teach Marx. When we assign the *Communist Manifesto*, students should analyze it like any other primary source—students should think about it as a product of its historical context, no more, no less—in the same way that they might analyze, say, the Gettysburg Address.

But is this fair? If a text is inspirational as a living document that speaks to students in the here and now, should not we allow them to be moved by it? Is not this precisely what makes teaching and learning exciting?

I would pose these same questions to Stedman Jones. He has sought to bury Marx with history. Perhaps he will convince some people to think about Marx solely as a historical figure. But those who remain inspired by Marx—those who think we still have something to learn from Marx—will ignore the limits upon our imagination that such militant attention to context imposes. And that is okay.

Illinois State University Andrew Hartman

Antonio Sennis, ed. *Cathars in Question*. Woodbridge, U.K.: York Medieval Press, 2016. Pp. vii+332. $99.00.

Like many edited volumes, *Cathars in Question* began as a collection of conference papers, in this case from an April 2013 conference entitled "Catharism: Balkan Heresy or Construct of a Persecuting Society?" at the Warburg Institute. At that conference's—and this volume's—heart is a deceptively simple question: Can historians of the Middle Ages assert with confidence that there existed in the twelfth-century southern France a cohesive group—a "church"—of heretical Christians called "Cathars" led by heterodox clergy called "good men?" (1). Despite the availability of much evidence in Toulousan archives, Parisian libraries, and elsewhere, this has been a hotly contested problem among heresy specialists and medievalists in general

at least since the publication of Joseph Strayer's *The Albigensian Crusades* in 1971. The fourteen contributors to this volume, all of whose specific arguments are too complex to discuss in full, fall into two camps. "Traditionalists" deem the evidence for the Cathars' existence sufficient while "skeptics" are not convinced that the heretics existed as an organized group and argue instead that they were the creation of orthodox medieval theologians, inquisitors, and the modern scholars who read those medieval people's writing as primary source material.

On one end of this argument is the staunch skeptic Mark Gregory Pegg, who asserts that "between the Rhône and Garonne Rivers in the twelfth century there was no Catharism and there was no 'heresy of the good men and women'" (38). On the other end lay Peter Biller, Jörg Feuchter, and Bernard Hamilton who see ample, explicit evidence of Catharism as distinct from the other major heretical group of the period, the Waldensians. Hamilton not only demonstrates the existence of people who self-identified as heretics in the Languedoc, but even shows highly suggestive evidence from the Premonstratensian abbot Eberwin of Steinfeld of links between French heretics and the well-attested Byzantine heretical group known as the Bogomils. Some contributors, including Julien Théry-Astruc, take moderate positions stemming from Michel Foucault's "perverse implantation" theory. This postmodernist perspective points to the phenomenon of groups gradually assuming identities—even heretical ones—that hegemons, in this case orthodox inquisitors, project on them even if those identities are generally considered bad (81). This sort of group creation, argues Théry-Astruc, could have happened in the case of the Cathars since orthodox churchmen regularly singled out as potential heretics people who were disgruntled with Church authority in the first place. Most of the contributions in this volume are to some extent sympathetic to the traditionalist point of view, and this is ultimately the more convincing set of arguments. Peter Biller's essay, the final one in the volume, contains an especially

powerful defense for the traditionalists in its demonstration that the skeptics have occasionally neglected important evidence of the Cathars' existence, such as the inquisitorial deposition of the layman Raymond John of Albi. In this debate surrounding the existence of Cathars, as in so many other historical discussions, positive evidence proves more convincing than any argument from an absence of evidence. The traditionalists show a good deal of positive evidence for heresy in twelfth-century southern France.

This collection has utility for secondary school and college instructors both for the comprehensive information on medieval heresy that it provides and as a source for course readings. *Cathars in Question* may be most useful within the context of teaching sourcing methods and the nature of historical argument. It clearly demonstrates the equivocal nature of historical evidence and the impact of historians' preexisting skepticism toward narrative sources. Pegg and Biller spar over translation and spelling issues in a particular Medieval Latin manuscript, showing students the importance of detail-oriented source analysis and the indispensability of extensive training in languages and, in some cases, paleography. While discussions surrounding medieval heresy are often dependent on jargon and presuppose readers' advanced theological knowledge, Antonio Sennis has masterfully edited this volume for undergraduate-level accessibility while preserving the topic's complexity. At around 350 pages spread over fourteen short contributions, *Cathars in Question* would provide suitable reading for a week or two in an advanced undergraduate course in historiography or medieval history.

Penn State University Frank Lacopo