

Beyond the norm: religious deviance in 19th- and 20th-century Europe, 12-13 April, Antwerp

12 April	Prentenkabinet room, Hof van Liere
17:00-18:30h	Peter Jan Margry <i>Religious deviancy: crafting idiosyncratic ways of religious experience and ideology</i>
13 April	Pieter Gillis room, Universiteitsclub, Hof van Liere
9:10-9:20	Welcome address
9:20-10:00	Chair: Tine Van Osselaer Kristof Smeyers <i>Defiant devotions. Cults versus modernity in nineteenth-century England</i>
10:00-10:40	Owen Davies <i>Spirits on the First World War battlefields: Explorations in religion, psychical research, and popular belief</i>
10:40-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-11:40	Chair: Andrea Graus María Tausiet <i>The sexuality of the soul. A deviant exorcist in 19th century Spain</i>
11:40-12:20	Leonardo Rossi <i>Bloody 'Wunderkammer'. The role of sensory perception in the creation of religious cults and 'deviant devotions'</i>
12:20-13:20	Lunch
13:20-14:00	Chair: Kristof Smeyers Agnieszka Halemba <i>Catholic Church stance on apparitions – Experiments or deviations?</i>
14:00-14:40	Andrea Graus <i>Parish priests, stigmatics and religious deviance in the French Third Republic</i>
14:40-15:00	Coffee break
15:00-15:40	Chair: Leonardo Rossi Tiago Pires Marques <i>Folk religion, psychiatry and public order: an inquisitorial process in 20th century Portugal</i>
15:40-16:20	Tine Van Osselaer <i>On coughing and other rebellious acts: the faithful, the Church and deviant devotions in the 19th and early 20th centuries.</i>
16:20	Final remarks
19:15	Dinner – Grand café Horta

Religious Deviancy: Crafting Idiosyncratic Ways of Religious Experience and Ideology

Peter Jan Margry (University of Amsterdam/Meertens Institute, KNAW), p.j.j.margry@uva.nl.

This keynote addresses a devotional culture that developed in the Western world after World War II as a grassroots expression of religious idiosyncrasy and, hence, often of deviancy. This devotional culture is created around Marian and Christocentric apparitions, visions, messages, and their complimentary miraculous phenomena, mainly constituted as a lay 'countermovement' from below. The background of the genesis of this development is related to the political, social and religious changes of a modernising world. The phenomenon will be related to the meaning of the individual as actor in cultural change and the role of the digital media networks. The claims professed by lay visionaries seldom have a happy message; they usually address the opposite. Their messages warn the world for its sins and, as a result, also for the consequences—usually dramatic and apocalyptic. Illustrated by some cases, the meaning and relevance of this 'practice of deviancy' will be evaluated.

Defiant devotions. Cults versus modernity in nineteenth-century England

Kristof Smeyers (Ruusbroec Institute, University of Antwerp), kristof.smeyers@uantwerpen.be

The nineteenth century in England is traditionally portrayed as a period of disenchantment in which a monolithic notion of modernity banished 'superstitions' to a pre-modern past or to the far corners of the Empire. Agents of this English modernity consistently painted dissenting cults and forms of religious enthusiasm in England itself as pockets of primitive resistance, as clinging to a disappearing world. This portrayal must itself be historicised. Small religious cults formed around the manifestation of the supernatural, for example, were numerous and dynamic across the country. In this paper I juxtapose the discursive portrayal of stigmatic cults in England—by clerical and local authorities as well as the media—with the agency of the cults themselves. How did they defend themselves against accusations of superstition, fraud and deviance? How did they defy this narrative of modernity?

Spirits on the First World War battlefields: Explorations in religion, psychical research, and popular belief

Owen Davies (University of Hertfordshire), o.davies@herts.ac.uk.

It is widely assumed that belief in spiritualism boomed during the First World War, and that apparent sightings of ghosts and apparitions were common on the battlefields due to the mass slaughter and the intensity of individual and collective emotions. But little historical research has actually taken place of either phenomenon beyond the Angel of Mons legend, and there are some basic misunderstands. Little distinction has been made in the literature, for instance, between Spiritualism as an organised religion (hence the capital S) with its own societies and membership; general interest in spiritualist phenomena as evident from the boom in pamphlets and books on the subject; the work of psychical researchers; and the practices of self-styled mediums or clairvoyants who were often not members of any Spiritualist organisation. A range of spiritual experiences and phenomena, some rooted in folklore, some in religion, some in psychical research, have also been conflated with the tenets of and interest in Spiritualism. So, we need to unpick the tangle of personal experiences, traditions, beliefs, and phenomena, to reassess some of the assumptions that have been made about death, grief, and the belief in supernatural interventions in wartime.

The Sexuality of the Soul. A Deviant Exorcist in 19th century Spain.

María Tausiet, mariatausiet@gmail.com.

A curious inquisitorial report regarding a charlatan healer and exorcist provides rare evidence of the relation between sexuality and religiosity at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Spain. Secular authorities in the town of Albarracín (Teruel) imprisoned one Ramón Duarte in the spring of 1818 accusing him feigning thaumaturgical powers. He was also charged with idleness -a characteristic concern of the period- since he himself confessed that he had chosen his profession in order avoid working. Like other popular exorcists who were not ordained priests, Ramón deployed a religious discourse to describe his cures and claimed to have the gift of expelling malign spirits. Besides that, the document indicates, although obliquely given the taboo subject matter, that he touched his patients' genitals. The Inquisition had already denounced such practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in relation to the so-called heresy of *alumbradismo*. The continuity of this fascinating phenomenon leaves much room for further investigation.

Bloody 'Wunderkammer'. The role of sensory perception in the creation of religious cults and 'deviant devotions'

Leonardo Rossi (University of Antwerp, Ruusbroec Institute), Leonardo.rossi@uantwerpen.be

Recent researches conducted in the field of sensory studies and material religion have shown the link between sensory perception and religious experiences, emphasizing the role of the senses in the production of religious concepts, cults and rituals. This connection has been highlighted for 'official' religions, while there has been only scant attention for the 'private' or 'deviant' religiousness, those forms of worship that were not (yet) approved or censored by religious authorities.

In the contemporary Catholicism, the stigmatization – that is the reproduction of the Christ crucified wounds on the body of a person – was an emotional and sensory shock both for those who received/auto-produced them (stigmatics) and spectators (visitors). In many cases, the perception of a so-called 'Friday of passion' (which involved, in different way, all the senses), gave the stigmatic in the eyes of the faithful a new pseudo-religious 'extrinsic value', turned her into a 'living saint', an 'evidence' of God's presence in the world (independently of the Church's teachings).

This contribution aims to investigate how sensory perceptions shaped forms of worship and – in particular – 'deviant devotions'. For doing this three cases of Italian stigmatized 'living saints' who lived between the mid-19th and the first decades of 20th centuries will be examined. Through visual experiences (the visit to their rooms on the Fridays of passion) and mental re-presentation (private worship) and/or the printed edition of them through different types of media (diffusion of fame and cult) these patients with the wounds were turned into charismatic religious figures. The selected cases – Maria Bordoni (1824-1863), Palma Matarrelli (1825-1888) and Ester Moriconi (1875-1937) – cover different types of status (one nun and two lay) and different environments in which they played out, as in a theater, their personal *via crucis* towards Calvary (cloister room, private house, church). Common elements are the bloody 'Wunderkammer' and the emotional-sensorial impact it produced on their visitors.

Catholic Church Stance on Apparitions – Experiments or Deviations?

Agnieszka Halemba (University of Warsaw, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology), a.halemba@uw.edu.pl.

This presentation looks at the actual ways in which the Catholic Church deals with cases of extraordinary visionary and other sensual experiences, chiefly in the context of contemporary apparitions of the Virgin Mary and other holy figures. So-called private revelations are deemed in Catholic theology as in principle redundant. In order to be accepted by the Church, they have to be repeated, and not amend the Public Revelation of which the Catholic Church sees itself as a guardian. In practice however, the apparition sites are nexuses of religious innovation and experimentation, where all kinds of interest groups meet, and that are useful also for the Church as hierarchical organization. Therefore, one should not regard those phenomena as exclusively bottom-up, traditional and outside of control of Church authorities. To the contrary, especially the sites with regard to which the final decision of the Church commission has not been as yet taken, can be analyzed as sites of innovation, necessary for the Church as a religious organization.

Parish priests, stigmatics and religious deviance in the French Third Republic.

Andrea Graus (University of Antwerp, Ruusbroec Institute), andrea.graus@uantwerpen.be.

Drawing on the reports of parish priests about several French stigmatics and their cults, this paper will explore the construction of religious deviance during the Third Republic. I will look especially at the reports about Laurentine Billoquet, Berguille Bergadieu and Marie-Julie Jahenny. The conflicts between these stigmatics and the ecclesiastical authorities took place within a historical moment where deviance, and especially religious deviance, was a topic of debate in the French medico-psychological milieu, championed by the Salpêtrière. In this context, several theologians wrote works opposing hysteria and sanctity to help the clergy differentiate between simulated and authentic religious experience. Following this trend, parish priests used medical terminology in their reports to disqualify stigmatics and present their behaviour as “out of the norm” or “deviant”.

Folk religion, psychiatry and public order: an inquisitorial process in 20th century Portugal

Tiago Pires Marques (Centre for social studies, University of Coimbra), tmarques@ces.uc.pt.

In Portugal, the rise of the Marian shrine of Fátima played an important role in the process of discrediting the spirituality of victim soul women. As the sources on Fátima currently under publication show, after Fátima, these apparitions multiplied, with a significant number of women claiming prophetic and healing powers through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. The Catholic Church discredited and silenced most of these women, but a few managed to establish local religious movements. In Portugal, the most notorious is that of a peasant woman called Maria da Conceição Mendes Horta, known as the Saint of Ladeira, and, to her devotees, Mother Mary. While excommunicated, arrested for troubling public order, and twice interned in a psychiatric hospital in Lisbon, Mother Mary had her healing and prophetic powers recognized by a growing number of devotees from the 1960s to the 1990s. This paper addresses the history of this folk religious movement with a focus on its construction as religious deviancy and a threat to public order.

On Coughing and Other Rebellious Acts: the Faithful, the Church and Deviant Devotions in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries.

Tine Van Osselaer (University of Antwerp, Ruusbroec Institute), tine.vanosselaer@uantwerpen.be.

On the 11th of April 1924 a strange “disease” caught some of the Bickendorf (Germany) parishioners. As their parish priest started to read a letter from the episcopal authorities, one parishioner after the other started to cough, making it impossible for the other parishioners to understand a word their pastor was saying. The other faithful did not discard the continuous coughing as a mere coincidence, but interpreted it as an attempt to hide the bishop’s decision from their fellow-parishioners. Or to be more precise, the coughing was to hinder the bishop’s condemnation of the visits to the allegedly stigmatized Maria Göbel becoming public knowledge.

In my presentation, I address the episcopal attempts to (re-)gain control over grassroots cults like Göbel’s and the responses these triggered among the faithful. My focus is on their actions to monitor the enthusiasm for stigmatics, the men and women who carried the wounds of Christ who were frequently reported in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. While some of them were eventually “adopted” by the Church (as saints, blessed or venerable persons), the majority never made it this far. This was not seldom due to the Church’s interference in the early stages of the cult. As we shall see, the clergy had various means at its disposal to curtail the enthusiasm (ranging from public letters to censorship and employment strategies). However, as the Bickendorf example shows, the faithful did not necessarily willingly obey their bishop’s decision and they could resort to various acts of rebellion.

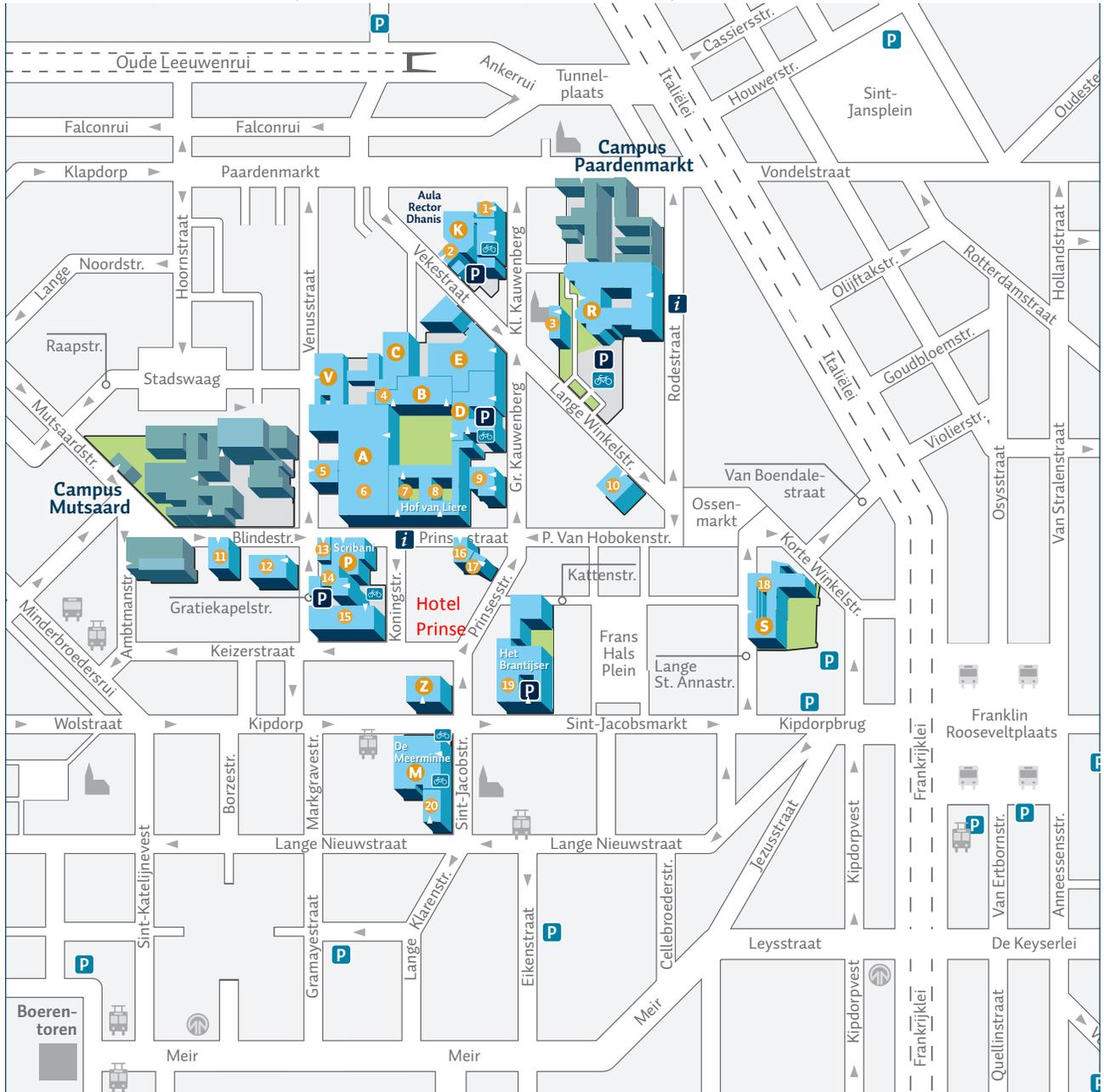
Studying these cases, I want to re-enter what has been called the “no man’s land” of religion and examine the “informal”, “deviant” devotions that have primarily been linked to the twentieth century (Margry, 2004) but might be detected in the previous eras as well. Drawing upon the work that has been done on “popular religion” and the official doctrine as a two-way relationship in which one influenced the other (Ryan, 2012), I want to study the cases where the tolerance of the Church met its limits, and devotions were explicitly called “deviant”.

William Christian, invited referee, billc@idecnet.com

Venue 12 April (n. 7 in the map)
 Prentenkabinet room
 Hof van Liere
 Prinsstraat 13, 2000 Antwerp

Venue 13 April (n. 8 in the map)
 Pieter Gillis room
 Universiteitsclub, Hof van Liere
 Prinsstraat 13b, 2000 Antwerp

Hotel Prinse
 Keizerstraat 63, 2000 Antwerp
 +32 (0)3 226 40 50



Stadscampus

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| A Building A - Prinsstraat 13 | 1 Linguapolis (secretary's office) - Kleine Kauwenberg 12 |
| B Building B - Prinsstraat 13 | 2 Central supply room - Vekestraat 33 |
| C Building C - Prinsstraat 13 | 3 Annexe - Rodestraat 14 |
| D Building D - Grote Kauwenberg 18 | 4 TPR / C-Mat - Prinsstraat 13 |
| E Agora / Sports centre - Grote Kauwenberg 2 | 5 Moral Consultant/Prevention Service - Venusstraat 35 |
| K Aula Rector Dhanis - Kleine Kauwenberg 14 | 6 Library - Prinsstraat 13 |
| M De Meerminne - Sint-Jacobstraat 2 | 7 Hof van Liere - Prinsstraat 13 |
| P Scribani - Prinsstraat 10 | 8 Universiteitsclub - Prinsstraat 13b |
| R Building R - Rodestraat 14 | 9 Ruusbroec association - Grote Kauwenberg 32-34 |