

Cameron Cross

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*Foucault and the Inquisition of the Languedoc*

**Part I. Foucault**

Never in any discipline have I seen scholars carry such a vigorous love-hate relationship than historians do with theory. The obvious complaint, of course, is that history is meant to describe, as accurately as possible, the actual doings and events of people and institutions; the moment theory is applied, the facts become distorted to suit the whims of some nineteenth century bedroom philosopher. However, what is history if not the chance to glimpse inside ourselves, to ask the questions, who we are and how did we come to be that way? Theory is indispensable for those who wish to see history as more than the recollection of dead people and places; it is the key to unlocking the relevance of history to people who are alive today.

While I believe that both arguments are valid in their own way, I feel that the art of history is lost without a theory to provide direction and guidance, a muse of sorts. It is indeed true that objectivity is an important virtue for the historian, but it is, of course, a physical impossibility. Any representation of history, it must be remembered, is just that -- only a representation. No matter how carefully the historian chooses his words, no matter how lofty his notions may be, the very act of writing employs a language of bias that can never be eliminated. Instead of pursuing the unattainable, it is wiser to therefore embrace our judgmental humanity and understand that our art of history is not to discover the truth, but to expose our past in ways that alter our vision of the world today. While this paper will address the application of a particular theory to a particular historical event, the general context behind it is to see how historians can apply theory to their discipline and what good can come of it.

The particular historical event that is the subject of this paper is the inquisition of Languedoc, a region of southern France in which the Cathar heresy enjoyed years of prosperity. The inquisition followed the wake of the bloody Albigensian Crusade of 1209-1229, and was designed to wrest the population back into the fold of the Catholic Church and eliminate the Cathars for good. As history has shown, it was successful. By the middle of the thirteenth century, faith in the Cathar good men and women was in decline, and three generations later was all but gone. The question that leaps to my mind is, how was this possible? Can people be so easily swayed, can heartfelt religion be destroyed so quickly? Answers to these questions can be found in many a piece of inquisition scholarship, and it is to two of these that I turn.

James B. Given of the University of California and Mark Gregory Pegg of Princeton have both recently published books on the inquisition in southern France. Given's book, [Inquisition and Medieval Society](#) (published in 1997), is a study of the inquisition led by Bernard Gui in Languedoc, covering the period between 1275 and 1325. Pegg, who published his book [The Corruption of Angles](#) in 2001, examines a single episode of the inquisition that took place in Lauragais, a specific region of Languedoc, in 1245-6 (see map). These books see the inquisition in separate ways but compliment each other nicely. Given is

concerned with “how a medieval governing institution interacted with the people it sought to control,”<sup>1</sup> or in other words, the exercise of power that took place. Pegg seems fascinated by the outcome of the inquisition, that a few dedicated friars could wipe out an entire heresy so efficiently. Both books concern themselves with the techniques employed by the inquisitors to achieve their goals, and have other methodological similarities. A comparison and contrast between these two books to illustrate the different ways they describe the inquisition is the main focus of this paper.

There is one element that has yet to be introduced, however, and that is the muse of theory. Both books are clearly guided by theoretical principles; they both seek to establish conclusions beyond the scope of their research, a point that can be applicable to our own times. I have chosen a single thinker that I will use as my guide in analyzing the two books, and that is Michel Foucault. Foucault is certainly not the only thinker to have written extensively on power in the twentieth century, but he is one of the most influential and I detect traces of his thought in both histories. This paper must then proceed in the following manner: after a brief introduction to Foucault and his ideas, it will examine various aspects of the inquisition as both books see them and speculate on how they could be written in support of or reaction against Foucault.

Michel Foucault was born in 1926 and was an active philosopher, writer, activist, and lecturer to his death in 1984. He wrote treatises on such topics as madness, medicine, archeology, the penal system, and sex. Throughout his work is a common thread of inquiry: the interaction between the individual and his society. In his studies on madness, for example, he sought to prove that the fundamental premise that had fueled the development of the sciences of psychology and psychiatry is that madness, that is, irrationality and unreason, is something unhealthy that must be corrected. In archeology too, he observed that Renaissance writers and thinkers defined and categorized the objects and ideas in their world through their resemblance to each other, while Classical philosophers of the eighteenth century sought to define relationship between two objects through observing the ways in which they were different. In this way the search for difference would isolate man from his society.

The main book that will be discussed in this study, however, is Surveiller et Punir (or “Discipline and Punish”), a treatise on the evolution of the penal system published in 1975. In this work, Foucault constructs power not as a ruler-dominating-the-ruled system, but as a discourse between the two, a much more subversive system in which power ‘invests’ in its subjects, causing them to exercise it and propagate it on their own volition. Through constant surveillance and corrective punishment, applied in every area of one’s daily life, including schools, factories, and the military, the individual becomes a docile participant in the system that has been constructed for him -- a classic example is that of a motorist at a red light at three in the morning, free to go whenever he wishes but waits because he has learned to police himself. Obviously, Foucault wrote of a modern society, and it is perhaps anachronistic to apply his theories to the Middle Ages. However, it is possible to examine the inquisition in this distinction of surveillance and see, perhaps, the roots of the modern states in the making. As Foucault pointed out, punishment before the Modern era had a different scope and thus was carried out in a very different way. Foucault notes that torture and/or public execution was the standard fare before the 1800s, which gave the enforcing power two

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<sup>1</sup> James B. Given. Inquisition and Medieval Society (Cornell, 1997), p. 3.

advantages: direct vengeance over the body of the criminal, and clear assertion of sovereign authority. Both advantages worked to instill the fear of physical harm to the audiences that gathered to watch the gruesome tortures. It was a blunt, public display of physical power, designed to keep prospective criminals at bay. As time went on, however, newer and more sophisticated methods of control were developed.

“It is the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of public punishment,” notes Foucault, “that must discourage crime.”<sup>2</sup> Although the prison reform movement of the 1800s is remembered for improving conditions within prisons, Foucault argues that that was not the intention. Instead, improved conditions, exercise, and mental treatment were all designed to rehabilitate the criminal, to discipline his mind and body until he was ready to be reinserted into society. For this reason, prisoners ceased to be shut up and left to rot, and instead became the objects of constant supervision. This technology of discipline and surveillance was applicable to the general society as a whole, and thus was ushered in a new brand of policing:

For a long time ordinary individuality -- the everyday individuality of everybody -- remained below the threshold of description. To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege. The chronicle of a man, the account of his life, his historiography, written as he lived out his life formed part of the rituals of his power. The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination.<sup>3</sup>

Foucault coined a few phrases and ideas that would resurface in the works of Given and Pegg. The first is technology: Foucault sees technology as a specific way to manipulate images, information, and ideas, in this case for the purpose of control. The second is the idea of power as a dialogue. Anytime a party seeks to dominate and control another, especially in the realm of ideas and belief, it will encounter resistance. The resistance will be very ingenious about finding weak spots in the dominator’s technologies, ways to keep its fundamental existence the same. The dominator must receive this feedback and modify his technology until it is perfected. It is therefore very important to study both the powerful and the weak in their discourse. Finally, the specific technologies of punishment, surveillance, and reform are critical in any application to the inquisition. Let us now turn to James Given, and see what happens when he takes this modern theory and applies it to the Middle Ages.

## **Part II. Given**

Foucault’s analysis of power must have been appealing to Given, for Given structures his book around the technology of power, dividing it into three sections: power as it was wielded by the inquisitors, power as it was resisted by the villagers, and finally expanding his conclusions to apply to medieval French society as a whole. This suggests that at the very minimum, Foucault influenced the way Given approached

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, trans. Alan Sheridan. Discipline and Punish (Random House, 1979), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, p. 191.

the inquisition; he gives equal study to both the oppressors and the oppressed. The first three chapters in the first section have very Foucauldian titles: *The Technology of Documentation*, *The Technology of Coercive Imprisonment*, and *The Technology of Punishment*. Each chapter deals with a specific tool the inquisition used to exercise its power, and as will be seen, Given argues that the phenomena that Foucault distinguished in the 1800s could indeed have developed centuries earlier.

The first chapter remarks on the superlative records the inquisitors used to find holes in their victim's alibis. While it might sound commonplace for us, who are used to an abundance of information, Given stresses it was an innovation of the deepest significance. Since time immemorial, the vast majority of information was kept alive through memory. It was a well-trained skill developed by members of the court, who would advise their ruler on matters of diplomacy, finance, science, and civil justice by means of the information preserved in their heads. Motivated by special circumstances, the inquisitors were among the first to not only move away from this traditional method of record-keeping, but made great advances in the preservation and cataloging of written information. Other written documents, like tax records, were meant to be used once and forgotten, but the monks of the Languedoc learned to divide text into chapters, add titles, page numbers, and alphabetical indexes, and annotate the marginalia. These careful and meticulous developments in record-keeping gave the inquisitors access to information that had written and stored years, even decades, ago.

The implications of this development are fearful. Any discrepancies in one's stories, even if they were told years apart from each other, would be noticed. It is all too easy to imagine the frightened villager on one side of the room as the inquisitor on the other side coolly marks the end of his deposition with "subject is lying." The registers, indeed, became objects of loathing more than the inquisitors themselves in some cases.<sup>4</sup> They could be used not only to point out holes in a story, but also to dredge up volatile information against threatening political enemies. As an example, Given recounts the story of Guillaume de Pezens, a *viguier* of Carcassonne, who sought to curb the inquisitor's power in the area. Looking through his archives, the local inquisitor discovered that the *viguier's* ancestors had been heretics and succeeded in expelling his adversary from office. Thus,

as Given notes, "The inquisitorial registers were thus active instruments not only of knowledge but also of coercion."<sup>5</sup> One would be hard-pressed to find a starker example of the power of knowledge. Information became a resource which could be used for both personal and political manipulation.

The next technique Given describes is the prison. The function of the prison, as described by Foucault, is to extract an individual from the mass: it "separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units."<sup>6</sup> This extraction is necessary to punish and correct the individual, and for that reason he must be stripped of all kind of contact. Given's study shows traces of this process already in development; the average prisoner was still allowed to mingle with other prisoners, and it was assumed that the tedium and expense of prison was enough to

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4 Given, p. 42.

5 Given, p. 39.

6 Foucault, p. 170.

eventually break his spirit. For those who stubbornly refused to recant their beliefs, however, a much harsher fate was in store for them. They would be locked away, well-guarded, and only visited by the prison wardens. The wardens would use every psychological technique in the book to bend his will -- the prisoner's conditions would steadily worsen as he received daily lectures on proper belief. He would be tempted with freedom and threatened with burning, and even his family would be brought in to beg him to give up.<sup>7</sup> These methods were, as far as Given is concerned, quite effective. In a thorough study of the sentences passed by the inquisition judges, he concludes that the average time it took to break a prisoner was 24.3 weeks. Given's conclusion of this chapter, quite ominous to read, seems to be haunted by the unborn spirit of Foucault, lurking the countryside of 1285:

What the inquisitors had done, and they may have been the first in medieval Europe to have done so, was to create a socially delimited space, in which they could isolate individuals from the outer world and subject them without interruption to an enforced and forcible persuasion. Such a planned and active use of imprisonment for *behavior modification* [italics mine] was possibly without parallel in medieval Europe.<sup>8</sup>

It almost seems that Given felt that Chapter 2 of his book was too extreme, because Chapter 3 nods to the fact that while traces of Foucault's nineteenth-century prison had emerged in the inquisition, it was a novelty in a still decidedly medieval world. Little thought was given to the overall management of the prisons, and while some suffered under the harshest of conditions, others enjoyed a relatively comfortable stay. In addition, there was no uniform application of corrective education.<sup>9</sup> The other punishments described in this chapter are distinctly medieval, for they all take place in the public realm: the torture, humiliation and execution Foucault describes in his introductory chapters. They included the wearing of crosses or forced pilgrimages, the confiscation of personal property, and, of course, burning at the stake. There was a purpose for punishments of this nature. Given reiterates that the prisoners were not the victims of "an expression of an outraged collective consciousness,"<sup>10</sup> but the attempt of the elite to impose their beliefs on a resistant underclass. The public nature of these punishments served as propaganda and the explicit assertion of dominance.

One of the main theses of Foucault's work is that the prison, as well as schools and the military, established systems of regulating behavior and correcting misbehavior, and this occurs only sporadically in Given's research. The inquisitors, far from being Foucauldian, were pioneers in certain techniques and technologies that would eventually become central aspects of the prison. Their innovative techniques of cataloging and cross-reference gave them an access to information unheard of in the middle ages, allowing them to manipulate and control everyone in the community. Furthermore, their use of prison instead of

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<sup>7</sup> Given, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Given, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup> Given, p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> Given, p. 78.

torture or quick execution as a form of punishment hinted at the future use of incarceration to isolate and correct the societal delinquent. These technologies, centuries ahead of their time, gave the inquisition immense power over the people of Languedoc, and while their methods were crude indeed compared to those of Foucault, they were sufficient to effectively eradicate heresy in the region.

The next section of Given's work turns to the people of Languedoc, an important move that would probably not have been attempted in histories written fifty years ago. Having established the agenda and techniques of the inquisition, Given attempts to discover how they were received and resisted by the lay population of Languedoc, dividing his study into individual resistance and collective resistance, then addressing ways in which the inquisition was manipulated to serve other ends. Foucault's influence is felt more in the intellectual approach of this section than in the terminology and vocabulary, for Foucault concerned himself mostly on the top-down application of power, content to argue that it was always resisted, but declining to specifically analyze how. The attitude towards power as a "dialectical process"<sup>11</sup> and not a one-way force is definitely Foucauldian, however, and it allows Given insight into a traditionally ignored aspect of the inquisition.

The section opens with the thesis that the twelfth century was a time of great administrative growth and sophistication, and the methods used to combat these new institutions also grew more elegant and elaborate. Given covers at length the clever use of words to escape the clutches of the inquisition, and resistance and denial quickly became so subtle that it became necessary to publish handbooks regarding the top ten evasive techniques given by those under question. The inquisition becomes a model of evolution, consisting of two parties interacting, competing, and constantly trying to out-wit the other. Resisters had a variety of responses available to them: they would attempt deception, promise to deliver a Good Man or Woman to the inquisitors if set free, play off one inquisitor against another, or simply flee. The conclusion to this chapter is very interesting, because Given draws from social analyst James C. Scott's conception of the "weapons of the weak" to define his description of the "weapons of the truly weak."<sup>12</sup> By this, he means that the people of Languedoc were completely at the mercy of the unregulated inquisition that could not have existed in the centralized modern state. Their methods of resistance, therefore, poignantly display the courage and strength of will that must have gone into their struggle and the ruthlessness the inquisitors had to have shown in order to succeed in the end.

The next chapter of Given's book moves from the individual to the group, the operation of collective resistance. Given's methodology here is particularly interesting, because it requires far more sleuthing than the previous section to understand on this complex phenomenon. With few written records left behind by the actual resistance, his main source material are the documents written by the inquisitors. The chapter begins with a table listing every riot or demonstration Given has been able to locate with an analysis of the table's implications. Given notes that public resistance seemed to peak in the 1230s and 40s and then again in the 1290s. He associates the first peak with the political unrest of the time, in which the French monarchy still had a shaky grip on the area. The opposition consisted of a united Languedocian

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11 Given, p. 91.

12 Given, p. 109.

population that consisted of many Cathars and Waldensians. By the 1290s, the inquisition and the French government had done much to squelch Catharism, and the open acts of violence were now more targeted at converted or traitorous heretics, a signal that Catharism had become “a hunted, underground church, afflicted with paranoia and declining into a self-destructive pattern of internal violence.”<sup>13</sup> Open resistance was also difficult because of the peculiarities of Catharism, which rejected the majority of worldly institutions and left it without a framework that would provide structured support. With this thought, Given examines the various frameworks that did exist in Languedoc and evaluates their effectiveness as tools of resistance. His conclusions are grim for those who wanted to resist -- out of villages, kinship ties, lordship, and towns, only towns were wealthy and organized enough to mount an effective resistance.

The final chapter of this section, *Manipulation*, investigates the ways the inquisition could be used to one’s own benefit. The topics Given covers include false testimony to punish an enemy, bribery, and the role of middle men who would play one side off the other for money or political clout. Upon identifying these markers, Given attempts to find patterns of manipulation and concludes that collective manipulation could be done by different groups than those that did collective resistance, especially factions and the kinship group. A faction was small in size, inherently unstable, informal leadership, and small and specific goals. It stands to reason that a faction might indeed achieve its ends, but only because it was interested in a single objective, rather than the destruction of the inquisition or the survival of Catharism. Families formed monopolies of communication between the townsfolk and the powerful institutions outside the town, and could exploit this situation to their benefit. This pattern was not at all unusual in the institutions of power in medieval Europe, or anywhere for that matter, Given believes. Any system that employed enough middle men was vulnerable to corruption. The aspect of the inquisition that made it distinct was that, unlike a monarchy, which was deeply tied through land and marriage to the nobility, the inquisition could function as an autonomous institution, as its only obligation was to the distant Church in Rome. Its members were hand-selected and trained members of the Dominican Order, zealous monks who were far less open to corruption than the average medieval administrator. This made the inquisition a much tougher nut to crack, and many who attempted to do so, Given notes, “despite some temporary successes, were ultimately destroyed.”<sup>14</sup>

This section of Given’s book gives us a wonderful chance to examine the results of theory applied to history. Thus far, Given had basically followed the pattern laid out by Foucault; as he examined the inquisition through his theoretical lens, he had no trouble identifying the institutions and technologies that Foucault had listed in detail. The next part of the book, however, demanded that Given break new ground, for Foucault seemed uninterested in pursuing the methods of resistance as closely as he had the methods of coercion. Ironically, the sections of this book that stand out the most in their Foucauldian influence are in his descriptions of the deterrents to resistance that the people of Languedoc faced. The punishments of the inquisitors were quite savage, for practically every one of them meant public humiliation and ostracism. Whether by imprisonment or the wearing of crosses, those that found themselves caught and punished

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<sup>13</sup> Given, p. 117.

<sup>14</sup> Given, p. 165.

would forever be social outcasts, marked and branded for life. Even those who fled, Given argues, surrendered their wealth and social status, essentially losing all that they had obtained thus far in their lives.<sup>15</sup> This has a very Foucauldian ring to it, for the punishments refer to the deconstruction of society into its elements that could then be regulated and controlled.

What remains, therefore, is Given's answer to the great problem of Foucault: within this system of prison, knowledge, isolation, and corrective discipline, how do people resist? His presentation of the ever-increasing subtlety of wordplay and false fronts is convincing, because in a society that is at the mercy of an unrestricted power such as the inquisition, physical resistance is practically impossible. Every form of resistance depended on secrecy, the ability to lie well, and the risk of losing one's property or life. For those that sought to assume an aggressive stand against the inquisition in the form of bribes, deals, threats, and manipulation, the risks became even higher, and the chances to escape unscathed remained despondently low. Given does offer a few positive examples of effective resistance to the Foucauldian model: he points out that while Catharism was destroyed, the heresy of Waldensianism managed to survive in a greatly altered state.<sup>16</sup> He also notes the pattern that suggests that organized group resistance was generally more effective than individual resistance, and if Catharism had not lent itself to a fractured society, its chances for survival would have been higher. These optimistic observations are overshadowed, however, by the eventual result of the inquisition, that is, the extermination of Catharism. If Given has correctly applied Foucault to the inquisition and found that those techniques are indeed capable of altering fundamental belief and society, the implications that we must assume for our own society are unsettling.

The final section of the book examines the social, economic, and political structures that may have influenced the success of the inquisition without any active role or presence in the consciousness of the people of the time. In other words, he examines the dividing factors in Languedocian society that made the inquisition so successful. One important distinction is the division between rich and poor, elite and low class, which rendered cooperation between the two so difficult that collaborative resistance became impossible. Parish priests and royal agents were both manipulated to serve the inquisition. The relationship between the French monarchy and the papacy is also a force that influenced the effectiveness of the inquisition. If the French king Philip IV needed papal support for his own projects, he would allow the inquisitors free reign to humor his ally. Power in the middle ages, Given concludes, was fractured, decentralized and characterized by personal sentiments and goals that made long-term success difficult. This, in fact, returns to one of Given's central observations, that the inquisition was a unique institution of the middle ages. It was relatively autonomous, internally unified, and, because it was concerned with the unusual goal of fundamentally altering the religious landscape of southern France, pioneered new technologies of documentation and punishment to achieve its goals. These methods gradually disseminated throughout the various power institutions of Europe, leading to a new kind of power, the power to influence ideas and behavior.

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<sup>15</sup> Given, p. 102.

<sup>16</sup> Given, p. 110.

The final pages of Given's book reinforces the influence of Foucault in his work. To reiterate, one of the great themes of Foucault's work in every subject he addresses is the creation of the normal, which by default establishes the abnormal. Unity, Given argues, is the one thing that can resist the technology of the inquisitors, and by simply categorizing a population into groups of "normal" and "abnormal," or perhaps more accurately, "good" and "bad," a government, and even its own people, can isolate and persecute the groups that are defined as "bad." Given traces this Foucauldian technology back to the inquisitors, who "incapacitated individuals by cutting them out of the social networks in which they were embedded. By processing people through their penitential system, they could alter their conduct."<sup>17</sup> Even more potent was the inquisitors' mastery of written documentation. Through a simple accusation, an inquisitor could alter the reality that surrounded a person -- even if acquitted a day later, he would spend the rest of his life in an aura of suspicion, a potential heretic and outcast from society.

This technology was effective in all areas of society and could be wielded by anybody. As an example, Given recounts the story of King Philip IV of France, who launched an attack on the Knights Templar in 1307. Using inquisitorial techniques, he managed to extract a "whole array of monstrous untruths: denial of the church and its sacraments, homosexual practices, demon worship, and so forth."<sup>18</sup> These confessions left the Templars in a tight spot -- either they were former heretics or relapsed heretics, and it left them with little choice but to dissolve. This event is perhaps the earliest example of the devastating techniques of the inquisition wielded by another institution of power. For Given, it is evidence of a trend that would have repercussions throughout history:

The capacity to bend the very fabric of reality and to force acceptance of that new shape was a radically new development in the political history of medieval Europe. With the inquisitors of medieval Languedoc, we are squarely on the road that will lead to some of the more reprehensible episodes of European history, including the persecution of Jews and Muslims in Spain and the great witch craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>19</sup>

This ominous statement affirms a close alliance between Given's analysis of the inquisition and power as seen by Foucault. They are tightly aligned and can even be consolidated into a single statement: the technologies of documentation, surveillance, isolation, and discipline were the result of the extraordinary efforts of the inquisitors to squelch a religious movement, and by the 1800s, these techniques had become perfected and fully integrated into all aspects of modern society.

### **Part III. Pegg**

It is time to turn to the entertaining and far less prophetic historian Mark Gregory Pegg, who wrote his book four years after Given's study. While I would not argue that it is written in response to Given,

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<sup>17</sup> Given, p. 216.

<sup>18</sup> Given, p. 214.

<sup>19</sup> Given, p. 215.

Pegg would have certainly read it and been aware of both Given and Foucault looking over his shoulder as he wrote his book. His tone is decidedly more moderate than Given's, his work is more focused, and his scope is to accurately examine the events and doings of the inquisition of 1245-6 and see how the people and inquisitors specifically interacted with each other. The region is smaller than Given's, the duration of time vastly shorter (two hundred and one days in contrast to fifty years), and he seems far less interested to apply his research to prove a theory. This gives his work a very different tone, and, more importantly, different aspects of the inquisition emerge. Perhaps the best way to illustrate his spirit of compromise between theory and history is found on page thirty-four, in which he offers a respectful nod to the theorists while expressing his reservations:

Certainly, what Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre did at Saint-Sernin went a long way in helping to formulate methods that, even though they might be reworked and rethought by later inquisitors, would eventually lead to clearly recognized regularities in procedure. Nevertheless, to jump from this to the notion that the two Dominicans were aware of the future institutional implications of their interrogations, or even that their registers were the start of a distinctive literary form, is simply a leap of faith.<sup>20</sup>

The first obvious contrast between Pegg and Given occurs when one reads the table of contents. They sound like they come out of a novel: *Four Eavesdropping Friars*, *Lies*, and to my surprise and joy, a Monty Python reference, *Not Quite Dead*. Each chapter, generally speaking, deals with a different form of interaction that took place between interrogators and villagers. The best way to deal with this book in comparison to Given, I feel, is to examine each individual chapter, pick out the thesis or theme, and compare it to Given's take on the subject. Further references to Foucault as an influence will be brought in when applicable.

Pegg opens his work with a wonderful account of the Albigensian Crusades between 1209 and 1229, the predecessor of the great inquisitions in the area. The wars were bloody and indecisive as power slipped between the hands of the local counts of Toulouse and the armies of the northern French. The final result was almost laughable in its irony, for although the count Raimond VII of Toulouse finally won, he had to surrender his daughter to the French crown, and soon after his death, the lands of Languedoc slipped into French control by default. This is important to remember (and to reiterate here in this paper) because it affects the dynamic of power that has been discussed. The people of Languedoc and the people of Paris had little to nothing in common, except perhaps a love of fine wine. Therefore, when the inquisitors came marching in with royal authority, they were seen as a group of foreigners, agents of the King and Pope who were not content to steal their land but wished to crush their religion. The next chapter is an additional shot of espresso for the tired theoretical mind, for in it Pegg sets out to place his heretics in the context that they saw themselves in. He notes their religious resemblance to the Manichees of the fifth century AD, and doubts the possibility of the influence of Eastern European heresies such as Bogomilism. He also reminds

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<sup>20</sup> Mark Gregory Pegg. *The Corruption of Angels* (Princeton, 2001), p. 34.

us that *Cathar* is a modern term; the heretics of Languedoc called themselves *Bons Omes* or *Bonas Femnas*, meaning Good Men and Good Women. This reflects how they were seen in their communities prior to the inquisition -- as pious, simple people who ought to be admired and followed, with none of the physical power over the community that a Catholic priest enjoyed. These first three chapters of the book are extremely important and reflect on the difference of priority between the two authors. Given does touch on these subjects, but is so quick to begin discussing theory of power that it is very easy to lose this critical context of time and place. Pegg, who is more concerned with the individual people in his study, is careful to define their identity before going to work.

The next chapter is a narrative taking the reader through the surviving manuscripts and folios left behind by the inquisitors. In this passage Pegg continues his pattern of describing in greater detail the physical aspects of the work, sacrificing the theoretical implications. Many of his comments agree with Given's: he remarks on the sophisticated punctuation and paragraph usage, the titles with the name of the parish on the top of the page to facilitate indexing, and the copious marginalia notes for cross-reference.<sup>21</sup> He also interjects a note of utmost significance to his readers (and in this regard he cannot be compared to Given unless for speculative purposes); that even though what remains contains thousands of testimonies and depositions, only two of the original ten books remain. This is a critical point for Pegg, because it certainly would discourage the overexertion of theory on a subject where only 20% of the data remain. This may not have been the case for Given, but returning to him after reading Pegg, a description of the texts he draws from is conspicuously absent. The criticisms of Given described in this and the last paragraph can be argued to reflect a preoccupation with theory to ignore possible contradictions. Pegg, unlike Given, is quite eager to describe just how uncertain this whole study is. The advantages of history without the *genius* of theory begin to emerge.

The next chapter of Pegg's work, marked by the distinctive title *Splitting Heads and Tearing Skin*, is about torture and the role it played. Pegg's opinion on this subject is simple and adamant: "Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre did not torture. No early inquisitor did."<sup>22</sup> He stresses the fact too that the two Dominican monks were not part of an organization that could perpetuate itself, but had to rely extensively on the fiscal support and "general tolerance"<sup>23</sup> of the nobility of Toulouse. This chapter exposes some more serious differences between the two works, for Given explicitly described one of the key advantages of the inquisition as its relative autonomy. However, in other areas of the book, he does point out how dependent the inquisitors were on outside sources of power,<sup>24</sup> and even admits that the inquisitors leave us with "an impression that may seem rather ambiguous, if not outright contradictory."<sup>25</sup> The information provided by the two books, therefore, does not contradict itself -- however, each book seeks to emphasize different qualities of that information to make its point. It is true that the inquisitors

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21 Pegg, p. 23.

22 Pegg, p. 32.

23 Pegg, p. 32.

24 Given, p. 198.

25 Given, p. 213.

were relatively mobile and autonomous in that they did not have anyone supervising their behavior, but it is just as important to acknowledge that they could not have operated whatsoever without the cooperation of the local nobility. Given's devotion to the theories of Foucault causes him to stress one aspect, while Pegg's desire to illustrate the way the inquisitors saw themselves and interacted with the people of Languedoc causes him to stress the other.

The next two chapters can be mostly ignored in terms of supplementing this analysis. The first is a wonderful evocation of the call to Saint-Sernin, in which all boys of fourteen years and older and all girls of twelve and older were summoned to the main church of Toulouse. Given does not describe this process at all, and Pegg seems to include it for his purpose of making his history more vivid. There are a few interesting notes that should be made for their own sake: The response itself was amazing: Five thousand, four hundred and seventy-one people from the Lauragais answered the call. It was a certain testament to the authority wielded by the inquisitors and their allies. It also reflects the inquisitors' attitude towards heresy. It was so widespread it had 'infected' everyone, and the only effective cure would come about if the entire population was questioned. The next chapter deals with the kinds of questions that were administered, and in comparison with those of Given's time, there is a strange discrepancy. Compare: "Did you eat or drink with the heretics or eat break blessed by them?" and "Did you hold any deposit or anything for a heretic?"<sup>26</sup> with "Do you believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son?" and "Do you believe that God is the creator of all things?"<sup>27</sup> There is a shift from questions of habit to questions of belief, and Pegg attributes this to the refinement of inquisitorial techniques as time went on.

For the sake of brevity, I must simply paraphrase Chapters Eight and Nine, because they are also vignettes that continue to personalize the inquisition of 1245-6, but do not relate very well to Given or Foucault. Chapter Eight examines the diverse testimony of the same event provided by four Franciscan monks, in which Pegg speculates that their variety may suggest a conspiracy among the monks to implicate their common enemy. Chapter Nine describes the translation process from spoken Occitan to written Latin and how it affected the recording process. Chapter Ten, *Lies*, is applicable because it deals with a particular form of resistance to the inquisition. Given and Pegg complement each other well here; the general patterns of behavior Given prescribes for the 'average villager' are confirmed in Pegg's specific examples. For instance, both books confirm that villagers would frequently bully each other into lying, for if one, just one, person let the truth slip out, it could mean the entire village could be implicated. The physical landscape of the Lauragais made lying especially risky because practically nothing went on in a village without everybody knowing about it. While the vocabulary of this chapter does not at all suggest Foucault (except for the occasional word like 'fragmentation'), the nature of the resistance seems to validate his reasoning. Rather than the townspeople organizing in a united resistance, the inquisition seems to have had the dangerous tendency to split them into quarreling groups. The punishments the inquisition levied upon its subjects inspired fear into the hearts of every villager and raised mutual distrust to an unstable level. Pegg's closing words of this chapter help to personalize the experience of the inquisition and give us a sense of the

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<sup>26</sup> Pegg, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Given, p. 94.

impact it had on daily life: “. . . Ordinary people looked at their lives and extracted, or concealed, old doings and old chatter which they knew would be used by the friar-inquisitors to constitute a true picture of heresy in the Lauragais.”<sup>28</sup>

As Pegg’s book moves along, unrestricted by the constant application of Foucault to his observations, other motifs begin to emerge that paint a picture of life in thirteenth-century Languedoc that were invisible in Given’s work. Chapters Eleven through Fourteen are all explorations into the daily life of the people of the Lauragais, and although the first read through seems banal enough, it becomes more apparent upon closer examination that Pegg is attempting to explain the great mystery of the inquisition: how was it possible for the inquisitors to transform life so dramatically? The beauty of this question is that it is another manifestation of the study of power, but it took a completely different journey to get there. Chapters Eleven and Twelve arrive at a common thesis; the inquisition began to deconstruct daily life in the search for heresy, and the inevitable result of this process was that soon *every* aspect of daily life could be heretical. A joke, a question, a religious debate implied knowledge of heresy, and knowledge led to complicity. As was demonstrated before, the inquisitors at this time were not concerned with belief. Mere interaction and conversation with heretics was dangerous, and the more Pegg describes the workings of daily life, the clearer it is that nobody could claim to be completely unaware of heresy in their community; indeed, it was so deeply ingrained in their lives that it was impossible to separate the two.

Chapter Thirteen, *Words and Nods*, returns to the experience of resistance that has been one of the main themes of this paper, but at this point in Pegg’s book, it is clear that his research methodology is different enough from Foucault’s and Given’s to give him a unique point of view. Instead of formulating theory or tracing violence patterns, Pegg simply recounts several different interactions between *bons omes* and regular townsfolk, and concludes that the Cathars grew increasingly rigid and secretive as the inquisition continued, forced to withdraw out of the society they had lived so freely in twenty years before.<sup>29</sup> This makes an encouraging comparison with Given, who arrives at a similar conception of the Cathar movement suffering a violent backlash even against its own members as it spiraled into decline. Both Pegg’s and Given’s methodology illustrates Foucault’s description of the wielder of power fracturing and dividing a community to expose its rogue members. It is perhaps the most harmonious moment between the three works. Pegg illuminates yet another example of the importance of the Cathars in Languedocian society in his chapter *Not Quite Dead*, in which he explores the role of the *bons omes* and *femnas* as village healers. The full integration of Cathar beliefs and rituals such as the moment-before-death *consolamen* with the social necessity of medicine rendered practically everyone in the society suspected of heresy. At this point in the book, Pegg’s thesis has clearly emerged from sheer descriptive language, and it offers a welcome insight into the theories of Given and Foucault. Up to now, inquisitorial technology was simply described in terms of its function, that it was effective in dividing communities, but it had never been explained why it worked. Only with Pegg’s vivid reconstruction of the heresy woven into Languedocian society do we understand its the inquisitors’ true effectiveness.

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<sup>28</sup> Pegg, p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> Pegg, p. 103.

As Pegg's work reaches its final chapters, the transformation of reality that the inquisitors effected in Languedocian society become evident. Chapter Fifteen, *One Full Dish of Chestnuts*, explores how the villagers' perceptions of their *bons omes* and *femnas* changed as the inquisition continued. As the Cathars retreated from the public village scene to a hidden existence in the woods and fields, it became easier and easier to see their former role in the village and who they interacted with the most. Furthermore, their withdrawal from society made it far easier to distinguish the villagers who simply were victims of the unavoidable interaction that took place in the village to the clearly intentional interaction that took place in the fields. This is the phenomenon of changing reality that both Given and Pegg are so fascinated with. Through their questioning, inquisitors were able to transform the "woods, fields, streams, vineyards, seasons, even the day and night" into "spaces, times, sounds, sensations of light that could no longer be taken for granted."<sup>30</sup> Every realm of life became a potential site of heresy, and with that knowledge, the villagers had to modify their lifestyle so as not to implicate themselves with the *bons omes* and *femnas*. Through Pegg, we get to see first hand the experience of those affected by this new power to warp reality that Given was so struck by.<sup>31</sup>

Pegg's chapter on punishment, *Two Yellow Crosses*, recounts the reaction of villagers to their respective penance. Ostracism and maltreatment seem to have been the case for those marked by the cross, for as Pegg notes, a "somewhat overdone confession of tolerance towards doing penance. . . [implies] how terrible the manner of some people must have been."<sup>32</sup> Additionally, he provides a poignant analysis of the fate of those who were imprisoned. There were not merely stigmatized; they were ripped from society, from family and friends. Simply put, they "ceased to exist."<sup>33</sup> The inquisitors left the Lauragais a fragmented society, the fundamental aspects of their reality permanently altered -- to such an extent that they had administered a "spiritual inoculation."<sup>34</sup> The technology described by Foucault seems to be completely applicable to this situation, for as Pegg closes this chapter, we are left with the distinct sensation that heresy had not only been wiped out for that generation, but the society itself had been trained to persecute deviants in the future. The Cathar movement was doomed to decline and disappearance; as Given simply puts it, "Societies really do forget as easily as they remember."<sup>35</sup>

Thus we are brought to the close of two studies of the inquisition, extremely diverse in their presentation and analysis of their material, but curiously arriving at similar (or at least complementary) arguments, seen from different angles. The most valuable aspect of this examination, in my opinion, is that it reveals the advantages and disadvantages of both styles of writing. Although they arrived at comparable conclusions, the influence of theory clearly causes the historian to emphasize different aspects of his research. In Given's case, his book had a much more clinical, organized feel to it. Each chapter was designed to apply a specific part of Foucault's theory to his research, and it caused him to analyze his

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30 Pegg, p. 124.

31 Given, p. 215.

32 Pegg, p. 128.

33 Pegg, p. 128.

34 Pegg, p. 129.

35 Pegg, p. 130.

sources as pieces of an overarching theme that would eventually come together in a cohesive whole. Pegg's approach was entirely different. He had no introduction to describe his inspiration, methodology, or thesis. He simply set about examining the lives of the people of the Lauragais as accurately as possible, and through reconstruction and description, trends and effects emerged on their own. I think that this approach is useful because it offers a 'purer' form of history; themes arrive to the historian, instead of the historian sifting through the evidence to prove something. However, the significance of Pegg's observations would have been far more obscure to me had I not read Given and Foucault, who are more concerned with using history to understand our own society than Pegg is. Rather than conclude on a depressing note that would arrive so easily with a summation of Foucault, let the paper stand as a nod of encouragement to the theorists and historians of the world. Given's work proves that it is possible to successfully apply theory to history to achieve a greater understanding of the subject, and while it must always be read with a grain of salt, the Givens and Peggs of the world can complement each other wonderfully in the art of history.