Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Medieval History

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jmedhist

Mendicants as victims: scale, scope and the idiom of violence

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Keywords:

Mendicant orders
Inquisition
Violence
Power
Anticlericalism
Urban conflict
Communicative action
Public sphere

A B S T R A C T

This article establishes the scale of violence perpetrated against mendicant friars in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe, and provides a list of these events in an on-line appendix. It underscores and analyses the wide variety of contexts in which such incidents took place and examines the ramifications for the history of the mendicant orders and medieval urban society generally. Violence was a subtler form of communicative action than is sometimes recognised, and the paper points to the inverse relationship between power and violence in medieval urban conflicts.

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According to the *Annales Colmarienses maiores*, on 22 October 1287 a certain Johannes, knight and resident of Colmar in Alsace, took the lives of seven Dominican friars: 'It is known that, on the 8th of the Ides of October, Johannes von Nortgasse [...] violently destroyed seven of the friars of the Order of Preachers living in that place.' Although the text is unequivocal in its indictment, the chronicle's eminent editor, Philipp Jaffé (1819–70), considered the description untenable. Alerted by the peculiar use of the verb *destruere* (to destroy, raze) or perhaps by the awkward construction of the passage, he chose to replace *de eorum* (of them) with *domorum* (of houses), thus reducing in one stroke the culprit's crime from murder to demolition.¹

The editorial intervention is palaeographically sound and syntactically sensible. There is moreover no alternative source to corroborate the *lectio difficilior*. But if Jaffé's amendment was driven by incredulity rather than grammar, as his terse footnote seems to suggest, then the impulse is undermined by numerous entries in the very same chronicle. For this brief text, probably compiled by

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¹ *Annales Colmarienses maiores*, ed. P. Jaffé (Monumenta Germaniae Historica [hereafter MGH], Scriptores 17, Hanover, 1861), 214: 'Iohannes miles, dictus de Nortgasse, residens in Columbaria, fratribus ordinis predicatorum in eodem loco residentibus, 8. Idus Octobris, septa de eorum per violentiam noscitur destruxisse' (reinstating the original text).

a Dominican friar in the fourteenth century, offers a veritable litany of open and at times violent hostility towards members of the mendicant orders. Among other incidents, the chronicler records that between 1281 and 1286, 'the Penitential Sisters were shamefully thrown out of their cloister [in Strasbourg]'; 'a friar from the Order of Preachers was seriously injured by a citizen of Strasbourg'; 'the Friars Preachers received lodgings [in the city] contrary to the objections of many'; 'during Easter several citizens of Colmar wounded [certain] slaves and violently forced them into the convent of the Minorites'; and 'Lord Heinrich, Bishop of Basel, of the Order of Friars Minor, was made Archbishop of Mainz and was gloriously received by his subjects [albeit] against their [initial] hope.'² The frequency of hostile acts against friars never escalates into a distinct routine, let alone renders more plausible the murder of seven brethren in broad daylight. Yet the *Annales Colmarienses*, alongside numerous other sources, suggests that violence afflicting friars was more common than is usually recognised.

That this violence in the middle ages has been overlooked owes much to the fact that few discrete sources document it. Yet it also reflects scholars' focus on the attacks on friars acting as inquisitors, even if these same studies point to a diversity of motivations in these assaults.³ As a corrective, this article demonstrates that although attacks on friars were an extreme (and hence limited) aspect of their orders' history, they nonetheless extended well beyond the brethren's inquisitorial activities. En route the assumption that anti-inquisitorial violence was itself a cohesive category is challenged.

The process of clarifying the scale and scope of anti-fraternal aggression offers several correctives to mendicant history. Yet the body of evidence upon which it relies also furthers our understanding of violence more generally. The attacks on friars were seldom discreet. Indeed, most assaults were open and highly communicative events staged before an attentive and increasingly sophisticated audience.⁴ This is not to argue that such aggression was always and everywhere ideologically coherent, or that its 'thick description' could offer us a privileged view of medieval society's culture and cosmology.⁵ At the same time, understanding violence as messaging reveals much about local power relations, participants' goals, and the methods deployed to achieve them.⁶ Studying anti-fraternal violence as local communicative action can shed further light on what Gerd Althoff, Daniel Smail and Carol Symes have been engaged in defining as the medieval urban public sphere,⁷ on the basis of concrete and often overlooked events.

² *Annales Colmarienses maiores*, ed. Jaffé: 'Multi ignobiles facti milites in Argentinia. Sorores poenitentes de claustruo suo se mutuo turpiter expulerunt' (208); 'Fratres ordinis predicatorum fuit a quibusdam civibus Argentinensibus debiliter vulneratus'; 'Item fratres predicatorum domum [...] pluribus contradicentibus receperunt' (212); 'Item in die pasce quidam ex civibus Columbariensibus servos sculteli vulneraverunt et eos in claustrum minorum per violentiam coegerunt'; 'Dominus Heinrichus, episcopus Basiliensis, frater ordinis minorum, factus est archiepiscopus Maguntinus et receptus est contra spem a suis subditis gloriose' (213). The author, no admirer of the Franciscans, willingly records how one of the Strasbourg brethren drowned and another was struck by lightning (219 and 221, respectively). On the relationship between the Penitential Sisters, or *Reverinnen*, and the Dominicans, see Simon Tugwell, 'Were the Magdalen nuns really turned into Dominicans in 1287?', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 76 (2006), 39–77.

³ Yves Dossat, 'Opposition des anciens ordres à l'installation des mendiants', *Les Mendiants en pays d'Occ au XIII^e siècle, Cahiers de Fanjeux*, 8 (1973), 263–306; Eugenio Dupré-Theseider, 'L'eresia a Bologna nei tempi di Dante', in: Eugenio Dupré-Theseider, *Mondo cittadino e movimenti ereticali nel medio evo (saggi)* (Bologna, 1978), 261–315, esp. 287–96; James B. Given, *Inquisition and medieval society. Power, discipline and resistance in Languedoc* (Ithaca, 1997), 111–40; Carol Lansing, *Power and purity. Cathar heresy in medieval Italy* (Oxford, 1998), 151–6.

⁴ On the medieval city as a theatre of violence see Claude Gauvard, *Violence et ordre public au moyen âge* (Paris, 2005); David Nirenberg, *Communities of violence. Persecution of minorities in the middle ages* (Princeton, 1996); Esther Cohen, "'To die a criminal for the public good': the execution ritual in late medieval Paris", in: *Law, custom and the social fabric in medieval Europe. Essays in honor of Bryce Lyon*, ed. D. Nicholas and B. Bachrach (Kalamazoo, MI, 1990), 285–304.

⁵ Clifford Geertz, 'Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture', in: Clifford Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures. Selected essays* (New York, 1973), 3–30. For a recent critique see Daniel M. Goldstein, *The spectacular city. Violence and performance in urban Bolivia* (Durham, NC, 2004).

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *On violence* (Orlando, FL, 1970); Wolfgang Sofsky, *Saggio sulla violenza*, trans. Barbara Trapani and Luca Lamberti (Turin, 1998); Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London, 2008). The ethnographic literature on urban violence is immense and often rewarding, which makes the achievement of Catherine Lutz, *Homefront. A military city and the American twentieth century* (Boston, 2001) even more outstanding.

⁷ Gerd Althoff, *Family, friends and followers. Political and social bonds in medieval Europe*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge, 2004), esp. 65–101, 136–59; Daniel Lord Smail, *The consumption of justice. Emotions, publicity, and legal culture in Marseilles, 1264–1423* (Ithaca, 2003); Carol Symes, *A common stage. Theater and public life in medieval Arras* (Ithaca, 2007), esp. 126–82.

Attacks on friars: scale

Resistance to friars is a staple of mendicant historiography, hagiography, martyrology and iconography.⁸ We would be justifiably sceptical of such tales as nostalgic reminiscences of a golden age, often advancing an internal critique of the orders' subsequent laxity or a demonstration of the brethren's selfless sacrifice; but attacks on friars are attested well beyond early mendicant authors, for instance in secular and monastic chronicles and in a variety of administrative documents, from the orders' internal correspondence, to papal and episcopal decrees and criminal court records. The present study is based on many of these sources, including more than a century of tribunal records from several Italian city-states, the geographical focus of and documentary depository for many of the mendicants' activities.⁹

There are myriad problems attending the use of data derived from court records for arguing about the nature or incidence of social deviance.¹⁰ As Trevor Dean asserts, given the particularly fragmentary nature of medieval evidence from court records, historians of criminal activity run the risk of magnifying extreme and at times bizarre cases, producing a distorted image which all but normalises deviant behaviour.¹¹ Gerald Harriss has noted how allegations of violence in medieval court records were often quasi-procedural, a necessary rhetorical gesture in bringing a suit to place it within a particular jurisdiction.¹² Both points are borne out by Chris Wickham's study of Tuscan conflict in the twelfth century, which explores the ritualistic and communicative nature of the settlement of disputes.¹³ Last, the processes for offering evidence for different categories of offence might vary substantially. Yet the submerged iceberg, whose tip we may observe in anti-mendicant violence, is probably rather modest: assaults on friars were generally too public to ignore, and although some incidents have undoubtedly been lost or actively hidden, many parties — not least among them mendicants themselves — had an interest in their documentation.

With that in mind, the picture that the sources reveal is of sustained if infrequent attacks on friars. The online [appendix](#) to this article documents a total of 84 instances across Europe between the orders'

⁸ Anonymous, *Chronica XXIV generalium ordinis minorum* (Analecta Franciscana 3, Claras Aquas [Quaracchi], 1897), 13; Lorenzo Di Fonzo, 'L'Anonimo Perugino tra le fonti francescane nel secolo XIII. Rapporti letterari e testo critico', *Miscellanea Francescana*, 72 (1972), 117–470 (16a–b, 17b–c, 19a–24b, 26a, 44b); Jordan of Giano, *Chronicle*, trans. Placid Hermann (Chicago, 1961), 4–6 and 27 (21–3 and 43, respectively); Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton, 1993), vol. 1, 260–1, 261–2; vol. 2, 229; Annette Kehnel, 'The narrative tradition of the medieval Franciscan friars on the British Isles. Introduction to the sources', *Franciscan Studies*, 63 (2005), 502. And see Isabelle Heullant-Donat, 'Dès missionnaires martyres aux martyres missionnaires: la mémoire des martyrs franciscains au sein de leur ordre aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles', in: *Écrire son histoire. Les Communautés régulières face à leur passé. Actes du 5e Colloque International du C.E.R.C.O.R., Saint-Étienne, 6–8 Novembre 2002* (Saint-Étienne, 2005), 171–84.

⁹ Civic criminal courts were surveyed for the following cities and periods: Milan, 1385, 1387, 1390–2, 1397–1400: Milan, Archivio Storico Civico, Cimeli 146–50, 175. These are the only remaining Milanese criminal-court records prior to the fifteenth century. See Ettore Verga, 'Le sentenze criminali dei podestà milanesi 1385–1429', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 16 (1901), 96–142. Lucca, 1331–3, 1357–67, 1398–1400: Lucca, Archivio di Stato, Sentenze e bandi 1–9 (the first available decades), 19–23, 25, 28, 33, 36 (an arbitrary decade after the Black Death), 93–6 (closing years of the century), 535. Bologna, 1285–94, 1325–34, 1354–67: Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Curia del podestà, Libri Inquisitionum 6–31, 115–39, 179–200, 203–4. And Florence, 1375–84: Florence Archivio di Stato, Capitano del popolo, 848, 892, 896, 947, 954, 1002bis, 1120, 1197bis, 1198, 1255, 1313, 1371, 1427, 1428, 1496, 1521, 1559. Episcopal court records were examined for Pisa, 1304–12, 1325–1400: Pisa, Archivio Arcivescovile, Atti straordinari 1, 3, 4, 6–9, 11 (the series is fragmentary), and Lucca, 1367–88: Lucca, Archivio Storico Diocesano, Tribunale Criminale 4–19, 23–30, 33–5, 37–9, 41–2, Misc. 1367–88. So far as I know, the latter are the sole surviving series among all major cities in this region for the period under examination.

¹⁰ See Robert D. Storch 'The study of urban crime', *Social History*, 4 (1979), 117–22; and *Historical research on crime and criminal justice. Reports presented to the sixth Criminological Colloquium (1983)* (Collected Studies in Criminological Research 22, Strasbourg, 1985).

¹¹ Trevor Dean, *Crime and punishment in late medieval Italy* (Cambridge, 2007), 8–9. Among extreme examples which Dean invokes to make his point is a fifteenth-century case of two Calabrian friars whose genitalia were cut off by a mob for refusing to pay a prostitute.

¹² Gerald Harriss, *Shaping the nation. England 1360–1461* (Oxford, 2005), 197.

¹³ Chris Wickham, *Courts and conflict in twelfth-century Tuscany* (Oxford, 2003). And see Smail, *The consumption of justice*.

formation in the early thirteenth century and the close of the fourteenth.¹⁴ The chronological distribution of incidents is fairly even, with the exception of the orders' formative period (before 1250), which saw a higher frequency of violence, especially in northern Italy and southern France, the focus of much inquisitorial activity. That said, and to anticipate a later discussion, anti-fraternal violence in that period did not arise exclusively from heretics; it involved burgesses, monks and clergymen even within regions targeted by the papacy as areas of heresy. The same point is apparent in the British Isles, where friars were never systematically deployed to combat heresy. Otherwise there are no major peaks in recorded assaults, with a relative scarcity of cases in the decades following the Black Death.

Most cases involved physical attacks on the brethren and/or the destruction of their property. Sixteen of these were group expulsions and there were 18 direct assaults on individual friars, 14 of which resulted in murder. As for the assailants, in 44 cases they were unidentified mobs, although on 19 occasions these can be broadly construed as anti-inquisitorial activists (but not necessarily heretics). Laymen led 22 assaults, clergymen and monks 15, and friars three. Only four cases concern female convents or individuals, all of whom were Poor Clares. While most of the assaults were directed at specific friars or convents, at least seven appear to have been incidental, for example, when a friary was robbed of its valuables or broken into to remove a criminal sheltered there.

The figures are far from precise or comprehensive, but intensive examination of court records in central and northern Italy augmented hitherto-known incidents by more than 40 per cent. Ten of the cases related above were drawn from local archives, in contrast to 21 cases already reported in print. Coincidentally, James Given's archival efforts resulted in a similar corrective, which augmented the examples of anti-inquisitorial assaults committed in Languedoc in 1233–20 by 40 per cent, from 27 to 44.¹⁵ Provisionally applying a 40 per cent increase beyond the incidents we currently know about outside Italy, where archival work has been done, yields a figure of around 110 cases.

Even making a 40 per cent increase beyond the cases collected here, the rate of incidence is relatively low: one case roughly every 20 months *somewhere* in Europe. Juxtaposing anti-mendicant violence with the broader yet comparable category of anti-clerical violence reconfirms its modest scale. In the well-documented diocese of Lucca, for example, priests were physically assaulted in at least six separate incidents during the decade 1355–64; that is, an equal number of clerics were victims in one region as were friars across the entire continent.¹⁶

Almost all incidents occurred in cities, and the more urbanised a region, the better documented the anti-fraternal violence. Most of the cases recorded for Germany, for example, took place in the more urbanised Rhineland (for example, Worms, Cologne) and nearby Strasbourg; and none of the 22 assaults documented for the British Isles and Ireland occurred outside towns. Rare exceptions include the despoiling of a Polish Dominican returning to his convent from a general chapter in Carcassonne; the kidnapping and rape of a Poor Clare en route to her convent in Arezzo; and the notorious murder of Peter Martyr, OP, on the Como–Milan road in 1252.¹⁷

Despite the strong link between religious mendicancy and urban centres,¹⁸ the decidedly urban profile of anti-fraternal violence is less obvious than it appears at first. The friars' constant wandering

¹⁴ For a discussion of friars killed outside Europe as missionaries see Heullant-Donat, 'Dès missionnaires martyres aux martyres missionnaires'. The increased recording and commemoration of mendicant deaths both within and beyond the borders of Christendom since the mid-fourteenth century are the focus of a future study by the author, 'Anti-fraternal violence as mendicant propaganda'.

¹⁵ Given, *Inquisition and medieval society*, 113–15.

¹⁶ Lucca, Archivio Storico Diocesano, *Tribunale Criminale* 8, f. 29r–v, 65r–v, 67r–v, 137r–v (1355); 11, f. 24r (1357?); 18, f. 136r (after May 1363). For a more general view of attacks on clerics, see Michael E. Goodich, *Violence and miracle in the fourteenth century* (Chicago, 1995), 38–41.

¹⁷ For the first two examples, see below, notes 106–7. Donald Prudlo, *The martyred inquisitor. The life and cult of Peter of Verona* (†1252) (Aldershot, 2008), 39–65.

¹⁸ Jacques Le Goff and others, 'Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale', *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 5 (1970), 924–87; L. Pellegrini, 'L'ordine francescano e la società cittadina in epoca bonaventuriana. Un'analisi del "Determinaciones quaestionum super regulam fratrum minorum"', *Laurentianum*, 15 (1974), 154–200; Augustine Thompson, *Cities of God. The religion of the Italian communes, 1125–1325* (University Park, PA, 2005), 419–56.

between cities would have rendered them relatively more vulnerable away from such sites, and yet that is paradoxically where they rarely ran into trouble.¹⁹ In this sense, the literary *topos* of the friar's protective garb seems to reflect more than just wishful thinking about the realities of highway travel.²⁰

How does one account for the low rate of assaults outside cities? Friars tended to travel in pairs or small groups and usually without valuables. This may have rendered them unlikely targets for robbers: the Polish friar's assailants walked away with a few coins and the recent chapter's *acta*. But the same cannot be said about heretics and their supporters (as the case of Peter Martyr attests), or highwaymen with ulterior motives (as in the Poor Clare's case). And yet aggression against friars scarcely had a pastoral backdrop. Here, to follow Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan's thesis that medieval urban violence was characterised by *familiarity* between the parties,²¹ the implication would be that the brethren were more likely to be the casualties of targeted violence than victims of circumstance. In other words, attacks on them in cities were consciously communicative acts. That is far from arguing that the message itself was always and everywhere the same, but rather to suggest that recognising the message is paramount, for it allows us to study aggression against mendicants from the perspective of identity politics without committing to a unifying context or ideology.

Attacks on friars: scope

Numerically speaking, Salimbene's lament about the many 'detractors, enemies and persecutors who gladly put a blot on the elect'²² seems unwarranted. The records fail to establish attacks on friars as a commonplace of medieval urban life. Instead, the evidence sends us in a new direction and in pursuit of two interrelated issues. First, there still was a sense in which assaulting friars and mendicant convents constituted an attempt to lay 'a blot on the elect' inasmuch as it implied the adoption of a critical stance against figures of religious authority. As the present section shows, there was a broad range of contexts and motivations for attacking friars, from xenophobia, to opportunism, to moral disenchantment.

Secondly, where the sources allow it, delving deeper into the assaults' orchestration affords a unique view of urban violence in action. Far from (being) a maddening crowd, the friars' aggressors quite often had a clear sense, not only of what they were decrying, but also of how precisely to articulate their complaints and balance genuine outrage with effective messaging. The aggressors may not have spoken with one voice, yet their actions inadvertently illuminate how medieval urban violence could work.

Strangers in a strange land: formation and settlement

Mendicant friars settled across Europe in the early thirteenth century as part of a concerted papal effort to combat heresy. Soon they met with pockets of fierce resistance, leading in France and Hungary to numerous acts of violence, and epitomised in Italy by the assassination of Peter of Verona, known to posterity as Peter Martyr (d.1252; canonised 1253).²³ The prevalence but especially fame of anti-inquisitorial violence — a category treated separately below — has helped obscure the fact that many instances of aggression against friars in this formative period were not a direct response to the brethren's activities as inquisitors, but rather

¹⁹ On contemporaries' perceptions of the highway and the uninhabited world as particularly dangerous places, see Goodich, *Violence and miracle*, 44–8, 103–15.

²⁰ See Jeanne Ancelet-Hustace, 'Les "Vitae Sororum" d'Unterlinden. Édition critique du manuscrit 508 de la Bibliothèque de Colmar', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 5 (1930), 317–509 (484); *Frater Thomae, vulgo dicti de Eccleston Tractatus de adventu fratrum minorum in Angliam*, ed. A.G. Little and J.R.H. Moorman (Manchester, 1951), 35.

²¹ Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, 'Violence, société et pouvoir à Venise (XIVe–XVIe siècles): forme et évolution de rituels urbains', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: moyen âge*, 96 (1984), 903–36. However, the implied view of modern urban violence as typically anonymous has more recently been dismissed. See *Fractured cities. Social exclusion, urban violence and contested spaces in Latin America*, ed. Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (London, 2007).

²² Salimbene, *Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia (Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis 125–125A, Turnhout, 1998–9), 177 (1:183): 'Est autem valde necessaria sapientia viris religiosus, quoniam multos habent mordaces et detractores et inimicos et persecutores, qui libenter ponunt maculam in electis.'

²³ Anti-inquisitorial violence is discussed below. On Peter, see, most recently, Prudlo, *The martyred inquisitor*.

an outcome of their status as strangers.²⁴ On the one hand, they were often culturally illiterate in foreign lands, and, on the other, their *modus operandi* exacerbated existing social and political tensions and introduced new ones. In this sense, friars can usefully be viewed as agents of disorder.²⁵

As mendicant chroniclers stressed repeatedly and not without some pride, there were many superficial grounds for rejecting the new wandering holy men.²⁶ Even when the brethren were not papal inquisitors, they still raised locals' suspicion as foreigners, spies, thieves, beggars and even heretics, especially where they were newcomers to a region. According to the *Lanercost Chronicle*, upon their arrival at Dover in 1224 the Franciscans were accused of being *exploratores* [...] *et latrones*;²⁷ and another memorable anecdote relates that when the brethren arrived in Germany they were likewise accosted by the locals, who 'asked if they were heretics, and if they had come to Germany in order to infect it just as they had perverted Lombardy'. Unfortunately, the friars' brief experience had taught them that, when in doubt, answer 'Ja'. Whereupon, as Jordan of Giano records,

some of them were beaten, others imprisoned, and still others stripped naked, taken to a public place and made a spectacle for men to mock at. Seeing therefore that they could gain no fruit in Germany, the brethren returned to Italy. From this experience, Germany came to have such a cruel reputation among the brethren, that no one but those inspired by a desire for martyrdom dared to return there.²⁸

Note the chronicler's adventurous leap from the events at hand and the use of the term 'martyrdom'. By Giano's own account, the friars were 'made a spectacle', but not even threatened with murder. The locals' action was geared towards the public humiliation of foreign heretics, not their destruction: the brethren were ultimately taken to 'a public place' to be mocked, not hanged. As in other cases below, the locals' restraint, not violence, underscored local power relations: where real power lies, extreme violence is unnecessary. Thus the Germans' 'cruel reputation among the brethren' seems to rest on campfire exaggerations, not on observation or experience, which may well be the author's broader point.²⁹

Ironically, both negative and positive receptions could be detrimental to the friars. Some of those who rushed to embrace the brethren were spurned and alienated by friends and relatives, who in turn directed their rage back at the mendicants. When Brother Solomon, the first Englishman to join the recently arrived Franciscans, came to beg for alms at his sister's house, he heard her curse the hour when she ever saw him.³⁰ Jordan of Saxony's successful recruitment of a nobleman's son led the angry father and his retinue to seek the Dominican's death.³¹ And Salimbene was originally warned by his father not to 'put any faith in these piss-in-tunics'. But to no avail; when the young Salimbene at last resolved to join the order along with his brother, their father, Guido de Adam, replied, 'Accursed son, I give you to a thousand devils, along with your brother, who is here a friar with you, assisting in your deception. I lay my everlasting curse upon your head and bequeath you to the infernal demons.'³² Given

²⁴ With the exception of Uwe Israel, *Fremde aus dem Norden. Transalpine Zuwanderer im spätmittelalterlichen Italien* (Tübingen, 2005), 81–2, 211–12, little direct attention has been given to friars traversing, challenging and reaffirming boundaries within Europe itself.

²⁵ On the symbiotic relationship between violence and disorder see Sofsky, *Saggio sulla violenza*, 3–19; Arendt, *On violence*, 56. Žižek, *Violence*, 63–88, argues for violence as a barometer of insecurity.

²⁶ See above, note 8.

²⁷ *Chronicon de Lanercost*, MCCI–MCCCXVI, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), 30.

²⁸ 'Unde accidit, ut interrogati, si essent heretici et si ad hoc venissent ut Theutonium inficerent sicut et Lombardiam prevertissent, et respondissent "ja", quidam ex ipsis plegati, quidam incarcerati et quidam denudati nudi ad choream sunt ducti et spectaculum ludecre hominibus sunt effecti. Videntes ergo fratres, quod fructum in Theutonia facere non possent, in Ytaliam sunt reversi. Ex quo facto Theutonia a fratribus tam crudelis est reputata, ut ad ipsam nisi desiderio martirii inspirati redire non auderent.' *Chronica Fratris Jordani*, ed. H. Boehmer (Paris, 1908), §5 (5–6). And see §6–7 (6–7).

²⁹ For an updated bibliography on Jordan of Giano, among many other Franciscan chroniclers, see: <<http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/index.htm>>, accessed 13 October 2009.

³⁰ Eccleston, *Tractatus de adventu fratrum minorum*, 12.

³¹ Gerardo de Fracheto, *Vitae fratrum ordinis praedicatorum*, ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert (Stuttgart, 1897), III, 14 (110–11). For a similar instance involving Jordan's activities among nuns see Marguerite Aron, *Saint Dominic's successor. The life of Blessed Jordan of Saxony, master-general of the Dominican Order, 1222–1237* (London, 1955), 81.

³² 'Dixit igitur michi pater meus: "Fili dilecte, non credas istis pissintunicis"; "Comendo te mille demonibus, maledicte fili, at fratrem tuum qui hic tecum est, qui etiam te decepit. Mea maledictio vobiscum sit perpetuo, que vos infernalibus commendet spiritibus." Salimbene, *Cronica*, 56 (ed. Scalia, 58–9).

that Guido's words expressed (according to Salimbene and others) a sentiment already shared by the wider community, including the local bishop, it is easy to see how violent responses to recruitment were only a small step away.³³

It would be rash, however, to take the friars at their word, especially since scorn was a badge of honour pinned onto many a mendicant's sleeve. Fortunately, for every Thomas of Eccleston and Salimbene there is independent corroboration of the brethren's antagonistic practices of recruitment, especially of children, which led to retaliation by their guardians. In 1288 Pope Nicholas IV recognised the important role that allegations of illicit recruiting practices in Strasbourg had played in the violent strife between local citizens and the Dominicans. In a decree seeking to end the affair, which had escalated into the blockading of the friary and the eventual ejection of the friars from the city, the pope repeated the prohibition on recruiting anyone under the age of 18 without his or her parents' express permission.³⁴ In 1326 the admission of a young boy into the Franciscan friary in Bologna, evidently against his parents' will, led to a rescue attempt and a brawl.³⁵ And on 13 July 1392 a London orphan was recruited under similarly suspicious and in any case antagonising circumstances.³⁶ Thus both literary and archival sources bear witness to one contentious aspect of the friars' routine activities which could and at times did meet with violent responses.

There were further grounds for antagonism. Among the better documented conflagrations of anti-mendicant violence were those ignited by the friars' settlement in centres of higher education such as Paris, Cambridge and Oxford.³⁷ Despite a propitious start, friars in each of these cities soon clashed with the resident faculty and the local clergy largely in response to their success in recruiting students and occasional lack of collegiality towards the corporate university body. These chapters in the friars' early history have won due attention, especially because of the outpouring of polemical literature on all sides. It is important to note that, even in the context of these heated confrontations between secular and mendicant masters, few among the former called for the eradication of the latter. William of St Amour's voice in the 1250s was indeed that of the caller in the desert.³⁸

Even in regions where friars were active as inquisitors, at least some hostility seems to have been motivated by the disequilibrium their arrival prompted, or rather its perceived threat to the status and steady income of existing ecclesiastical foundations. In the early thirteenth century the Benedictines of Prouille in Languedoc tried to regain by force the first female convent to come under Dominican rule — an event duly noted by the Dominican Bernard Gui (1261/2–1331).³⁹ Yves Dossat's study of opposition to the friars in Languedoc lists several similar cases: in 1269 Cluniacs sacked the Carmelite convent at Mézin; in 1272 a prior at Rabastens led a beating and expulsion of the local Franciscans; and in 1291 the Franciscans recently settled at Agen were assaulted by a mob gathered by a Cluniac prior, who pillaged their convent and injured three brothers.⁴⁰ Much like the initial rejection of the Augustinians and Sack Friars by the citizens of Worms in 1264,⁴¹ and the assault led by a local bishop on the newly arrived

³³ De Fracheto, *Vitae fratrum ordinis praedicatorum*, IV, 13.8, 17.3, 22.3 (186, 201, 211); Eccleston, *Tractatus de adventu fratrum minorum*, 93–6.

³⁴ '[U]t nullum de civitate predicta infra etatis sue annum octavum decimum constitutum absque parentum suorum consensu in ordine predicto recipiant, et quod ad observationem huiusmodi et quorundam aliorum articulorum similium se per suas patentes litteras obligarent.' *Urkunden der Stadt Strassburg*, ed. Wilhelm Wiegand and Aloys Schulte, 4 vols (Strasbourg, 1879–98), vol. 2, 106 (no. 150; 28 July 1288).

³⁵ Archivio di Stato di Bologna, Governo Riformagioni e Provvigioni 200, f. 312v–313r (21 February 1326).

³⁶ *Calendar of select pleas and memoranda of the City of London* [...] AD 1381–1412, ed. A.H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1932), 182.

³⁷ M.-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne, 1250–1259* (Paris, 1972); Gordon Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. An institutional and intellectual history* (New York, 1968), 34–47; A.G. Little, 'The Friars v. the University of Cambridge', *English Historical Review*, 50 (1935), 686–96.

³⁸ G. Geltner, *William of St Amour's 'De periculis novissimorum temporum': a critical edition, translation, and commentary*, (Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 8, Leuven, 2008), 18–22.

³⁹ Bernard Gui, *De fundatione et prioribus conventuum provinciarum Tolosanae et provinciae ordinis praedicatorum*, ed. P.A. Armagier (Monumenta ordinis fratrum praedicatorum historica 24, Santa Sabina [Rome], 1961), 10–11.

⁴⁰ Dossat, 'Opposition des anciens ordres à l'installation des mendiants', 286–91.

⁴¹ Kaspar Elm, 'Ausbreitung, Wiksamgeit und Ende der Provençalischen Sackbrüder (Fratres de Poenitentia Jesu Christi) in Deutschland und den Niederlanden', *Francia*, 1 (1973), 257–324 (267).

Franciscans in Orense in 1289,⁴² none of these incidents appears to have been a direct response to the friars' inquisitorial role.

Mendicant apologists such as Gui were probably interested in offsetting the hostility facing his own brethren in their role as inquisitors and in mitigating their frequent depiction as abusers of privileges. For our purposes, however, the degree to which the friars' lachrymose history may or may not be factual matters less. Instead, the majority of cases encountered so far exposes the often prosaic nature of attacks on the friars. It is difficult to discern an ideology of Williamine anti-fraternalism among Cluniacs eager to maintain their estate, local residents wary of supporting a band of scruffy foreigners, or parents struggling to direct their children's destiny.

The abuse of privileges

Despite some resistance, the friars' early success was meteoric. In less than 60 years of activity they established over a thousand convents across Europe — a number that had increased more than fourfold by the early sixteenth century.⁴³ The mendicants' popularity reflected their broad appeal, especially in urban centres.⁴⁴ Such a swift spread was also aided by a number of papal dispensations to administer certain sacraments and facilitate their preaching activities. It was these universal privileges (alongside others, more local by nature), however, that brought the friars into bitter confrontation with the clergy, cloistered monks and civic authorities, who accused them of hypocrisy and of abusing their status. The charges' rhetorical force — as William of St Amour was well aware — derived from the juxtaposition of the brethren's self-professed humility and their alleged arrogance. If, in the eyes of some, the habit did not make the monk, in the eyes of others, special privileges undermined the friars' original allure.

Several incidents described in the previous section may overlap with the present category of abuse-related aggression, but the records do not always enable a neat distinction between the two. Certainly the friars' relative independence from local bishops and, in the case of academic towns, the university's central institutions, won them some staunch enemies. Yet incidents such as those unfolding at Colmar, cited at the start of this article, can be more directly linked to the friars' real or perceived abuse of privileges.⁴⁵ A similar case in point occurred in nearby Strasbourg in 1283, when the local mayor and council sought to curb the mendicants' ability to receive bequests and required parental consent for oblates entering the order under the age of 18. The local Franciscans decided to comply, albeit grudgingly. The Dominicans, however, dragged their feet. In early May 1287 several residents, claiming to be backed by the city's magistrates, decided to take matters into their own hands.

What directly triggered their action remains unknown, yet several accounts combine to convey a vivid picture of what ensued. In an urgent letter to the civic leaders of Strasbourg the bishop of Tusculum (Frascati) and papal legate to the region fulminated against their actions:

You violently invaded the houses of those [Dominican] friars with hatchets and horrible cries, breaking the door of that house and terrifying the besieged brethren with many other injuries; and, what is more dreadful, as it is said, you locked those men up completely, lest any of the faithful approach them, and no one was allowed to leave.⁴⁶

⁴² *Les Registres de Nicholas IV (1288–1291)*, ed. E. Langlois (Paris, 1886–1905), 1281 (261–2).

⁴³ Richard W. Emery, *The friars in medieval France. A catalogue of French mendicant convents, 1200–1550* (New York, 1962), 1–17; John B. Freed, *The friars and German society in the thirteenth century* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), 22–3; David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses. England and Wales* (London, 1971), 492 (Table H); Ian B. Cowan and David E. Easson, *Medieval religious houses. Scotland*, 2nd edn (London, 1976), 114–42 and 152–5; Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses. Ireland* (London, 1970), 208–305 and 307–26. John R. H. Moorman, *Medieval Franciscan houses* (St Bonaventure, NY, 1983), ix, claims that by 1517 there were around 4500 houses spread from Beijing to Cuba.

⁴⁴ Lester K. Little, *Religious poverty and the profit economy in medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1983); and see above, note 18.

⁴⁵ See *Ungedruckte Dominikanerbriefe des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Heinrich Finke (Paderborn, 1891), 36–41; and Sandrine Turck, *Les Dominicaines à Strasbourg. Entre prêche, prière et mendicité (1224–1429)* (Strasbourg, 2002), 39–45.

⁴⁶ 'Violenter domos ipsorum fratrum cum securibus et horrendis clamoribus invasistis frangendo ipsius domus ostia aliasque fratribus ipsis multiplices injurias orrogando et, quod est immanius, ipsos, ut dicitur, undique reclusistis, ne ad ipsos pateat fidelibus accessus et eis omnino prohibeatur egressus.' *Urkunden der Stadt Strassburg*, ed. Wiegend and Schulte, vol. 2, 70 (no. 114, 14 May 1287).

Later that month, Bishop Heinrich of Regensburg, the Dominicans' protector in Germany, added several details in recounting how the Strasbourg laity

revolted against those poor and unarmed [friars] in an uproar, and with an indiscriminate hand invaded their homes and workshops with hatchets; then, savagely tearing up [the convent from within], the men struck terror with such a lewd rage of their fury, that all alike thought they [the friars] would lose their lives. Nor were the men satisfied until they had sealed the broken and open doors with strong wooden beams, so that they could not serve as exits, thereby reducing the friars' house to a prison.⁴⁷

Both authors sought to depict the aggressors as a crazed crowd. Yet the hatchets they wielded were only partly destructive, and mostly constructive. It was not the impious threat of death but rather the forced cloistering of the friars which emerges from these texts as the citizens' essential act: the humbling of those who should be professionally humble, the external disciplining of those who ought to inspire Christian perfection. From this perspective, raw violence or its threat dissolves to reveal an eloquent critique, not untouched by irony, of the brethren's conduct. It demonstrates yet again how the absence of power, and not its presence, can lead to extreme violence.

Such airing of grievances was not an isolated event. Envy, alarm and measured rage were common responses, especially among the clergy, to the friars' increasing popularity and material success. The cup was brimming with allegations brought forward by those disaffected by the brethren's disproportionate power and privilege.⁴⁸ Thus, even by the mid-thirteenth century, Federico Visconti, Archbishop of Pisa, had felt compelled to remind his flock of the friars' unique contribution to urban spiritual welfare.⁴⁹ His concerns were justified and timely; less than three generations after the friars' advent, and despite great initial enthusiasm, many bishops found it increasingly difficult to show emphatic support for the brethren and rise above the endless litigation over burial rights, tithes, preaching zones and confessional jurisdictions, which increasingly demanded papal intervention. The sinister scenes of corpses snatched and smuggled at night from mendicant to collegiate churches and vice versa,⁵⁰ the periodic expulsions of friars from diverse cities,⁵¹ and other instances of aggression,⁵² all speak volumes of the friars' overplaying their hand in conservative environments.⁵³

⁴⁷ 'Contra ipsos pauperes et inermes tumultu et manu hostili temere insurrexerunt ac portas domus sue et officinarum hostia securibus invaserunt, [interna] quoque ferociter lacerantes sic fuoris sui inprudica vehementia terruerunt, quod vitam suam perdidisse omnes pariter putaverunt, nec hiis contenti omnes portas fractas et apertis sic tabulis ligneis et fortibus obstruxerunt, quod ipsis egredi non valentibus ita quod domus eorum in carcerem est redacta.' *Urkunden der Stadt Strassburg*, ed. Wiegend and Schulte, vol. 2, 74 (no. 118). Heinrich names 15 men and 16 *magistri et consules* who condoned or participated in the attack.

⁴⁸ Palémon Glorieux, 'Prélats français contre religieux mendiants. Autour de la bulle "Ad fructus uberes" (1281–1290)', *Revue de l'histoire de l'Église de France*, 11 (1925), 309–31, 471, 95; Jean L. Copeland, 'The relations between the secular clergy and the mendicant friars in England during the century after the issue of the bull *Super Cathedram* (1300)' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1937); Luigi Pellegrini, 'Mendicanti e parroci: coesistenza e conflitti di due strutture organizzative della "cura animarum"', in: *Francescanesimo e vita religiosa dei laici nel '200. Atti dell'VIII Convegno Internazionale (Assisi, 16–18 ottobre 1980)* (Assisi, 1981), 129–67.

⁴⁹ Alexander Murray, 'Archbishop and mendicants in thirteenth-century Pisa', in: *Bettelorden und Wirksamkeit der Bettelorden in den städtischen Gesellschaft*, ed. Kaspar Elm (Berlin, 1981), 19–75. And see *Les Sermons et la visite pastorale de Federico Visconti, archevêque de Pisa (1253–1277)* ed. Nicole Bériou and others (Rome, 2001).

⁵⁰ *Materials for the history of the Franciscan province of Ireland, AD 1230–1450*, ed. E.B. FitzMaurice and A.G. Little (British Society of Franciscan Studies 9, Manchester, 1920), 91, 104–5; *Carte dell'Archivio Arcivescovile di Pisa, Fondo Luoghi Vari*, ed. Luigina Carratori Scolaro and others, 3 vols (Pisa, 1988–9), vol. 3, 8–82 (nos 4–20); *Le pergamene del convento di S. Francesco in Lucca (secc. XII–XIX)*, ed. Vito Tirelli and Matilde Tirelli Carli (Rome, 1993), nos 75–81, 83–99, 101, 103–13; Peter Linehan, *The ladies of Zamora* (Manchester, 1997), 140; Antonia Gransden, 'A fourteenth-century chronicle from Grey Friars at Lynn', *English Historical Review*, 72 (1957), 270–8.

⁵¹ Nicholas Glassberger, *Chronica* (Analecta Franciscana 2, Claras Aquas [Quaracchi], 1887), 159.

⁵² *Calendar of patent rolls of the reign of Edward I, 1301–1307*, 4 vols (London, 1893–1901), vol. 3, 79 (Exeter, 1301).

⁵³ Nor were the friars oblivious to the mounting claims. See, for instance, the anonymous treatise 'Quedam dubia apud iuvenes', now part of a Franciscan miscellany in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, P25, f. 208r–214r.

Military and political targets

Individual friars and mendicant houses were scarred by violent struggles — local or regional — which erupted across Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Whether during the prolonged border disputes between England and Scotland, in the factional strife between the papal and imperial parties throughout Italy and Germany, or in the Peasants' Revolt converging on London in 1381 — the brethren were threatened, beaten, abducted, robbed, expelled and even killed; their convents seized, sacked and occasionally razed and burnt. For our purposes, however, it is essential to establish, wherever possible, whether friars were direct targets or innocent bystanders, whether their injury was the result of an *ad hominem*, *ad fratrem* or an *ad ordinem* assault, and in any case what were the assailants' original goals and motivations.

Mendicant chroniclers boasted how one convent or another belonging to their order was spared the cruel fate that befell laymen or even other monasteries.⁵⁴ But from a military perspective, friaries were by and large occasional victims. It was not the mendicants' ideology or affiliation but their convents' wealth, location and defensive potential which rendered them likely objectives of invading armies and even tactical victims of besieged cities. In 1365, for instance, the commune of Vivero in north-western Spain agreed to finance repairs to the local Dominican convent, damaged by the town's preparations for battle.⁵⁵ During a concerted English and Welsh attack on Scotland in 1335 a number of sailors from Newcastle plundered Dundee and burned the local Franciscan convent, killing at least one friar in the process. The seamen's opportunism (and even perhaps irony) is confirmed by the fact that they later sold the convent's confiscated bell to none other than the Dominicans of their native town.⁵⁶ On other occasions mendicant convents were altogether spared, either individually or along with other monastic houses, although at times the resident friars were replaced with brethren belonging to the triumphant side. Thus when Edward III ejected the Scottish Augustinians from Berwick in 1333 he installed English friars in their stead, a policy which he repeated after removing French Augustinians from Calais in 1347.⁵⁷

The mendicants' high public profile — notably as royal and princely almoners, confessors and administrators⁵⁸ — meant that they were prone to becoming embroiled in political strife, which in turn increased their vulnerability. In 1381, John of Gaunt's physician, William of Appleton, OFM, was killed by insurgents during the Peasants' Revolt for his alleged complicity in his master's failed leadership.⁵⁹ Later that year residents of Cambridge broke into the local Carmelite convent and proceeded to burn some of the friars' manuscripts in the market square, citing somewhat ironically the brethren's role in stirring up the same revolt.⁶⁰ And a similar fate befell both the Dominicans and Franciscans of York.⁶¹ Given the inconsistency of the allegations, an element of scapegoating seems to have been involved.

In most documented cases, however, rather than being (rightly or wrongly) identified with particular factions, it seems that the friars' ubiquity and their convents' accessibility placed them in the line of fire. Thus, again in 1381 London, a mob pursuing some resident Flemings, who were especially targeted during the revolt, invaded and damaged the Augustinian convent, which the latter had entered for safety.⁶² The pattern of collateral damage is repeated at different times and places: in 1276

⁵⁴ *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 246; *Die Chronik Johannis von Winterthur*, ed. F. Baethgen (MGH, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, new series 3, Berlin, 1924), 11–12.

⁵⁵ Santa Sabina, Rome, Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum, XIV, Lib. III, f. 158v–161r (1 November 1356). And see *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 172, 173–5; *Materials for the history of the Franciscan province of Ireland*, ed. FitzMaurice and Little, 95.

⁵⁶ *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 282.

⁵⁷ Frances Andrews, *The other friars. Carmelite, Augustinian, Sack and Pied Friars in the middle ages* (London, 2006), 103. According to the *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 275, the departing Scottish friars despoiled their incoming English brethren of their books, chalices and vestments.

⁵⁸ William Chester Jordan, 'The case of Saint Louis', *Viator*, 19 (1988), 209–17; Xavier De La Salle, *Le Service des âmes à la cour. Confesseurs et aumôniers des rois de France au XIIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris, 1995).

⁵⁹ Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey Brereton, rev. edn (London, 1978), 220; *The Westminster Chronicle, 1381–1394*, ed. and trans. L.C. Hector and Barbara F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982), 6.

⁶⁰ Andrews, *The other friars*, 62–4.

⁶¹ Christian D. Liddy, 'Urban conflict in late fourteenth-century England: the case of York in 1380–1381', *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003), 1–32 at 25 and 29.

⁶² Jens Röhrkasten, *The mendicant houses of medieval London, 1212–1539* (Münster, 2004), 290–2.

a priest seeking refuge at the Franciscan convent in Nice was assaulted there;⁶³ in 1299 residents of Ludlow violently broke into the local Augustinian friary and seized another asylum seeker, John le Berner;⁶⁴ in 1345 a Lombard residing in London was likewise followed by an angry mob into the Augustinian convent;⁶⁵ and in 1362 a Pisan criminal on the run, slipping into the local Dominican convent under the pretext of illness, precipitated a brutal sacking by the pursuing party.⁶⁶ As in military affairs, so in these instances, friars were probably the victims of circumstance, not its target. Either way, it seems that neither the friars' habit nor their popular convents offered full protection.⁶⁷

Unlike the unanticipated consequences of the accessibility of friaries, the brethren's involvement in high politics exposed them more directly to the winds of change. According to the continuator of the *Westminster Chronicle*, in 1384 a Carmelite confessor, who may have been mentally ill, implicated members of Richard II's court in a plot against the king. Deemed reliable, the friar was rushed off for safekeeping, but the carriage was seized and its secret human cargo brutally tortured. The Carmelite died of his severe injuries within days, never disclosing his source of information.⁶⁸ The following year, an English Franciscan described by the same chronicler as 'a decent man but a manifest traitor to the kingdom' (*decens persona set proditor regni manifestus*), was intercepted carrying letters of credence from John of Vienne to Charles VI of France (1380–1422). He was imprisoned in the Tower of London and tortured to death.⁶⁹ The continuity of this trend into the early fifteenth century convinced Eamon Duffy to accept that the Minorites' political affinities under Henry IV (1399–1413) led to 'more Franciscan friars [being] executed for preaching against Lancastrian dynastic usurpation than Lollards were burned for heresy'.⁷⁰

So much for the British Isles: on the continent, tensions between the competing claims of popes and emperors were paramount in shaping the friars' political fortunes. Most friars, most of the time, stood squarely on the papacy's side and were accordingly prone to incurring imperial wrath: the Franciscans in Reggio, Modena and Cremona were ejected from these cities in 1249 for supporting Innocent IV against Frederick II;⁷¹ their Parisian brethren were similarly expelled from the Capetian capital in 1303 for their loyalty to Boniface VIII over Philip IV;⁷² and, less than a generation later, Dominicans throughout Germany were ordered to leave their convents after lending support to John XXII against Louis IV of Bavaria.⁷³ Conversely, a number of high-profile Franciscan dissenters found refuge in Louis' court as their brethren were violently repressed by the pope from 1318.⁷⁴

Tensions between local needs and the friars' strong links to the papacy continued to influence the orders' ability to carry out their mission in diverse and at time adverse political climates. Things would become only more complicated for them as their new recruits were increasingly drawn from local towns or their surrounding countryside, men and women who could not be reasonably expected to remain aloof from local politics, often a raw clash between family networks of patronage.⁷⁵

⁶³ *Majus chronicon Lemovicense a Petro Coral et aliis conscriptum*, in: *Recueil des historiens de Gaules et de la France*, ed. M. Bouquet and others, 24 vols (Paris, 1738–1904), vol. 21, 788.

⁶⁴ *The register of Richard de Swinfield, bishop of Hereford (AD 1283–1317)*, ed. W.W. Capes (Canterbury and York Society 6, London, 1909), 359.

⁶⁵ Röhrkasten, *Mendicant houses of medieval London*, 290–2.

⁶⁶ Pisa, *Archivio Arcivescovile*, *Atti straordinari* 8, f. 80r–80v (14 February 1362).

⁶⁷ See Dino Compagni, *Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne' tempi suoi*, ed. Isidoro Del Lungo (Florence, 1889), 151.

⁶⁸ *Westminster Chronicle*, 66–81.

⁶⁹ *Westminster Chronicle*, 136.

⁷⁰ Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars. Traditional religion in England, c.1400–c.1580*, 2nd edn (New Haven, 2005), xxiii. Duffy's statement is uncorroborated, but see *Continuatio Eulogii in Eulogium (historiarum sive temporis)*, ed. F. Haydon, 3 vols (Rolls Series 9, London, 1858–63), vol. 3, 389; *The Chronicle of Adam of Usk, 1377–1421*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford, 1997), 175; and Caroline Barron, 'The deposition of Richard II', in: *Politics and crisis in fourteenth-century England*, ed. John Taylor and Wendy Childs (Gloucester, 1990), 132–49.

⁷¹ Salimbene, *Cronica*, 33 (ed. Scalia, 502).

⁷² Michael Robson, *The Franciscans in the middle ages* (London, 2006), 144.

⁷³ Galvano de La Flamma, *Cronica ordinis praedicatorum ab anno 1170 usque ad 1333*, ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert (Rome, 1897), 22.

⁷⁴ For the emperor's opportunism in this case see Hans-Joachim Schmidt, 'Povertà e politica. I frati degli ordini mendicanti alla corte imperiale nel XIV secolo', in: *Ordini religiosi e società politica in Italia e Germania nei secoli XIV e XV*, ed. Giorgio Chittolini and Kaspar Elm (Bologna, 2001), 373–417.

⁷⁵ Jacques Heers, *Family clans in the middle ages. A study of political and social structures in urban areas*, trans. Barry Herbert (Amsterdam, 1977).

Anti-inquisitorial violence

Mendicants are easy to detect among the victims of heretics and their supporters.⁷⁶ The frequency of such aggression is not simply an over-representation in the extant documents, though a higher survival rate of inquisitorial records — often produced by friars — certainly plays an important role. Rather, it is a reflection of the extreme feelings and high stakes underpinning the friars' activities as papal inquisitors and those directing the strategies of resistance employed by religious dissidents. Those questioned, threatened and tortured by inquisitors in Languedoc, Lombardy and elsewhere stood to lose their lives, if not their souls. It is therefore easy to understand locals' recourse to violence against the chief agents of a new ecclesiastical order, one which could moreover spell their own demise. It is yet another illustration of how violence marks the absence of power or its serious threat, rather than its abuse.

Though not uncommon, anti-inquisitorial violence runs the risk of being the single most over-rated aspect of medieval anti-fraternalism. For instance, it is often unclear if it was religious mendicancy, or rather new practices that were imposed against which heretics and their aides were protesting. Local residents may have targeted friars for what they symbolised, namely papal or royal authoritarianism. Indeed, on several occasions in the early thirteenth century such tension pitted Dominican inquisitors as papal representatives against local residents and their *Franciscan* allies, in whose convents the latter sought and found a safe haven.⁷⁷ Further, among medieval Dominican historians, inquisitorial activities were routinely glossed over and marginalised; in the words of one recent scholar, Dominican inquisitors became 'strangers to their own order', men whose excessive power and worldliness provoked 'hesitation on the part of some and troubling silences among others'.⁷⁸ Thus, anti-inquisitorial violence is an elusive indicator of anti-fraternal sentiments.

To illustrate the diversity and even ambiguity of violence employed against friars as inquisitors let us examine two related cases from northern Italy. According to the anonymous *Chronicon Parmense*, on 13 October 1279, a domestic servant by the name of Todescha was awaiting her execution. She was convicted as a heretic by the local Dominican inquisitor as an accomplice of her mistress, Oliva de Fredulfi, herself a confessed heretic sentenced to a similar fate. Todescha's demise, then, seemed inevitable when, to the author's evident dismay,

certain evil men, driven by a diabolical impulse, ran to the lodgings of the Friars Preachers, entered them forcefully and looted the place, striking and injuring many of the brethren, and killing a certain friar by the name of Jacopo de Ferrara, who was an aged man and a virgin (as it was said) and who was blind and a member of the order for over 40 years. And these incidents could not be stopped by [any] good men.⁷⁹

As in the description of the Strasbourg incident, here too the chronicler is at pains to emphasise the crowd's savagery. True, unlike their German contemporaries, the Parmese chased the Dominicans out of the city. But the supposed acme of their brutality, the slaying of a blind, sexually pure, old friar could have been merely a case, however unfortunate, of collateral damage: as they ransacked the friary, only those who blindly rather than heroically stood in their way were hurt. No real obstacle presented itself had they truly wished to slay some of the brethren. No real obstacle, that is, except for their desire to communicate being in control of the situation — of being in power — by exercising and signalling their capacity for violence through its restraint.

⁷⁶ Henry Charles Lea, *A history of the inquisition in the middle ages*, 3 vols (New York, 1906), vol. 2, 12–14, 16, 58–9, 214–18, 293–4.

⁷⁷ Given, *Inquisition and medieval society*, 131–9.

⁷⁸ Laurent Albaret, 'Inquisitio heretice pravitatis. L'inquisition dominicaine dans le midi de la France aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles ou la première inquisition pontificale', *Praedicatores, inquisitores I. The Dominicans and the medieval Inquisition. Acts of the 1st international seminar on the Dominicans and the Inquisition*, 23–25 February 2002, (Rome, 2004), 421–46 (440).

⁷⁹ Anonymous, *Chronicon Parmense ab anno MXXXVII usque ad annum MCCCXXXVIII*, ed. Giuliano Bonazzi (*Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* 9:ix, Città di Castello, 1902), 35: 'tamquam heretica [...] quidam mali homines, instintu diabolico instigati, cucurerunt ad domos fratrum predicatorum et ipsas per forciam intraverunt et expoliaverunt, et multos ex fratribus percusserunt et vulneraverunt, et quemdam nomine fratrem Jacobum de Ferariis interfecerunt, qui erat homo annosus et virgo, ut dicebatur, et qui non videbat et quo steterat in ordine per xl annos et plus; et predicta prohiberi non potuerunt per bonos homines.'

The chronicler was also at pains to restrict the deed's popular appeal by demonstrating the city magistrates' commitment to the Dominicans' safety and to bringing the culprits to justice. All to no avail, however, for the brethren left Parma, marched to Florence, and there convinced the resident papal legate to place the city under interdict. Curiously, the well-intentioned Parmese, despite profuse apologies, a pledge to finance the friary's reconstruction and the swift punishment of the original assailants, failed to obviate the decree. More curiously still, it took the legate fully eight years to lift the interdict, finally enabling the Dominicans to return to their convent in February 1287.⁸⁰

The legate's implied tenacity hardly explains the lag if indeed the violence was perpetrated by a handful of hot-heads protesting the inquisitor's verdict of guilt by association. Was the chronicler misrepresenting the event by narrowing its scope? In other words, could Todescha's dubious conviction have merely triggered rather than galvanised a broader resistance to the inquisitors' presence or perhaps even to that of the friars more generally? Or were the crowd's motivations entirely different: material gain, the restoration of a humbled civic pride, a gesture at disorder and its threat? Unfortunately, local archives offer us no further clues as to the raiders' intentions beyond the traces of their violent behaviour. The only other contemporary mention of the event is a brief paragraph in Salimbene's chronicle, which subtly challenges the inquisitor's judgement, yet avoids entering into any detail.⁸¹

Another case further underscores the ambiguity surrounding anti-inquisitorial violence. It concerns a somewhat later incident in Bologna, yet one envisaged, according to one participant, as an attempt to expel the local Dominicans 'as was done in Parma'⁸² — an explicit reference to the consequences of Todescha's case. On 13 May 1299, a crowd gathered at Bologna to witness the burning of Giuliano and Bompietro, two convicted heretics, became outraged when the Dominican inquisitors refused to allow one of the condemned men to confess his sins and die a reconciled Christian. The uproar nearly turned into a mob-assault on the friars, but it was eventually quelled; the inquisitors left the scene unharmed and continued to operate in the city. Indeed, within a few weeks their leader, Guido da Vicenza, called on anyone who may have witnessed the scene to volunteer information.

The Bolognese came forth in droves to repeat what they said, but mostly what 'they overheard.' Their depositions comprise a unique survey of attitudes toward inquisitors, and they also preserve some of the private and collective concerns contemporaries had about the friars' conduct in general. The confessions attest not only the outrage which followed the inquisitors' denial of the chance for one of the condemned to die reconciled to the Church; they also disclose the friars' normative shortcomings.

Thus Niccolò, son of Guido de Bonromeo of San Bartolo, claimed that while waiting for the burning he heard it said 'that if the said Giuliano and Bompietro had had 40 lire for bribing [the inquisitors], what had happened to them would not have happened.'⁸³ Jacopo, a Dominican friar also present that day, overheard similar talk, yet he also testified that the aforementioned Niccolò fulminated 'that the friars were bad people; and he spoke other filthy things about the friars [... namely] that the friars were more worthy of being burnt than the said Bompietro and Giuliano.'⁸⁴ Another man testified to hearing another person yelling (*in alta voce*) that 'the inquisitor did this because the said Bompietro refused to

⁸⁰ Anonymous, *Chronicon Parmense*, ed. Bonazzi, 53. Despite the Dominicans' absence, at least one citizen remembered them in his will. Parma, Archivio di Stato, Conventi, S. Pietro Martire di Parma, Domenicani, B. 3, 12, attests that one Rolandus de Ardemanis of Parma endowed a *beneficium* associated with the church of Sant'Ambrogio, for which 'specialiter elligatur et ponatur unus bonus et justus sacerdos per guardianos fratrum minorum et predicatorum de Parma.'

⁸¹ Salimbene, himself a *parmeggiano*, but no fan of the city's laymen, notes that the inquisitor 'had her burned as a heretic' (*sicut caccaram comburi fecerunt*) (emphasis mine). Salimbene, *Cronica*, 736–7 (ed. Scalia, 764).

⁸² Bologna, Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio, MS B. 1856 (antica 16*-gg-1-1), f. 42v [=Archiginnasio, B. 1856], (testimony of Pasquale de Agubio, 16 May 1299). This inquisitorial register has been edited by Lorenzo Paolini and Raniero Orioli, *Acta S. Officii Bononie ab anno 1291 usque ad annum 1310*, 2 vols (Fonti per la Storia d'Italia 106, Rome, 1982). The most recent treatment of the event is Augustine Thompson, 'Lay versus clerical perceptions of heresy: protests against the inquisition in Bologna, 1299', in: *Praedicatores, Inquisitores I*, 701–30.

⁸³ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 40r (14 May 1299): 'quod si dicti Julianus et Bompetrus habuisset quadraginta lib. bon. pro sturione non contingisset sibi quod contingit.'

⁸⁴ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 40 (14 May 1299): 'quod fratres erant mali homines et dicebat alia verba turpia de fratribus. Item, quod fratres essent plus digni combustione quam dicti Bompetrus et Julianus.'

give his sister or allow her [to go] to the inquisitor.⁸⁵ Donna Tomasina confessed to having said ‘that the friars committed a grave sin and that the friars were more worthy of being burnt than Bompietro and Giuliano.’⁸⁶ And Chechola, daughter of Bartolomeo, simply asserted that ‘the inquisitor is the Devil.’⁸⁷ Emotions evidently ran high, and the anonymity of the crowd afforded those with an axe to grind or a theory to air a misleadingly safe venue.

For others the events in the piazza were merely a point of departure for commenting on the nature of local Dominicans. In his testimony, Bartholomeo, son of Ivan Barberi of San Vitale, tried to deflect allegations that he spoke against the friars by revealing that a certain Francesco, son of Gerandello, ‘when two Friars Preachers *passed through his neighbourhood*, said “You Friars Preachers deserve such beatings.”’⁸⁸ In this way witnesses’ memories meandered from the events surrounding the occasion at hand to their own (or others’) personal encounters with the friars in different contexts. Contessa, wife of Giovanni Piero of San Leonardo, likewise confessed ‘that, when two Friars Preachers *passed through her neighbourhood*, she said: “Do not search this house, for although it is big, there is too little in it”’⁸⁹ — probably mocking the friars’ appetite, greed and perhaps even curiosity, and a common *topos* of anti-fraternal satire.⁹⁰

These and other testimonies suggest that, as in Parma and elsewhere,⁹¹ so in Bologna inquisitorial executions supplied the spark but not the fuel for attacks on mendicants. In her study of heresy in Orvieto, Carol Lansing argues that the city’s first Dominican inquisitors were treated like political or even military opponents rather than religious ones, that is, attacks on them had more to do with local power struggles than with religious ideology.⁹² How typical the Orvietan case was is hard to say, but it too, like the cases cited above, illustrates how diverse the motives for assaulting friars could be, even within the seemingly more cohesive category of anti-inquisitorial aggression. Moreover, the precise manner in which these events unfolded, insofar as they are knowable, tells us much about the relative strengths of competing claims: what type of force was employed, by whom, exactly against whom, where and to what ends — all of these are questions that help map local power in terms of a particular event.

Internal, sporadic and opportunistic violence

It is no secret that friars could be their own worst enemies, not only by their sometimes lax discipline,⁹³ but also by committing unequivocally heinous crimes. Caesarius of Speyer, the first Franciscan Provincial in Germany, was either assassinated or grossly mishandled by a lay brother in 1239 while incarcerated for his strict views on poverty;⁹⁴ in 1297, Thomas, an English Carmelite, killed his co-religionist Henry of Oxford;⁹⁵ and in 1356 the guardian of the Franciscan house in Newcastle murdered friar Richard Pestel.⁹⁶ Such events were uncommon, but alongside the violent repression of

⁸⁵ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 41r (14 May 1299): ‘inquisitor facit hec quia dictus Bompetrus noluit ei dare sororem suam nec consentire eam ipsi inquisitori.’

⁸⁶ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 43r (18 May 1299): ‘quod fratres faciebant magnum peccatum et quod fratres erant magis digni conburi quam ipsi Bompetrus et Julianus.’

⁸⁷ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 43v (18 May 1299): ‘inquisitor est diabolus.’

⁸⁸ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 42r (16 May 1299): ‘dixit, cum duo fratres predicatorum transirent per contratum ipsius testis: “vos fratres predicatorum velletis tales bastonatas”’ (italics mine).

⁸⁹ Archiginnasio, B. 1856, f. 43r (18 May 1299): ‘quod dum duo fratres predicatorum transirent per contratam dicte testis ipsa testis dixit: “nolite respicere in domum, quia domus magna est, tamen parum est in ea”’ (italics mine).

⁹⁰ On anti-fraternal literature see, most recently, the contributions of Penn R. Szittyta and others in: *Defenders and critics of Franciscan life. Essays in honor of John V. Fleming*, ed. Michael Cusato and G. Geltner (Leiden, 2009).

⁹¹ See Guillaume Pelhissou, *Chronique (1229–1244)*, ed. and trans. Jean Duvernoy (Paris, 1994), 80–6.

⁹² Lansing, *Power and purity*, 57–9. Conversely, the relative success of a later wave of inquisition at Orvieto (administered by the Franciscans, as it happened), was owing to and shaped by the friars’ social and political integration among the city’s political elites (137–50).

⁹³ G. Geltner, ‘Brethren behaving badly: a deviant approach to medieval anti-fraternalism’, *Speculum*, 85 (2010), 47–64.

⁹⁴ Angelo Clareno, *Historia septem tribulationum ordinis minorum*, ed. Orietta Rossini (Rome, 1999), 136–7.

⁹⁵ Kew, The National Archives, JUST1/369, mem. 22.

⁹⁶ F. Donald Logan, *Runaway religious in medieval England, c.1240–1540* (Cambridge, 1996), 244.

the Franciscan Spirituals between 1318 and 1329 — the outcome of a spiraling *internal* Franciscan dispute — it seems as though a significant portion of mendicant and philo-mendicant casualties were felled by mendicants.⁹⁷

The obscurity of other cases simply defies categorisation. Salimbene mentions ‘many rascals and evil doers’ who prepared to pillage the Franciscan convent in Reggio in 1287 as well as a botched attempt to storm their brethren in Monfalcone that same year.⁹⁸ But he elaborates no further. It remains equally unclear why either the Pisans attacked the Minorites or the Neapolitans the Preachers in the early thirteenth century.⁹⁹ And one can only impute from the warning of Fernando of Castille (1199–1252) to the contrary that some sort of forced (and perhaps repeated) entries into the Dominican convents in Madrid raised the brethren’s concern.¹⁰⁰

Criminal court records, which occasionally preserve instances of violence involving friars, can be no less frustrating. No grounds are specified, for example, in a case brought against a monk by the name of Donabonum who, in 1289, led a mob assault against Adam, a Franciscan friar who was leading his brethren in prayer outside Bologna.¹⁰¹ Likewise, no grounds are ever specified when three men, including a priest, were charged with wounding two Augustinian friars in Lucca in 1361;¹⁰² when Agostino, rector of the church of San Iusto and San Lorenzo de Branchaio in the diocese of Lucca, allegedly assaulted Benedetto, a local Augustinian friar, in 1391;¹⁰³ or in the charge brought against Ludovico Cittadini of San Miniato in 1398 for assaulting another Lucchese Augustinian, Benedetto di Castro Fiorentino.¹⁰⁴

Administrative records also reveal some rare instances of opportunistic violence targeting friars and mendicant convents for petty material and in some cases sexual gain: in 1334, three Bolognese men robbed Giovanni, a local Franciscan, of a piece of cloth, a tunic and 40 soldi in cash;¹⁰⁵ a Polish Dominican travelling back from his order’s general chapter in either 1338 or 1342 was attacked and robbed;¹⁰⁶ and in 1383, a Florentine vagabond named Naso abducted, robbed and raped Francesca, a Poor Clare en route to her convent in Arezzo.¹⁰⁷ Friaries were even easier targets: in 1355 a former mayor of Bristol broke into the local Augustinian convent and robbed it;¹⁰⁸ in 1379 Cecco Pieri di Jacopo, a serial thief, rapist and violent offender, broke into the Franciscan convent in Poggibonsi and threatened to kill one of the brethren there unless he disclosed the location of cash;¹⁰⁹ and, in a similar vein, there were burglaries at the London Carmelite and the Lucca Servite convents in 1305 and 1359, respectively.¹¹⁰

Here as elsewhere diversity of motivations continues to emerge as characteristic of anti-mendicant violence. Over time, the more friars became woven into urban life and its institutions, the more likely

⁹⁷ David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans. From protest to persecution in the century after Saint Francis* (University Park, PA, 2001), 213–59. Among the casualties were 12 Franciscan friars, 6 priests, 68 men and 16 women.

⁹⁸ Salimbene, *Cronica*, 921 and 937 (ed. Scalia, 949 and 965, respectively).

⁹⁹ See Mauro Ronzani, ‘Il francescanesimo a Pisa fino alla metà del Trecento’, *Bollettino Storico Pisano*, 54 (1985), 1–55 (9–10); and Friedrich von Raumer, *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen und ihrer Zeit*, 6 vols (Leipzig, 1840–2), vol. 3, 470–1, respectively.

¹⁰⁰ Santa Sabina, Rome, Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum, XIV, Lib. III, f. 15v–16r: ‘que nunguno non sea osado de les fazer tuerbo, ni demas, ni entrar en sus casas por fuerza, ni en ninguna de sus casas.’

¹⁰¹ Bologna, Archivio di Stato, Curia del Podestà, Libri Inquisitionum 16, fasc. 8, f. 32r–43r (20–29 January 1289).

¹⁰² Lucca, Archivio Diocesano, Tribunale Criminale 17, f. 102r–103v (11 August–8 November 1361). A fragment of the original civic proceedings (dated 5 July) is tucked into the register’s cover.

¹⁰³ Lucca, Archivio Diocesano, Tribunale Criminale 41, f. 55r (29 May 1391).

¹⁰⁴ Lucca, Archivio di Stato, Sentenze e Bandi 94, f. 15v (5 May 1398).

¹⁰⁵ Bologna, Archivio di Stato, Curia del Podestà, Libri Inquisitionum 137, fasc. 4, f. 2r (30 March 1334).

¹⁰⁶ Romanus Fabianus Madura, *Acta capitulorum provinciae Poloniae ordinis praedicatorum. Volumen I (1225–1600)* (Rome, 1972), 13. Another rare instance of a documented assault on a friar in the countryside dates to 1405, when the Irish Franciscans’ minister general, returning from a general chapter in Munich, was captured for ransom by Flemish seamen. See *The Annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn*, ed. and trans. Bernadette Williams (Dublin, 2007), 255.

¹⁰⁷ Florence, Archivio di Stato, Capitano del Popolo 1521, unnumbered folios (25 May 1383).

¹⁰⁸ Francis Xavier Roth, *Sources for a history of the English Austin Friars* (Heverlee-Leuven, 1958–61), 179–80 (no. 420).

¹⁰⁹ Florence, Archivio di Stato, Capitano del Popolo 1197, f. 147v–148r and 149r (14 June 1379), which related that Cecco also robbed the local Augustinian convent.

¹¹⁰ *Calendar of select pleas*, ed. Thomas, 237; Lucca, Archivio Storico Diocesano, Tribunale Criminale 14, f. 42r–42v (25 June 1359).

they were to develop relationships — hostile as well as amicable — with local men and women. This familiarity meant that friars were increasingly unlikely to be truly anonymous or random victims of circumstance. The mendicant garb, while attempting to signal its bearer's poverty and holiness, failed to fend off opportunistic assailants, who were perhaps aware of laymen's cynical use of religious habits, or the employment of friars as couriers of valuable goods and sensitive documents.¹¹¹ As for mendicant convents, they too suffered from the peculiar combination of being accessible, physically marginal and increasingly well endowed — to the common knowledge of surrounding society.

Conclusion

Assaults on medieval friars were evocative but ultimately uncommon events, whose unity across space and time is further challenged by the diversity of their circumstances. Even if the overall effect of recounting these incidents lends a lachrymose quality to mendicant history, little if any anti-mendicant glue holds them together: the abolitionist rhetoric of William of St Amour apparently failed to resonate either broadly or down the centuries. Grievances against the brethren were no less real for that matter, but they had more to do with perceived threats to social order than with any coherent ecclesiology.

Examining in detail attacks on mendicants likewise exposes the fallacy of collapsing anti-fraternalism into anti-clericalism. Just as most anti-fraternal literature was composed by clerics, so a significant portion (17 per cent) of the cases surveyed was instigated or led by monks and secular clergymen. In other words, assaults on friars were often enough an ecclesiastical in-house affair, notwithstanding the major role played by individual laymen and their contingents.

Last, beyond informing mendicant history per se, attacks on the brethren attest contemporaries' critical stance towards putative figures of authority, a stance that could and at times was articulated in the idiom of violence. Interrogating the sources allows us to qualify the allegations of sheer brutality which they sometimes convey or its absence, which they occasionally conceal. A careful reading of the narratives of this violence allows us to focus on how aggression operated as a system for communicating messages in the public sphere, and on how urban dwellers used it to describe, shape or upset local power relations. Among the salient gestures of this aggression is the display of moderation: vis-à-vis its capacity for violence, a group's restraint signalled the degree of power to which it laid claim.

Acknowledgments

For their insights and comments on earlier drafts I wish to thank Stephen Mossman, Sam Cohn, Jr., the *Journals* reviewers and the conveners and participants of Oxford University's Medieval History Seminar. Two Brooklyn bakeries — Joyce and Blue Sky — provided the perfect setting for writing most of this article.

Appendix. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version, at doi:[10.1016/j.jmedhist.2010.02.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmedhist.2010.02.001).

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¹¹¹ Compagni, *Cronica*, 3.10 (ed. Del Lungo, 151), notes that in 1304 many among the Florentine Black Guelphs 'clad themselves as friars for fear of their enemies, for they had no other defence.'