and therefore Alaraxis's journey in 1321. That said, the martyrology is far from unimpeachable as a source; among other things, it lists Raimunda Arrufat, who is documented deposing before the inquisitorial court in September 1325, as having died along her husband in 1322, probably mistaking her for another unnamed *soror*.

¹⁹ On the naming of this dissident movement after the punishment its adherents suffered, see Nieto-Isabel, "Beguines, Free Spirits, and the Inquisitorial Network Conundrum."

²⁰ Doat 28, fol. 218v: "(...) respondit et dixit quod mulieres sunt talis conditionis quod quando audiunt aliquid tale novum dici, credunt illud de facili."

²¹ For an operationalization of the beguin belief system, see Nieto-Isabel, "Communities of Dissent. Social Network Analysis of Religious Dissident Groups in Languedoc in the 13th and 14th Centuries," 175. This ranking is based on the classification of the beliefs documented in the ninety-five extant depositions connected to the beguins of Languedoc into individual tenets, what we could call the smallest units of belief, with the unjust condemnation of beguins ranking the highest and the belief that Francis and Olivi were Elijah and Enoch (the two witnesses in Rev. 11:1–4) being the least widespread within the network.

by herself to meet one of the most conspicuous targets of inquisitorial persecution before giving away the Franciscans in her attic to two strangers. But the issue remains that even a woman as potentially well positioned to respond to theological matters as Alaraxis was actually sentenced to life imprisonment for assisting fugitives.

The Ties that Bind: Supporting Dissent and Inquisitorial Mapping

The question list in the earliest inquisitor's manual known to date, the *Ordo processus Narbonensis*, focused on the actions of suspects in relation to heretics and not so much on doctrinal issues.²² Composed in the mid-thirteenth century, its main concern were Waldensians and the 'heretics' that have come to be known as *bons omes* and *bonas femnas* – commonly referred to as Cathars despite the problematic nature of the term.²³ Some of the actions in the *Ordo's* questions were connected to devotional practices, such as seeking confession and different instances of worship, but an important part of the interrogation was devoted to uncover and ultimately uproot the material support that heretical groups received from the rest of the population. Inquisitors were particularly interested in knowing whether deponents had provided heretics with food, drinks or any other kind of assistance.²⁴ Although they would not have phrased it that way, mapping material exchanges gave them an access point into the social backdrop of heresy, for kinfolk, friends, and even mere acquaintances were the medium for the transmission of doctrinal contents and devotional practices alike. Moreover, thwarting these exchanges, which heavily relied upon pre-existing social connections, could potentially cripple the network, as it could not survive without material support in its many forms.

In contrast, in the specific case of the "burned beguins," the interrogation procedures included in Bernard Gui's *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, completed between 1323 and 1324, were

²² Around 1880, the Dominican François Balme discovered in Madrid, Biblioteca Universitaria, manuscript 53 the only extant copy of the *Ordo processus Narbonensis*, a collection of inquisitorial materials commissioned by Pope Innocent IV and the archbishop of Narbonne. The Biblioteca Universitaria de Madrid was dismembered by Royal Order of 6 May 1897 into nine autonomous institutions, and its holdings were transferred to nine different venues, some of which merged over time. Although I am in the process of tracing the whereabouts of the former ms. 53, so far its location remains unknown. However, the different scholars that have dealt with the matter have simply passed on its previous location unaware that the aforementioned library no longer exists as such; see Torres Santo Domingo, *La Biblioteca de la Universidad de Madrid, 1898-1939*, Biblioteca Histórica, documento de trabajo 2000, no. 1.

²³ For some of the most recent contributions to this question, which goes far beyond a matter of terminological accuracy, see Biget, Caucanas, Fournié, and le Blévec, eds., *Le "catharisme" en questions*, as well as the volume to which this one provides a response of sorts, Sennis, ed., *Cathars in Question*. See also, Benedetti, "Frammenti di un discorso ereticale. Per una introduzione," and, in the same volume, Anne Brenon, "I catari di Linguadoca."

²⁴ Tardif, "Document pour l'histoire du processus per inquisitionem et de l'inquisitio heretice pravitatis," 672: "Deinde requiritur si vidit hereticum vel Valdensem et ubi et quando, et quoties et cum quibus, et de aliis circumstantiis diligenter (...) et eos hospitio recepit aut recepit fecit. Si de loco ad locum duxit seu aliter associavit, aut duci vel associari fecit. Si cum eis comedit aut bibit (...) Si dedit vel misit eis aliquid. Si fuit eorum questor aut nuntius, aut minister. Si eorum depositum vel quid aliud habuit."

fully centred on the matter of beliefs, to the point that most of the issues included in the extensive question list start with a variant of the formula “has [the accused] believed or does [the accused] still believe or has [the accused] heard.”²⁵ The “burned beguins” were the only heresy in the *Practica* whose definition was still in progress at the time, which would explain why it was of paramount importance for Gui to clearly state what made them heretics and what singled them out from other well-established groups.²⁶ But the fact is that none of the various interrogation techniques featured in the *Practica* – specially designed to identify the members of a variety of ‘sects’ – contain the characteristic set of questions related to material support. Likely, by the early fourteenth century these questions were so commonplace among inquisitors that Gui, who was after all composing a highly specialised manual meant for his fellow inquisitors, didn’t feel the need to insist on them.

The *culpae* included in Bernard Gui’s book of sentences – which records the fieldwork experience that would enable him to write the *Practica* – show that, in fact, the actors of the beguin network he interrogated between 1321 and 1322 were not only asked about their beliefs, but also about their social interactions with other members of the community, as well as about the assistance they had provided for them.²⁷ Mirroring the questions in the *Ordo processus Narbonensis*, most of the beguins interrogated by Gui were asked about their material involvement in the clandestine workings of the struggling community.²⁸ Thus, Guilhem Ros, a Franciscan tertiary from Cintegabelle, was asked whether he had shared meals with heretics, accompanied them from one place to another, and provided them

²⁵ Among countless examples of similar formulas, see *Practica tradita per fratrem B. Guidonis, de ordine Predicatorum, contra infectos labe heretice pravitatis*, Toulouse, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 388, fol. 82r: “Item, si credidit, aut credit vel audivit (...)”; cf. Doat 30, fol. 260v. Gui’s manual was first edited in its entirety in Douais, ed., *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis, auctore Bernardo Guidonis ordinis fratrum Praedicatorum*; the formula above can be found in *ibid.*, 278; cf. Mollat, ed., *Manuel de l’inquisiteur Bernard Gui*, vol. 1, 158; cf. Wakefield and Evans, eds. and trans., *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 428: “Also [inquire] whether he believed or now believes, or has heard it taught (...)”

²⁶ On the process of definition of “the heresy of the burned beguins,” see Nieto-Isabel, “Beliefs in Progress: The Beguins of Languedoc and the Construction of a New Heretical Identity.”

²⁷ A copy of Bernard Gui’s *Liber sententiarum* is extant in London, British Library, ms. Add. 4697, a rich parchment volume of 221 folios bound in red leather and written in fourteenth-century diplomatic script. In 2002, Annette Pales-Gobilliard published a revised edition in Pales-Gobilliard, ed. *Le livre des sentences de l’inquisiteur Bernard Gui (1308-1323)*.

²⁸ Inquisition records are problematic sources whose trustworthiness has been repeatedly questioned. Much has been written about their constraints, the best way to approach them, and the opportunities they afford. To cite but a few of the most significant contributions, see Ginzburg, “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist”; Bruschi, “Magna diligentia est habenda per inquisitorem’: Precautions before Reading Doat 21–26”; and Arnold, *Inquisition and Power. Catharism and the Confessing Subject in Medieval Languedoc*. The present article and the analysis that follows are predicated on the understanding that despite the limitations imposed by their format and the procedure that led to their production, inquisition records are rather unique in the wealth of relational information they provide. As a result they not only serve as a medium to understand inquisitorial views but also offer representative samples for the quantitative analysis of the social context on which they were based. See Nieto-Isabel and López-Arenillas, “From inquisition to inquiry: Inquisitorial records as a source for social network analysis”; see also, Pihko, “The Construction of Information in Medieval Inquisition Records: A Methodological Reconsideration”.

with food and drinks.²⁹ Maria de Serra, his neighbour and fellow tertiary who was sentenced to life imprisonment in July 1322, confessed that she had shared meals with many beguins and beguines, and that she had provided them with bread, wine, eggs, and money.³⁰ Bernarda d'Antusan, yet another member of the same community, confessed in March 1322 that she had received fugitive apostates and beguins in her family house and that she gave them food and drinks. When they left in a hurry trying to avoid capture, Bernarda still gave them a big piece of flat cake and two pieces of *rosolas*, a sort of stuffed pastry.³¹ One of those fugitives was Peire Tort, who after his capture declared that he had also received Franciscan apostates and convicted beguins in his own home in Montréal, providing for them and giving them shelter.³² In turn, Bernarda's husband, Raimon, who also admitted to having received fugitives in the family house, added that he had provided them with supplies and a rather remarkable amount of money, a hundred silver *tournois* and fifty *sous* of Toulouse.³³ Meanwhile, in nearby Belpech, Bernard de Na Jacma also received fugitives in his home, supplied them with food and drinks, and sent ten *sous* of Toulouse and nine silver *tournois* to the beguins that remained imprisoned in the archiepiscopal gaol of Narbonne.³⁴ Likewise, his neighbour Raimon de Bosch admitted to having visited this same group of imprisoned beguins that ended up at the stake in February 1322, and he confessed that he had received apostates in his home and accompanied them from place to place in disguise.³⁵

²⁹ Indeed, Guilhem ate and drank with seven fugitive apostates, with whom he travelled, and he also drank wine, which he paid for, with two convicted beguins, Peire Arrufat and Peire Tort; see Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1366: "(...) et semel scivit esse VII fugitivos apostatas (...) cum eis comedit et bibit et participavit et aliquos ex ipsis multociens associavit de loco ad locum"; *ibid.*, 1594: "Item ipse misit pro vino et bibit cum eis in dicta domo."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1374: "Item multos alios Beguinos et Beguinas de erroribus predictis et aliis loquentes et suspectos et suspectas existentes et fugitivos pro heresi vidit, associavit et cum eis comedit, et panem et vinum et ova et pecuniam dedit eis."

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1354: "Item plures et pluries recepit et receptavit in domo sua et viri sui aliquos quos in confessione sua nominat discurrentes, et aliquos apostatas fugitivos (...) et talibus dedit ad comedendum et bibendum de bonis domus sue"; *ibid.*, 1356: "Item dictis duobus hominibus existentibus tunc in domo ejus venit Guillelmus Ros et dixit sibi quod diceret illis hominibus qui erant intus quod cito exirent de dicta domo pro utilitate sua (...) et tunc recesserunt inde, et in recessu ipsa dedit dicto Petro Tort unum magnum cautellum de placenta et duo frusta de *rosolas*." I thank Dr Maria Soler for her help in identifying these as the 'resoles' described in the earliest surviving Catalan culinary text, the *Llibre de Sent Soví*. The recipe for the 'resoles' appears in Chapter CL of Grewe, ed., *Llibre de Sent Soví*, 168 under the title "Qui parla con se ffan resoles de paste e d'ous e de fformatge."

³² Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1414: "Predictus autem P. Tort multos apostatas ordinis fratrum Minorum quos sciebat fugitivos pro facto heresis, etiam quosdam etiam Beguinos fugitivos qui propria temeritate cruces dimiserant (...) receptavit in domo sua et alibi, de suo etiam dedit eis, quos non revelavit, nec cepit, nec capi fecit, set eos celavit ac celari fecit."

³³ *Ibid.*, 1346: "(...) et de bonis suis dedit et expendidit semel centum turonenses albos argenteos, et semel quinquaginta solidos Tholosanorum."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1330-32: "(...) receptavit diversos apostatas ordinis fratrum Minorum de fratribus vocatis Spiritualibus et diversos Beguinos (...) et dedit eis comedere et bibere, et misit semel X solidos Tholosanos Beguinis captis in Narbona, et alia vicem novem turonenses argenteos."

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1308: "Item scivit plures alios esse credentes et consencientes in facto predictorum condempnatorum et ivit cum eis de loco ad locum in habitu dissimulato et

Despite the absence of such questions in the section of the *Practica* devoted to the *interrogatoria propria ad Bequinos moderni temporis*, these cases evince that this was still a matter of utmost concern for inquisitors. Therefore, it is likely that having deponents confess on material exchanges was widespread enough that Gui did not feel the need to specify it in his manual, and instead chose to leave it to what he called “the experience, cunning, and ingenuity” with which inquisitors had to conduct interrogations.³⁶ The purpose of monitoring the exchanges of food and drinks among deponents and suspects was twofold. On the one hand, these supplies provided essential sustenance for the survival of the persecuted network. In tune with their Franciscan backbone, living on alms was deemed as praiseworthy among beguins, but furthermore, once many of them became fugitives, the material support of their co-religionists was sometimes their only chance to stay away from inquisitorial reach. On the other hand, food and drinks usually involved sitting around a table and eating together, which was far more dangerous regarding the spread of beliefs. Therefore, since the time of the *Ordo processus Narbonensis*, questions about commensality — *si cum eis comedit aut bibit* — were prominently featured in inquisitorial question lists, right next to those about sustenance.

Food for Thought: From Socially Constructed Performance to Playing a Central Role

Of the ninety-five actors of the beguin network whose depositions are extant, only a third, thirty-two, were women.³⁷ Interestingly, the percentage of women among deponents who confessed to having provided other members of their religious community with supplies almost doubles that ratio. Indeed, out of the thirty-five people who admitted to engaging in these practices, as many as twenty-one — roughly 60% — were women, which would suggest that they were remarkably more involved in this activity than men. This is further confirmed by analysing the participation of men and women separately, which shows that over 65% of all female deponents gave or sent food and drinks to other actors, while only a fifth of male deponents were charged on these grounds (Fig. 1).

The types of food and drinks that were at the centre of this system of clandestine material support can only say so much about the daily diet of the members of the network, which included not only beguins

visitavit illos Beguinos qui detinebantur in carcere Narbone et fuerunt postmodum tanquam heretici condemnati.”

³⁶ Mollat, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, vol. 1, 8: “Curet igitur sapiens inquisitor occasionem accipere sive ex deponentium responsis sive ex attestationibus accusantium sive ex hiis que experientia docuit sive ex proprii acumine ingenii sive ex sequentibus questionibus seu interrogatoriis.”

³⁷ Taken at face value, this unbalance between male and female deponents, quite consistent across different heretical groups, could easily lead to the conclusion that women were on average less involved than men in non-mainstream Christianities. Although this article is not the place to expound on this issue, with which I have dealt elsewhere, this lack of proportion stems in fact from a bias in the inquisitorial mindset that results in a systematic under-representation of women; see Nieto-Isabel, “Communities of Dissent,” 359. I discuss this topic at length in my forthcoming book, Nieto-Isabel, *Networks of Defiance*.

and their lay supporters but also fugitive Franciscans. The victuals exchanged had to be easy to transport and consume. However, this information also confirms the lack of dietary restrictions among beguins. Unlike other dissident groups, the religious elite of the beguin movement – those who specifically identified themselves or were identified by others as *beguini*, *beguinae*, or Franciscan tertiaries – could not be singled out by the food they ate, or more accurately, by the food they chose not to eat. Not even the men and women who alleged to have been professed as Franciscan tertiaries were bound to any specific dietary restrictions. Chapter V of *Supra Montem*, which regulated the periods of abstinence and fasting that the members of the Third Order of Saint Francis had to observe, merely forbid them from eating meat on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, bar in case of special circumstances, such as illness, being on a journey, or solemn festivities.³⁸ In general, the bull advised moderation and allowed Brothers and Sisters to eat from whatever was offered to them when they were visiting other religious.³⁹ Thus, these regulations aimed for austerity but not for segregation: Franciscan tertiaries were not meant to live separately from their fellow villagers but to join them in festivities and other communal events. This inclusive nature of the dietary usages of the elite of the movement was even more apparent in the case of those beguins and beguines who defined themselves as such but made no claims as to having taken any vows. There is not even a single mention of any specific observance of abstinence or fasting periods that were different from those that the rest of the Christians had to comply with.⁴⁰ Therefore, inquisitors were interested in the exchange itself and not so much in what kind of products were being exchanged.⁴¹

Only ten of the depositions mention specific types of food and drinks, while most of them include rather generic expressions, with deponents simply confessing to having provided others either “with food and drinks” or “from their own goods.” While wine is the only

³⁸ Rossi da Pusaro, ed., *Bullarium Franciscanum*, vol. 4, 95: “Ab usu autem carnum secunda, quarta, et sexta feria, dieque Sabbati abstineant universi, nisi aliud infirmitatis vel debilitatis instantia suaderet: Minutis vero per triduum carnes dentur, nec subtrahantur in itinere constitutis. Sit quoque ipsarum comestio licita singulis, cum solemnitate præcipuam intervenire contigerit, in qua ceteri Christiani ab antiquo epulis carnis vesci solent.”

³⁹ Ibid.: “(...) sed et cum Religiosis ceteris in eorum Conventualibus domibus licite sumere valeant de appositis ab eisdem (...) Sit sanis cibus moderatus et potus.”

⁴⁰ In fact, in her confession of 1325, the visionary beguine Na Prous Boneta took matters one step further by claiming that there was no need to carry out penances like fasting, because contrition made all other penances unnecessary once one believed in the works of the Holy Spirit; see Doat 27, fol. 77r-v: “Item dixit se credere quod ille qui peccat mortaliter et de peccato ille contentur in corde salvari potest absque oris confessione solum quod credat in opere Spiritus Sancti dicens quod tali non est necessaria aliqua impositio pœnitentiæ in hoc mundo, scilicet ieiuniorum aut alia quia in hoc quod homo contentur in hoc est pœnitentia et ideo sibi non est alia pœnitentia imponenda.”

⁴¹ On the presence of references to food in inquisition records, see Biller, “Why no Food? Waldensian Followers in Bernard Gui’s *Practica inquisitionis* and *culpe*.” For a thorough analysis of its meaning in terms of religious experience, see Pihko, “A Taste of Dissent: Experiences of Blessed Bread as a Dimension of Lived Religion in Thirteenth- and Early Fourteenth-Century Languedoc.”

drink explicitly mentioned by the suspects,⁴² the variety of food products is much wider. As could be expected, bread and the grain needed to make it were the main objects of these exchanges, appearing in half of the cases that document details in this regard.⁴³ It should be noted, however, that unlike in the case of other dissident communities for which the circulation of blessed bread was loaded with religious meaning,⁴⁴ a counterpart to this devotional practice is not documented among the “burned beguins.” The aforementioned religious elite of the group – beguins, beguines and tertiaries – were not involved in any kind of sacramental performance, and even the Franciscans in disgrace who were connected to the network were only seen administering confession and occasionally Eucharist, but with no reference to blessing bread or wine.

Fruits and vegetables followed in order of importance,⁴⁵ while animal products were more sparsely mentioned.⁴⁶ Finally, the four documented examples of more elaborate foods were, again, easy to transport and consume while on the run. As mentioned above, Bernarda d’Antusan gave Peire Tort a flat cake and two *rosolas* just

⁴² Guilhem Ros paid for the wine he shared with Peire Tort and Peire Arrufat in the Antusan household in Cintegabelle (Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1594); Maria de Serra, also in Cintegabelle, provided many beguins and beguines with wine, among other things (*ibid.*, 1374); and the draper Johan Orlach gave wine to the beguins imprisoned in Maguelone (Doat 27, fol. 24v: “(...) quosdam Beguinos habitatores tunc Montepessulano visitavit et ex tunc eorum noticiam et familiaritatem habuit qui Beguini fuerant postmodum in Lunello combusti eosdem Beguinos in carcere primo detentos vidit et vinum eis dedit”).

⁴³ Among many other examples, Jacma Sobirana, a widow from Carcassonne, sent bread to the fugitive friar Raimon de Johan (Doat 28, fol. 212v: “ipsa loquens visitavit cum ibi et panem misit.”); Miracla Esteve, from Montréal, also provided for the same Raimon, sending him one *quartera* of grain (Doat 28, fol. 191v: “et alias unum quarteriam frumenti.”); in Lodève, the widow Berengaria Estorg was given grain and had it ground to send the flour to another fugitive, Guilhem Serralher, in Montpellier (Doat 28, fol. 196r: “et pro eo bladum sibi datum moli fecit, et farinam sibi misit); while Jacma Lauret, also from Lodève, sent Serralher one *sester* of wheat (Doat 28, fol. 233v–234r: “misit eidem Guillermo amore Dei unum sextarum bladi per ipsam personam.”)

⁴⁴ Pihko, “A Taste of Dissent”, 68–79.

⁴⁵ Berengaria Estorg carried fruit all the way to Montpellier where Serralher was hiding (Doat 28, fol. 195r: “et fructus tradidit apud Montepessulano”); the harness-maker Peire Massot delivered fruit to the beguins imprisoned in the episcopal gaol of Béziers (Doat 27, fol. 12v); the aforementioned Miracla sent peas and fruit to Raimon de Johan (Doat 28, fol. 191v: “et alias de pisis, et alias de fructibus”); and Jacma Lauret even specified that on one occasion she sent Serralher a basket with dried figs, grapes, and pears (Doat 28, fol. 234r: “idcirco misit eidem Guillermo unum cabassium de fructibus, scilicet de ficibus, et racemis, et piris siccis”).

⁴⁶ Pons Elies confessed to having brought hens to the beguins imprisoned in Carcassonne, an impractical gift for fugitives but not for prisoners who were no longer leading a clandestine life (Doat 28, fol. 119r: “Item Begguinis in muro Carcassone detentis gallinas, panem, et argentum multotiens apportavit et misit ad comendandum et bibendum”). Jacma Lauret admitted to having given sausages to Guilhem Serralher when she allegedly met him by chance in Aniane (Doat 28, fol. 234r: “ipsa loquens dum esset apud locum de Anhana tempore indulgentiæ invenit ibi dictum Guillelmmum Serrallerii et ibi loquta fuit ei et dedit de salsiciis quas ipsa portabat”), and Maria de Serra listed eggs among the things she had provided for fugitive beguins. Peire Esperendiu describes the confiscation by royal officers of a cartload of cheese that the fugitive Guilhem Verrier had sent to Narbonne to be sold –presumably– to help support other fellow beguins. When Verrier rode back into the city asking about the cheese, Peire informed him of what had happened and advised him to leave or risk capture, a passage that appears recorded in the vernacular (Doat 28, fol. 251v: “Vrayement li fromages vostres ne son pas vendus, mais les a pris le Roy et vendus”).

before he fled her house. Miracla Esteve, in Montréal, sent Raimon de Johan one *fogassa*, a sort of flat bread, and one *flaó*, a pastry that could be filled with cottage cheese or eggs.⁴⁷

The interest of inquisitors in discovering the involvement of suspects in the exchange of victuals also encompassed those instances in which food and drinks were not only given or sent away but also shared around the same table. The social importance of commensality has been extensively discussed among social scientists;⁴⁸ well beyond biological need, the act of sharing food is deeply intertwined with social structure and practices. Eating together creates and reinforces social ties, but it also establishes a symbolic communal space where opinions, and therefore, beliefs flow freely.⁴⁹ Sharing food is also one of the most basic rituals that build up family bonds, for it sparks a sort of intimacy that can be made extensive to friends, which in turn strengthens pre-existing social ties.⁵⁰ Inquisitors were conscious of the implications that seating at the same table had in terms of community bonding.⁵¹ Sitting at a table with suspects of heresy to share a meal implied not only being acquainted and even having a close relationship with them, but also, and more importantly, being exposed to heretical doctrines.⁵² Thus, sharing meals was both a consequence and a sign that two people were acquainted enough as to exchange dangerous opinions, especially in a climate of religious turmoil, and inquisitors treated it as such.⁵³ The beguine Na Prou Boneta, while

⁴⁷ Doat 28, fol. 191v: "sibique postea misit unum fogassetum et unum flatonem."

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Fishler, "Commensality, Society, and Culture." For a more recent overview of this field, see Jönsson, Michaud, and Neuman, "What Is Commensality? A Critical Discussion of an Expanding Research Field."

⁴⁹ On the symbology of commensality as religious communion, see Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, esp. 49; and Méndez-Montoya, *Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist*, 113–60.

⁵⁰ See the enlightening analysis in Douglas, "Deciphering a meal," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 41: "Drinks are for strangers, acquaintances, workmen, and family. Meals are for family, close friends, honoured guests. The grand operator of the system is the line between intimacy and distance."

⁵¹ See the analysis of the complexity of ritual meals in early Christianity in McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals*; see also a study on communal monastic meals in Sagne, *La Symbolique du Repas dans les Communautés*.

⁵² A particularly significant example of this inquisitorial concern is the case of the priest Bernard Mauri, who confessed to having shared meals with many different people and was specifically asked about who had sat at the table on each of those occasions (Doat 35, fols. 29v–30r: "et simul in eadem mensa comendentibus dictis Andrea et Cicilia ac Marino et Domino Hugone Robaudi presbitero"). Bernard had already admitted to the close friendship he and the fugitive Peire Trencavel maintained. He described the warm welcome he gave his old friend, and even had to clarify that they had not shared a bed when they both spent the night at the same hospice; however, he was still required to answer to whether they sat at the same table when they shared meals; Doat 35, fol. 27v: "(...) dictus Petrus Trencavelli tunc supervenit (...) cum ipse qui loquitur vidisset fuit admiratus et recollegerunt se mutuo et se salutaverunt tactis manibus et cum amplexibus sed non recordatur si se osculati fuerunt vel non est, (...) et aliquotiens scilicet vis comedit et bibit idem Petrus in eadem mensa cum ipso loquente (...) et semel iacuit dictus Petrus un dicta domo hospitalis cum ipso loquente, videlicet uno iacente in uno lento et alia in altero."

⁵³ The aforementioned harness-maker Peire Massot met Guilhem Verrier and his wife in Montpellier, where they shared a meal. Given that Peire was from Béziers, that the Verriers lived in Narbonne, and that they were all involved in the beguin movement before said meeting took place, it is not unlikely that a similar religious motivation was behind the presence of these three people in Montpellier. Whatever the case, they seem to have struck up a friendship, for Peire saw the couple many more times and shared

recounting the different stages of her own mystical experience, casually described in her deposition how she, her sister Alisseta, and their companion Alaraxis Bedoc discussed the sermon they had just listened to during the service of Good Friday while eating together at the same table.⁵⁴ But this was not the only kind of conversation that took place at the Boneta household, for both Alisseta and Alaraxis confirmed in their respective depositions that many actors of the network visited the house, shared meals, and conversed with them while they were there.⁵⁵ Likewise, the tailor Johan Peire, one of the many members of the group who lived in Montpellier and undoubtedly knew the Boneta sisters and Alaraxis Bedoc, also confessed to having frequently shared meals with followers of the “beliefs of the burned beguins” both in his house and elsewhere.⁵⁶

Sharing meals was not incidental, it was a practice in which people engaged voluntarily and purposefully, and that is precisely what made it an aggravating circumstance in the eyes of the inquisitors. However clear and incriminating the connection between two individuals was, eating together consolidated their bond, and therefore needed to be explicitly recorded. When the fugitive priest Bernard Mauri, who had changed his name to Blas Martí to try and remain undetected, was interrogated about the people with whom he maintained a close relationship, he gave the names of three female members of the beguin community, Elis Castres, Raimunda Esquirol, and a certain Guilhema. To prove their friendship, Bernard recounted how they had looked after him when he fell ill and on many other occasions, but as if that was not confirmation enough, he added that they had frequently shared meals and conversed both in Brignoles, where he was staying, and in Manosque, where they lived.⁵⁷ Commensality was therefore a source of social connections and became one of the features that defined whether someone belonged to the community or not. Thus, when trying to establish the involvement

meals with them both in Narbonne and in Béziers; see Doat 27, fol. 13r: “(...) semel comedit in Montepessulano quod tunc non cognoscebat Guillelmum Verrerii de Narbonensi et eius uxorem, in domo sua et alibi vidit et cum eis comedit et bibit tam in Narbona quam in Bitterris.”

⁵⁴ Doat 27, fol. 53r: “(...) et cum fuit in domo et esset in mensa cum sociabus suis et loqueretur de sermone facto, radii prædicti iterato circumfulserunt eam et ideo fuit in tango fervour et amore access ad Deum quod non pituitary comedere sed surrexit de mensa.”

⁵⁵ Doat 27, fol. 26v: “(...) et multos alios homines et mulieres de credentia Beguinorum combustorum in domo dictæ Na Prous cum qua morabatur multociens et diversis temporibus vidit (...) et cum eis comedit et bibit et de bonis suis dedit nesciens a principio sed tamen postea satis cito sciens eos esse tales et nihilominus cum eis postmodum sicut et antea extitit conversata”; Doat 27, fol. 30r-v: “(...) in dicta domo Na Prous et sua vidit receptavit et eis dedit ad manducandum et bibendum et cum eis inibi comedit et bibit eosdemque alibi visitavit etiam (...) et sciebat eos esse tales et tenere opiniones Beguinorum combustorum.

⁵⁶ Doat 27, fol. 22v: “(...) multosque alios fugitivos et alios de credentia Beguinorum combustorum etiam in dicta domo sua et alibi vidit et associavit et cum eis comedit et bibit frequenter.”

⁵⁷ Doat 35, fols. 33r-34v: “Interrogatus cum quibus personis conversatus est specialiter postquam venit ad partes istas et quibus adhesit et fuit magis familiaritatis dixit quod cum Elis Castras de Biterris, et Raimunda de Squirola et Guillelma mulieribus supradictis quæ se dicte tempore infirmitatis et alias sibi servierunt cum quibus frequenter et pluries comedit bibit et stetit et conversatus est Manoscha et Brinonia.”

of the already deceased priest Peire de Tornamira, the record states how several witnesses attested to the fact that he belonged to their group, conversed with them, shared meals with them, and lived in their houses of poverty — a sort of communal dwelling — with them.⁵⁸

From a gender perspective, both men and women participated in commensality practices within the beguin network. Interestingly, despite the fact that the majority of the thirty deponents who confessed to having shared meals with other members of the group — seventeen, that is, 57% — were men, the thirteen women who did the same represent a 43%, which is significantly higher than one third, the ratio that could be expected on the basis of the gender distribution of the extant depositions. Moreover, whereas those seventeen men involved in this kind of practices were only 27% of all male deponents, as many as 40% of the women were charged on these grounds (Fig. 2). Beyond socially constructed roles that charged women with preparing and serving food, commensality data prove that women in the beguin network were not passive helpers, but fully active members of the group who sat at the table and participated in the conversation. In sum, the analysis of these instances of material support seems to indicate that the part women played in these practices was especially significant, which in turn highlights their vital role not only for the survival of the persecuted members of the community, but also for the establishment and reinforcement of social ties within the religious network.

‘Material Girls?’: Gendered Practices of Assistance and Support

Food and drinks were not the only form of material support exchanged among the members of the beguin community. The formulaic question *si dedit vel misit aliquid* inquired about virtually anything that the deponents had ever given to convicted heretics or to any other suspect. In the answers they provided to this question, victuals were closely followed by money as the main means of support in circulation through the network. However, given the Franciscan spiritual basis of this particular group, the donation and acceptance of money was not without issue, for poverty was central to the belief system of the “burned beguins.” Furthermore, the controversy on the poverty of Christ and the apostles had specifically brought to the table the matter of money, and the stance of the religious elite of the movement on this point was rather clear, at least in theory. Peire de l’Hospital, an inhabitant from Montpellier who was among the first group prosecuted in 1319 and was finally burned as a relapser in Toulouse in September 1322, declared before Bernard Gui that the pope could not allow Franciscans and Franciscan tertiaries who took

⁵⁸ Germain, “Une consultation inquisitoriale au XIV^e siècle,” 333: “qui omnes communiter asserunt et affirmant dictum Petrum presbiterum fuisse de societate Beguinorum supradictorum, et cum eis conversatum fuisse, comedisse et bibisse, et cum eisdem Beguinis hereticis in domibus Paupertatis et aliis locis moratum fuisse et cohabitasse.”

a vow of poverty to handle money, nor make them wear rich habits for this was against the precepts of the evangelical Rule of St Francis.⁵⁹

In fact, deponents sometimes singled out Judas as the only apostle who carried money, which had rather straightforward implications. Some of the testimonies were actually quite detailed in this regard. For instance, in May 1322, the cutler Peire Tort confessed to have heard some Franciscans in Narbonne preach that Christ and the apostles owned nothing; they had also said that Christ had advised the apostles not to carry gold or silver in their belts, and not to carry a pouch or a satchel, for anyone who refused to renounce their possessions could not be his disciple.⁶⁰ Peire further added that Christ had no money for him or his apostles and that he didn't use money unless under extreme necessity, but instead appointed Judas to manage and distribute it to the poor.⁶¹ As the deposition of the Franciscan tertiary Peire Calvet shows, Tort was not the only one under this assumption. According to Calvet, Christ and the apostles owned nothing; however, he also admitted to doubt on this point for he had heard that Judas carried a money pouch.⁶² This rejection of money is also confirmed by the confession of the Franciscan friar Raimon de Johan, who admitted to having money despite the fact that according to their Rule he should not possess anything, neither privately nor in common, which, furthermore, he identified as the main reason for the division within his Order.⁶³ For the members of the beguin network, this was not a matter of opinion: money and vows were not to be mixed. For instance, the shoemaker Johan Dalmau heard the well-connected Peire Trencavel say that those who took evangelical vows could not carry money, and that the pope could not dispense from said evangelical vows.⁶⁴

In practice, however, money was the most convenient means of support for the actors of the network who lived on the run once the persecution started. Money allowed them to buy whatever they needed the most, and the social extraction of many members of the

⁵⁹ Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1616: "Item quod papa non potest secundum Deum dispensare quod fratres Minores aut fratres de tercia regula sancti Francisci qui voverunt paupertatem tenere possint per se ipsos peccuniam contrectare, aut quod portent habitus magnos, latos et preciosos, qui faciendo predicta aut dispensando in predictis faceret contra regulam evangelicam, quam dicit esse regulam sancti Francisci."

⁶⁰ Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1396-98: "(...) credit quod Dominus Jhesus Christus et apostoli ejus, quamdiu in hoc mundo vixerunt, non habuerunt aliquid in proprio vel communi, quia, ut dixit, audivit predicari in Narbona per fratres Minores quod Christus precepit apostolis quod non possiderent aurum nec argentum nec es in zonis et quod non portarent sacculum neque peram et quod 'Nisi quis renunciaverit omnibus que possidet non potest esse meus discipulus'."

⁶¹ Ibid., 1398: "(...) dicentes quod Christus pro se vel pro apostolis suis non habuit loculos set distributorem peccuniarum missarum Christo constituit Judam ut distribueret pauperibus, et quod dicta peccunia Christus non fuit usus nisi pro presenti necessitate."

⁶² Ibid., 1370: "Item quod Christus et apostoli non habuerunt aliquid in proprio vel communi, et de hoc ipse dubitabat, quia audiverat dici quod Judas portabat loculos."

⁶³ Doat 27, fol. 36v: "(...) et pecuniam tenuit et tractavit licet dicant et confessus fuerit quod secundum eorum regulam nihil debent habere nec in proprio nec in comuni assenser quod finaliter et principalis causa quare suum ordinem divisi fuit."

⁶⁴ Doat 28, fol. 209r: "Item a dicto Petro Trancavelli audivit quod quicumque fecisset votum Eavngelicum non poterat portare denarios nec pecuniam aliquam et quod dominus Papa non posset dispensare in votes Evangelicis."

community certainly made it a viable option. Although the information provided by the extant depositions is most of the time quite unspecific in regard to the amount and currency of money donations, it does reveal a certain variety on both counts. As befits the period, the presence of gold coins in the testimonies of the deponents is scarce. Nevertheless, the mention of gold *agnels* and florins is especially significant given that French mints only issued a limited amount of gold coins in this period, which proves the privileged economic position of some donors.⁶⁵ The rest of the depositions providing specific information about money donations record the use of different silver coinages: *diners*, *sous tournois* and *grossos tournois*, *julhats*, and *sous* of Toulouse. The sums range from the modest 20 *diners* that Amada Orlach paid for the meal she shared with Guilhem Serraller in Aniane, to the forty *grossos tournois* that the priest Peire de Tornamira gave to the beguins with whom he had fled overseas before he made his way back home.⁶⁶

Money donations were carried out by both men and women. Most money donors were men, as follows from the higher number of male deponents, but there is no evidence to support that women were less inclined than men to procure money for the members of the community that needed it (Fig. 3). The few instances where large amounts are mentioned are connected to male donors, but the data is too scarce as to establish whether they had access to more money because of their sex, and not because of their particular status. It thus cannot be securely concluded that women were only capable of making smaller donations on account of their sex. In contrast, and despite this relative vagueness of the records, it should be noted that over 25% of the overall sample of money donors were widows, which confirms the importance of their involvement in the movement or, at the very least, highlights their visibility. As it often happens when it comes to widows, it is not always that they were only capable of acting once their husbands were gone, but rather that the actions of married women were usually subsumed under those of their husbands and only became visible once they were on their own.

As the case of Alaraxis exemplifies, the most widespread form of material support among beguins, even if somewhat less tangible than the actual exchange of goods and money, was sheltering other members of the network. These practices included not only providing

⁶⁵ Spufford, *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe*, 183. As noted above, the wealthy tertiary from Cintegabelle, Raimon d'Antusan, provided fugitive beguins with a remarkable sum: 100 silver *tournois* and fifty *sous* of Toulouse. But furthermore, two years before his deposition, that is, around 1320, Raimon had entrusted Peire Trencavel with 350 gold *diners* in *agnels* and florins, which he had paid in two instalments. The purpose of this deposit was to grant Raimon – and presumably his wife Bernarda – safe passage to Greece or Jerusalem in order to avoid the impending tribulations that would destroy the carnal Church according to the Olivian interpretation of the Apocalypse. Raimon also claimed that many other people had also put their money into Trencavel's care for that same reason (Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1350).

⁶⁶ Doat 28, fol. 193v–194r: "Item Guillermmum Serrallerii de Lodova de quo audiverat dici quod aufugerat de Lodova et quod non audebat illud reverti propter captionem Begguinorum (...) vidit in loco de Anhana et cum eo bibit et comedit vigintique denarios pro expensis solvit"; Germain, "Une consultation inquisitoriale," 335: "(...) et dictus presbiter retrocessit et dimisit eum; sed in recessu dedit sibi viginti vel quadraginta grossos turonenses albos."

a temporary safe haven for fugitives who were trying to avoid capture, but also procuring permanent dwellings for them. Several instances involved the explicit handling of money, such as settling the rent, or purchasing a house, but it was far more frequent to look for solutions that were based on the personal resources and social ties of the benefactors. Welcoming fugitives into one's home was not only a reactive measure that tried to counter the actions of inquisitors, but also a new source of social and spiritual connections that strengthened the network. Thus, men and women sheltered Franciscans and beguins with whom they were acquainted, as Alaraxis did, but these often brought along companions that were immediately accepted despite the great risk involved in doing so. Thus, for instance, the tertiary Bernard de Na Jacma received in his house a certain beguin whom he knew very well, but the man did not come alone. Travelling with him were one Franciscan apostate and one "important beguin," which put Bernard in serious danger, for he had already been captured once, had abjured all heresy, and had sworn to refrain from any further contact with the group. Be that as it may, Bernard took them in all the same.⁶⁷ In Lodève, Amada Orlach used to visit a group of beguins who were staying at the house of Guilhem Serraller. She believed them to be good men and frequently went there to listen to their words, thus establishing a connection that led her to admit before the inquisitor that had she dared to defy her husband, she would have gladly invited them to her own house.⁶⁸

It is precisely the absence of a male figure in the house that Alaraxis Biasse shared with her mother that makes their case so revealing in terms of female agency. By all accounts, Alaraxis was unmarried and her mother was most probably a widow, as any whiff of illegitimacy would have been recorded. Therefore, the decision to shelter fugitive Franciscans was theirs alone, and so were the responsibilities that came along with that decision, given that sheltering fugitives, especially for a long time, also involved providing for them, hiding their presence, and helping them escape if the situation demanded it. Moreover, Alaraxis and her mother are not the only women who displayed such a degree of resourcefulness and ability to act on their own. As a result of the interest of inquisitors in discovering the lengths to which the suspects had gone to help the members of the group, the extant depositions provide a colourful set of examples of this clandestine aspect of the movement. Berengaria Donas, the wife of a Narbonnese merchant, not only travelled to different towns delivering supplies for some of the fugitives herself, but also hid some of them in her home. When the inquisitorial officers in search of fugitives put guards at the gates of Narbonne, she came up with a plan to facilitate their escape. She led them to an enclosed vineyard of hers whose wall

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1340: "Item postquam abjuraverat quendam Beguinum quem frequenter viderat venientem ad domum ipsius cum quodam apostata et quodam Beguino qui sunt de principalibus secte Beguinorum." Although Bernard de Na Jacma was sentenced to life imprisonment during the general sermon held in Pamiers on 5 July 1322, he is also listed in the Beguin martyrology as having been burned in Toulouse on a non-specified date.

⁶⁸ Doat 28, fol. 193r-v: "(...) et in domo Guillermo Serrallerii de Lodova ubi erant eos visitavit eorumque verba frequenter audivit ipsosque bonos homines esse tunc credidit ipsosque libenter ad domum suam duxisset si propter maritum suum ausa esset."

bordered the fields outside the suburbs of Narbonne, where they remained for a whole day until they were able to climb the wall and flee under the cover of darkness.⁶⁹ Berengaria is not documented as a widow, but her husband is not mentioned at all during the proceedings, and the record refers to both the house and the vineyard as hers, in contrast to other cases in which we find expressions such as “in her and her husband’s house” – *in domo sua et dicti mariti sui*.⁷⁰ Also in Narbonne, the Rundaria sisters, Astruga and Maria, who had moved to the city and lived by themselves, sheltered the fugitive Franciscan Jacme de Riu in their house for one night.⁷¹ In Montpellier, it was in the house of a beguine, Na Bodina, that a group gathered to discuss how better to escape overseas. This group, including, among others, the aforementioned priest Peire de Tornamira and the Franciscan apostate Raimon de Johan, one of the most wanted individuals in the inquisitorial wishlist, left first for Agde, whence they travelled by boat to Barcelona, Sardinia, Trapani in Sicily, and finally Zaragoza, in Aragon.⁷²

The case of Raimon de Johan is remarkable in this regard, given that at least nine different actors of the network sheltered him in their houses for quite some time.⁷³ Indeed, according to his own testimony, Raimon spent about nine years on the run, moving from place to place over a vast area. Through this whole ordeal, he always found refuge among members of the beguin network, mostly women.⁷⁴ Thanks to the deposition of his nephew, we know that Raimon spent some time in Sauvian, where he stayed at a house that remains unnamed in the record; a house where he arrived dressed in full Franciscan garb but which he left already in disguise.⁷⁵ Everything we know about the activities of Alaraxis and her mother suggests that it would not be too much of a deductive leap to imagine that it was they who sheltered

⁶⁹ Doat 28, fols. 220v–221r: “(...) eosdem apostatas et fugitivos in domo propria receptavit et etiam occultavit sciens eos esse tales (...) Item cum quadam die servientes inquisitionis eosdem fugitivos seu eorum aliquos perquirerent et capere vellent in Narbona posuissentque insidias et excubias in singulis exitibus villæ Narbonensis iidemque apostatæ et fugitivi timentes capi nescirent per quem locum evadere possent, ipsa que loquitur hoc percepto invenit cautelam per quam eos liberavit, nam duxit eos ad quandam vineam suam clausam muris qui attingebant campos extra omnes barras villæ Narbonensis, ubi per diem latuerunt, et etiam per aliquam partem noctis, et postmodum ascendentes supra muros prout eos docuit aufugerunt.”

⁷⁰ Deposition of Raimunda Arrufat, Doat 28, fol. 210v.

⁷¹ Ibid., fol. 226r: “Item fratrem Jacobum de Rivo apostatam ab ordine minorum qui postea fuit combustus, in domo propria una nocte receptavit.”

⁷² Germain, “Une consultation inquisitoriale,” 334–35: “Finaliter dictus Petrus presbiter et ipse testis convenerunt in domo alterius beguine, vocate Na Bodina, ubi dictus Petrus portavit capellam suam et alia que portare volebat, et fuit conductum, quod ipsi duo simul recederent versus Agaten, et alias eum rebus suis incederent per stagnum; et sequenti die recesserunt insimul, et arripuerunt viam ad eundum ultra mare; et associaverunt eos multi alii beguini; et venerunt Agaten, deinde Barchinonam, deinde in Sardiniam; deinde venerunt ad civitatem de Trapena; inde venerunt ad civitatem Seragusta.”

⁷³ Raimon de Johan is listed with the rebel friars of Narbonne in Eubel, ed., *Bullarium Franciscanum*, vol. 5, 119.

⁷⁴ Deposition of Raimon de Johan, Doat 27, fols. 35r–42r.

⁷⁵ Deposition of Raimon’s nephew, also named Raimon de Johan, Doat 28, fol. 197v: “(...) mandatus per dictum avunculum suum ivit apud Salvianum ubi ipsum invenit in quadam domo quam nominat portantem habitum sui ordinis, et postmodum dimmisso dicto habitu et indutis vestibus secularibus.”

the infamous friar and helped him conceal his identity. From there Raimon went to Narbonne, via Ginestas, and back to Montréal, where he stayed at the house of the Baró family. In fact, several deponents testified as to their frequent visits to the Baró household to see the friar, to be confessed by him, and to hear him speak. All the while, it was Flors Baró, the eldest daughter of the house who spread the news that Raimon was staying with them and encouraged people to go see him.⁷⁶ He also spent some time in Carcassonne and Cintegabelle, and after that, he made his way to Montpellier where he stayed at the house of the Boneta sisters and in several other places, establishing a close relationship with many members of the beguin community of the city.⁷⁷

It is important to note that the activation of these kinds of reactive mechanisms aimed at protecting the members of the community relied upon a pre-existing social and religious network grounded in solidarities established in the decades preceding this period of persecution. That is the only explanation that can account for the massive participation of men and women in this practice. Indeed, around 60% of the deponents were charged with having sheltered and hidden fugitives in their homes or elsewhere; among these a little over 40% were women. Moreover, whereas 50% of men sheltered fugitive beguins, Franciscans, and other suspects, as many as 75% of female deponents did the same (Fig. 4).

To sum up the results of the gender analysis of the different types of material support recorded in the extant depositions, the engagement of the female actors of the beguin network in this activity was, in relative terms, higher on all accounts. Although the women interrogated regarding the “heresy of the burned Beguins’ were but a third of the total number of people brought before the inquisitors for that same reason, their actions were essential for the survival of the network, especially once the network itself was forced into clandestinity. Thus, on average, the charges brought against women usually included several instances of material support, the provision of shelter (75% of female deponents) and victuals (65%) being especially significant (Fig. 5). However, the fact that the depositions of men were less likely to include material support and generally leaned towards doctrinal and cultic aspects, should not be read as women being confined to logistic matters, but rather to the fact that they added assistance to the variety of their religious commitments.

Given the general content of the depositions, which showed that female deponents actively engaged in doctrinal exchanges, this prominence of women as far as material support goes was but an

⁷⁶ Doat 28, fol. 231r: “(...) in domo patris sui vidit fratrem Raymundum Johannis apostatam olim de ordine minorum qui erat de spiritualibus (...) diversasque personas quaesitum ivit et ad dictum fratrem Raymundum adduxit.”

⁷⁷ The deposition of Jacma Sobirana documents his presence in Carcassonne (Doat 28, fol. 212r-v), and the confession of Raimon d’Antusan places him in Cintegabelle at some point before 1322 (Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1346). As for his presence in the Boneta household, see, among others, the deposition of Alaraxis Bedoc, Doat 27, fol. 30r: “(...) Gillelmum Serrallerii fugitivum pro facto haeresis et Beguinorum combustorum et fratrem Raimundum Joannis apostatam ab ordine minorum qui tenebat ordinem illorum qui dicebantur spirituales in dicta domo Na Prou et sua vidit, receptavit, et eis dedit ad manducandum et bibendum, et cum eis inibi comedit et bibit.”

aspect of their involvement, and should not be understood as their main and only role. Both men and women took part in communal readings of vernacular translations of the writings of Peter of John Olivi, especially the *Lectura super Apocalipsim*, first censured in 1299 and officially condemned as heretical in 1326, and formed their own opinions on the matter. Just to cite but a few examples, in Cintegabelle, the married tertiary Bernarda d'Antusan had learned from the *Lectura* that Babylon, the great prostitute who rode a many-headed beast and was the mother of fornication, was to be identified with the carnal Church, and she had also attended readings of other Olivian works such as *De paupertate*.⁷⁸ Her neighbour, the widow Maria de Serra, testified at length before Bernard Gui about the mystical Antichrist and the advent of the Age of the Spirit, including her take on papal bulls and papal authority.⁷⁹ In Montpellier, as noted above, the house of the Boneta sisters was a safe space for doctrinal discussion where Na Prous, the eldest, shared her visions and many visited to talk and listen to her. In Lodève, the widow Manenta Rosa Maur kept a book that had originally belonged to a woman who was executed in Lunel in 1321 as one of the "burned beguines."⁸⁰ Finally, in Narbonne, Amoda Sepian was well acquainted with a group of beguines, later executed, all of whom openly discussed the Rule of St Francis and read Olivian books, and the aforementioned Berengaria Donas also kept an Olivian book entrusted to her by a beguine and frequently had it read to her, for presumably she could not read herself.⁸¹ Thus, although the pages above show that women were central in sustaining the beguine network, this function was neither exclusive to them nor certainly their sole purpose.

By Way of Conclusion

For inquisitors, disrupting material exchanges was a way of starving religious dissent into submission while at the same time mapping it. In tune with the old tropes of the devil aping God and heretics mimicking the attitudes of the pious and imitating the mores of true Christians, inquisitors did not regard the practices of material support in which the actors of dissident networks engaged as

⁷⁸ Pales-Gobilliard, *Le livre des sentences*, 1354: "Item aliquando audivit legi sibi et aliis Beguinis de libris fratris P. Johannis in vulgari, et specialiter de postilla ejus super Apocalipsim in qua inter cetera audivit legi de Babilone quam vocat meretricem magnam sedentem super bestiam, matrem fornicacionum, habentem ciphum aureum in manu sua plenum abhominacionibus, et inde potabat alios, et habebat multa capita et X cornua, et exponebat predictam mulierem esse ecclesiam carnalem."

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1374: "(...) dominus papa qui nunc est non debuit concedere fratribus Minoribus granaria vel cellaria, nec poterat in hoc dispensare, quia, ut dicebant, sanctus Franciscus non concessit eis."

⁸⁰ Doat 28, fol. 14r: "(...) dixit etiam si habuisse et habere unum volumen a quodam quem nominat quod fuit cuiusdam mulieris cognata sua combusta in Lunello."

⁸¹ For Amoda Sepian, see Doat 28, fol. 238r: "Item quarundam Begguinarum quas nominat combustarum et aliarum familiaritatem habuit ab eis audivit loqui de Regula fratrum minorum et legi libros aliquos in quibus Ecclesia Romana vocabatur Babilon meretrix magna." For Berengaria Donas, see Doat 28, fol. 221r: "Item a quadam Begguina unum librum de doctrina fratris Petri Johannis habuit quem frequenter legi audivit."

devotional expressions.⁸² In July 1233, during the canonization process of St Dominic that took place in Bologna, Bonaventure of Verona, the friar who acted as the last of Dominic's confessors, reported the pleasant aroma that Dominic's tomb gave off and how "men and women came to the sepulcher with candles, images, and votive offerings, saying that God had performed miracles for them or their relatives through the merits of the holy Dominic."⁸³ Almost a century later, in 1318 Narbonne, Olivi's sepulchre, in the centre of the choir of the Franciscan church of the city, was desecrated, and his remains were removed along with "everything else, from the wax figures to the cloths brought to his tomb by the hands of the simple."⁸⁴ Up to that moment, the tomb attracted crowds from all over Languedoc and beyond, who travelled to Narbonne to pay their respects.⁸⁵ Olivi, who had died in 1298, was credited with miracles, such as healing the sick, and his body was even said to give off the characteristic sweet odour emitted by the remains of saints. Both Sibil la Cazelle, a widow from Gignac, and Johan Orlach, a draper from Montpellier, confessed in

⁸² For a relevant example included in Bernard Gui's *Practica*, see Toulouse, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 388, fol. 71v: "(...) et confingunt tanquam symie quaedam alia loco ipsorum quæ quasi similia videantur" [In ape-like fashion, they have fabricated other sacraments in their stead (that of the sacraments of the Roman Church) that appear similar to these]; Doat 30, fol. 192r. For a recent and thorough analysis of the evolution of the old trope of the *species pietatis*, see Steckel, "Hypocrites! Critiques of Religious Movements and Criticism of the Church, 1050-1300."

⁸³ Lehner, ed., *Saint Dominic: Biographical Documents*; see also, David Haseldine, "Early Dominican Hagiography."

⁸⁴ Eimeric and Peña, ed., *Directorium inquisitorum*, vol. 2, 77: "Idem dominus Papa Ioannes fecit exhumari ossa dicti fratris Petri Ioannis et omnia, tam cereos imagines quam pannos, per manus simplicium ad eius tumulum deducta, Narbonae fecit publice concremari." This account is taken from the popular inquisitor's manual compiled by Nicolau Eimeric around 1376, half a century after the desecration of the tomb. However, the same episode is also reported in two contemporary works, Bernard Gui's *Practica* and Angelo Claren's *Liber chronicarum sive tribulationum ordinis minorum*, with their authors reaching remarkably different conclusions as to the perpetrators. For the *Practica*, see Toulouse, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 388, fol. 84v: "Fuit autem corpus eius inde extractum et alibi portatum et absconditum sub anno Domini millesimo trecentesimo decimo octavo sed ubi sit a pluribus dubitatur et diversi diversa circa hoc loquuntur et dicunt"; cf. Doat 30, fol. 277r. For Claren's chronicle, see Ehrle, "Die historia septem tribulationum ordinis minorum des fr. Angelus de Clarino," vol. 2, 108-155, and 249-327. On the destruction of Olivi's tomb, see *ibid.*, 129: "animose dampnaverunt doctrinam viri sancti Petri Johannis et ossibus et reliquiis eius in tenebris violato sepulcro ipsius ut tenebrarum ministri occultam iniuriam intulerunt"; and *ibid.*, 293: "exhumaverunt ossa eius et contumeliose et furibunde exterminaverunt sepulcrum et sanctitatis eius et devocionis fidelium ad ipsum oblata signa." For a more recent edition see Boccali, ed., *Liber chronicarum sive tribulationum ordinis minorum*.

⁸⁵ Analysing the same sources, Jean-Louis Biget and Louisa Burnham reach very different conclusions about the popular veneration of Olivi. Whereas Biget plays down its dissemination, Burnham emphasises its popularity among Languedocian laity. Cf. Biget, "Culte et rayonnement de Pierre Déjean Olieu en Languedoc au début du XIVe siècle," and Burnham, *So Great a Light*, 20-24. I concur with Burnham's opinion that there is "extensive evidence" supporting a widespread cult of Olivi, especially adding to the Doat sources, which both authors use, the proceedings against the Beguins of Vilafranca. In 1346, Geraldona Fuster explained how her father had gone on pilgrimage to St Peter of Montmajour, in Arles, and upon his return he described the great feast that was held in Narbonne around Olivi's tomb; see Barcelona, ADB, *Processos* 3, fol. 14v: "[...] dicendo quod a Narbona fiebat festum magnum de dicto fratre Petro Iohannis et quod gentes in magna multitudine veniebant ad eius sepulcrum, vbi eciam aportabant multas ymagines de cera magnas, in testimonium miraculorum que faciebat"; Perarnau i Espelt, "Beguins de Vilafranca del Penedès," 68.

1325 that the saint had saved their sick children, and Na Prous Boneta, recounting her visit to the tomb, claimed to have smelled the most pleasant fragrance.⁸⁶ Neither Dominic's nor Olivi's cults had been officially sanctioned when their resting places started drawing multitudes. Eventually, canonization legitimised Dominic's devotees *ex post facto*, but Olivi's would forever remain the followers of an "uncanonized saint". Whereas those men and women who had first visited Dominic's sepulchre in Bologna would be seen as pious Christians, those who prayed to Olivi's remains in Narbonne would be suspected, at the very least, of facilitating heresy. Thus, in a sort of Foucauldian turn, the line between charitable Christian devotion and illicit support was not a matter of religious experience, but an issue to be decided by those with the power to sanction; certainly not by 'gullible women' who easily mistook the two.

When it comes to mainstream expressions of medieval Christianity, it is quite normal to understand donations, foundations, and bequests to specific religious houses or churches in terms of what can be called an "economy of salvation," which was shaped not only by economy, but also by religious expectations.⁸⁷ We track the changes in devotional and religious trends through the dedication of churches, the acquisition of relics and the endowment of religious establishments by royal families, aristocracy, and other wealthy groups.⁸⁸ Likewise, the works of mercy were yet another widespread means to articulate charitable efforts. They had become a popular artistic motif and a common theme in sermons and catechisms in early

⁸⁶ Sibil la brought her daughter who suffered from scrofula to Olivi's tomb and the girl healed; see Doat 27, fol. 18r: "et quandam filiam suam quae patiebatur infirmitatem in gutture, scilicet scroellas ad sepulcrum suum duxit et curata fuerit." Johan did the same with his son; see Doat 27, fol. 25r: "quondam filium suum infirmum dicto fratri Petro sicut sancto devovit et ad eius sepulcrum portavit, credens ipsum filium fuisse sanatum per dicti fratris Petri merita quem reputabat sanctum." For Na Prous's testimony on Olivi's odour of sanctity, see Doat 27, fol. 56r-v: "quod ipsa die eadem qua ipsa fuit in Narbona supra sepulcrum dicti fratris Petri Joannis (...) maiorem fragantiam vel odorem quam unquam ipsa sensisset."

⁸⁷ The literature on this topic, which could easily take us back to the seminal Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, is too vast to properly reference here. Among recent contributions to it, see the survey of historical interpretations of charity in the Middle Ages in Davis, "The Social and Religious Meanings of Charity in Medieval Europe"; see also the more elaborate study on the connections between charity and piety that ultimately resulted in the spread of medieval hospitals in Davis, *The Medieval Economy of Salvation: Charity, Commerce, and the Rise of the Hospital*.

⁸⁸ Again, there is an abundance of literature on this topic. To cite but a few works, including some classics: Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*; for the connection between bequests funding the celebration of anniversary masses and the hopes of intercession with the divine, see the most recent edition of Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge (vers 1320 - vers 1480)*; for a variety of studies focusing on the interplay between the materiality of the cult of saints and political, religious, and economic power, see Fournié, Le Blévec, and Vincent, eds., *Corps saints et reliques dans le Midi*; for a collection of essays focusing on the role of the cult of saints in commerce across medieval western Europe, see Kelley and Turner Camp, eds., *Saints as Intercessors Between the Wealthy and the Divine: Art and Hagiography Among the Medieval Merchant Classes*.

fourteenth-century Languedoc.⁸⁹ Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned were the subject of lavish illuminations in manuscripts such as the popular *Breviari d'amor* of the Franciscan friar Matfré Ermengau,⁹⁰ and also central to Franciscan lay spirituality. However, despite all this evidence, when we turn to dissident networks, our whole perspective seems to shift and the many forms of material support among their actors end up completely detached from religious expressions, being instead perceived and understood solely through the lense of survival and contestation.

This shift is even more abrupt in the case of women, whose material contributions have been noted before, but usually as an extension of roles women adopted within the wider social framework. Women were carers, and as such it stands to reason that they would cook for, care for, dress and shelter members of their group.⁹¹ Thus, the actions of women like Alaraxis and her mother who sheltered fugitives, caring and cooking for them and even providing the clothes on their backs are rarely seen as an indication of devotion. But the fact is that they were doing far more than fulfilling neighbourly duties; like Berengaria Estorg, from Lodève, who made on her own the two-day journey to Montpellier and stayed there for a month looking after the fugitive Guilhem Serraller during his illness and serving him and another fugitive, Raimunda Rigaud;⁹² or Isabel de Bourges, who acted as a sort of assistance broker in Carcassonne, receiving money with which she bought food for the beguins imprisoned in the inquisitorial gaol.⁹³

Since the days of the seminal article by Richard Abels and Ellen Harrison on 'Cathar women', quantitative and qualitative arguments have been wielded to establish and nuance female participation in heretical movements, but always with a strong focus on their sacerdotal performance and intellectual contributions.⁹⁴ It is now necessary to look into the material role of women and to consider it not as mere logistics – vital as that was – but as an integral part of their devotional experience. Indeed, by practicing the works of mercy on those they deemed true Christians, they were actually committing to their particular brand of religious dissent and, in doing so, they were being just as subversive and challenging to Church authority as

⁸⁹ See an analysis of these practices in the region along with an edition of a thirteenth-century catechism in Limousin Occitan in Vicaire, "La place des œuvres de miséricorde dans la pastorale en Pays d'oc," 40–42.

⁹⁰ See, for instance, London, British Library, ms. Yates-Thompson 31, fol. 110v.

⁹¹ For a recent analysis of the evolution of views on women related to care from the medieval to the early modern period, see Cersovsky, "Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens?: Gendered Perceptions of Care from the Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries".

⁹² Doat 28, fol. 195r: "(...) apud Montempessulanum ivit ad visitandum Guillelmu Serrallerii de Lodova, qui dicebatur inibi egrotare (...) et cum eo et Raymunda Rigauda stetit de Lodova eis serviendo quasi per unum mensem."

⁹³ Doat 28, fol. 117r: "(...) quia sic audiverat dici ab illis duobus hominibus qui apportabant ipsi loquenti et aliis duabus sociis suis pecuniam unde dictis Begguinis in muri detentis necessaria cibaria ministrabant."

⁹⁴ Abels and Harrison, "The participation of Women in Languedocian Catharism"; Brenon, *Les femmes cathares*; Hancke, *Les Belles Hérétiques. Être femme, noble et cathare*; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy. Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530*; Shahar, *Women in a Medieval Heretical Sect. Agnes and Huguette the Waldensians*; Biller, "Women and dissent" Arnold, "Heresy and Gender in the Middle Ages."

those who read the dangerous works of Alaraxis's great-uncle; which, incidentally, many of these same women also did. The depositions of women in the inquisition records concerning the beguins of Languedoc are more likely to include instances of assistance and support than those of men, and that is not a collateral effect of inquisitorial methods, but rather a result of women's positions within the network. Evidence shows how men and women were asked similar questions, which covered everything from doctrinal content and unsanctioned cultic practices to material support.⁹⁵ Moreover, the documented depositions reveal that the breadth and depth of interrogations were certainly not gendered variables. It is then reasonable to conclude that Alaraxis, her mother, and other women like them were never seen as the masterminds behind heretical deviance, but rather as followers and enablers, and yet, as this article proves, they were central to keeping their religious network from being dismantled.

⁹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the themes that came up during the interrogation of the actors of the beguin network, see Nieto-Isabel, "Following the Heart: Relics, Martyrdom and the Relational Space among the Beguins of Languedoc," 402-08.



Figure 1. Number of goods suppliers by gender



Figure 2. Commensality practices by gender

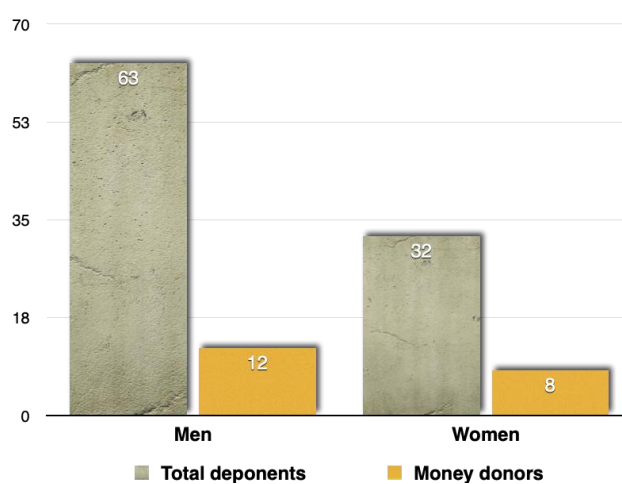


Figure 3. Number of money donors by gender

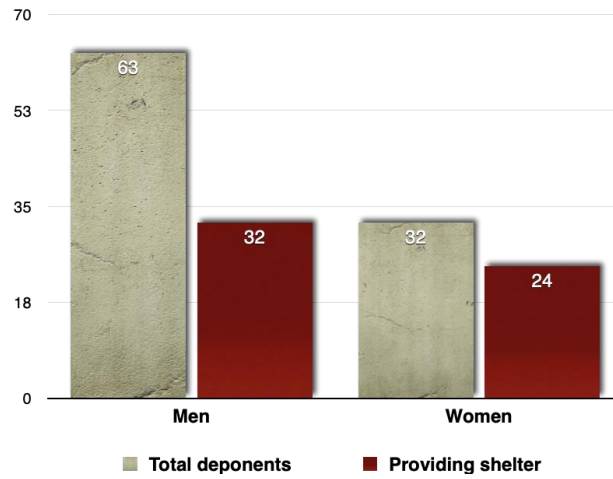


Figure 4. Sheltering practices by gender

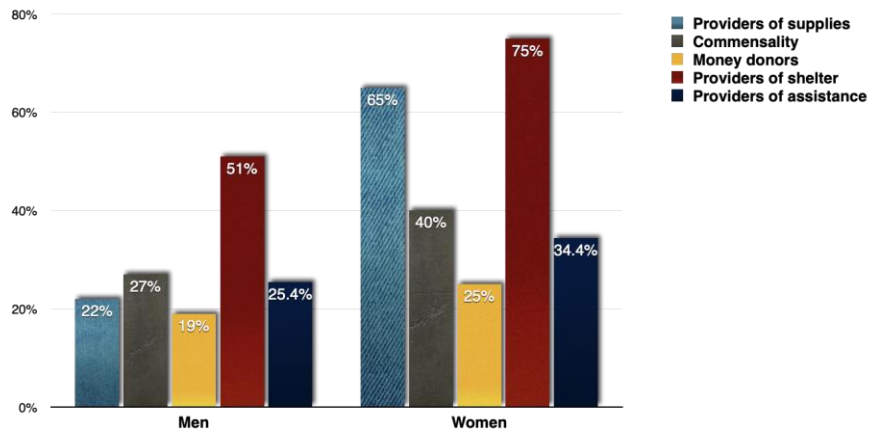


Figure 5. Percentage of depositions containing material support by type and gender

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