

Preface

by Umberto Longo and Lila Yawn

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Framing Clement III, (Anti)Pope, 1080-1100

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This dialogue of 2010 between Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri of the Università di Urbino «Carlo Bo» and Lila Yawn of John Cabot University and the American Academy in Rome rapidly expanded into a *conversazione a quattro* and then *a cinque*, drawing in other researchers interested in the eleventh- and twelfth-century papacy, above all Umberto Longo of Sapienza-Università di Roma, Kai-Michael Sprenger of the Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom, and Thomas J.H. McCarthy of New College of Florida. The discussions of this enlarged circle were enlivened by a recent flowering of interest in medieval antipopes and the manipulation of collective memory, notable in the initiatives of the «*Damnatio memoriae*» interdisciplinary

research group at the University of Zurich¹; in the recently published acts of the conference held in 2008 at Ascoli Piceno²; in the project underway at Aachen under the direction of Harald Müller³; in Mary Stroll's then forthcoming book on eleventh-century popes and antipopes⁴; and in Roberto Rusconi's *Santo Padre* (2010), particularly the section on the reputed sanctity of Clement III/Wibert of Ravenna⁵. The underlying issues of collective memory and the ways in which it could be cancelled or transformed were given special immediacy, meanwhile, by news of the Arab Spring – of nearby countries struggling, often violently, with internal rifts and the specters of newly defunct regimes – and by Osama bin Laden's swift, calculated burial at sea.

Through our exchanges, a constellation of issues began to take shape that seemed both methodologically urgent and rich in historical potential. The medieval papacy was marked by sporadic, sometimes protracted and often profound schisms involving two or more simultaneous claimants to the papal throne, each with his own supporters and election (another issue of great interest to us). How, then, did the papal line come to seem a tidy sequence? During most papal schisms there were diametrically opposed opinions about which of the rival claimants was the legitimate pope. What means were used, then, to brand one of the contenders as a fraud and a villain in perpetuity while securing his opponent's lasting image as the authentic successor of St. Peter? How, in short, did someone become an antipope, a title that none of the men in question, including those now long called by that epithet, would ever have willingly accepted?

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Researching in this void created long ago and filled with distorted images would clearly require something more than our habitual individual methods. For that reason, we decided to pool our intellects, bibliographies, and research skills and to work together across disciplines, as we did in our first joint venture, a conference – or rather an «anti-conference», as we affectionately called it – about Clement III/Wibert of Ravenna, organized by Lila Yawn at John Cabot University in April of 2011⁶. Wibert was elected pope in 1080 by the philo-imperial Synod of Brixen to replace the (theoretically) deposed Gregory VII and was consecrated pope with the name Clement III in March of 1084⁷.

Clement was an obvious, if perhaps also an audacious, choice for our first group enterprise, the beginning of what we intend to be a multi-year endeavor that builds upon our personal specialties and varied approaches to the same problems and sources (documentary, narrative, iconographic, epigraphic, monumental). Clement was one of the two most powerful and influential eleventh- and twelfth-century pontiffs the Church now considers antipopes; the other was Anacletus II (1130-1138), about whom we will hold an international conference in Rome in April of 2013. Clement had an unusually long pontificate and was opposed by four decidedly high-profile popes who made it into the canon: Gregory VII (1073-1085), Victor III (1086-1087), Urban II (1088-1099), and Paschal II (1099-1118). As pope, Clement retained his title as archbishop of Ravenna, which gave him considerable influence in northern Italy, and had a significant following both in Rome and abroad during a *ventennio* that was especially crucial for papal-imperial relations and the reform of the Church. He was also regarded by some as a saint. After his death there were reports of miracles at his tomb. They were soon cut short, however, by Paschal II, who had his corpse exhumed and thrown in the Tiber.

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Historical scholarship about Clement III/Wibert of Ravenna is very limited. We owe this shortage in part to the sparse and biased primary record, which resulted from the remarkably thorough *damnatio memoriae* carried out after his death. Yet it also comes from the tendency, pronounced in the history of art but also present to varying degrees in other varieties of history, to accept the confessional construct of a clear-cut, unitary papal line and to forget that some (anti)popes were at least as powerful, active, pontifical, and potentially victorious as their now-canonical rivals.

That issue is the subject of Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri's prolegomenon to our studies⁸. With a title evoking both Lewis Carroll and René Magritte, whose fantasy worlds densely entwine reality, perception, fiction, and representation, this opening chapter sets forth the overall theme of the monographic section and invites readers to invert what many histories looking back over the period take as a default point of view. Instead of assessing past events on the basis of hindsight, as if history had a predetermined end, Carpegna Falconieri urges us to analyze past events (those of the popes and antipopes serve as a test case) «as if we were inside of them, as if we ourselves were anchored in that distant present, frozen in the still frame along with the contenders, when the possibilities were still virtually infinite and the end of the story had yet to be written». With a Shakespearean oxymoron, Umberto Longo's title, *A Saint of Damned Memory*, sums up the posthumous reputation of Clement III, who after death was venerated as a saint by his adherents and reviled as a heresiarch by his adversaries. These diametrically opposed images serve in Longo's analysis as a mirror and paradigm of the eleventh-century Church reform, which was far more multifaceted and composite than scholarship of the finalistic kind has accustomed us to envisioning. In *The Tiara in the Tiber*, Kai-Michael Sprenger fathoms an episode of *histoire événementielle*, the disinterment of Clement III's remains and their disposal in the Tiber, against the depths of the *longue durée*. By examining cases of the river's use as a place of punishment and oblivion from Roman antiquity to the twentieth century, Sprenger brings out another seeming contradiction – namely, the very memorability of public acts of deletion, with their collective rituals of purification and defamation. Deletion is also at the center of Lila Yawn's chapter, which associates the suppression of Clement III's memory with a physical place, the basilica of S. Clemente in Rome. Applying the principle of «history from the inside», Yawn ponders whether the well-known frescoes celebrating St. Clement I in the lower basilica were commissioned by supporters of Clement III, rather than by his enemies as the long-standing consensus holds, and also whether the destruction of the church

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These collected studies are not intended as a systematic treatment of the life and times of Clement III/Wibert of Ravenna or of his immediate post-mortem misfortunes. Our aim instead was and is to view the available evidence through new eyes – or rather through very old ones, according to Carpegna Falconieri's formulation – and, in so doing, to bring out formerly unrecognized possibilities, in some cases about familiar things: about the eleventh-century reform, for instance; about the expunction of the ancient basilica of S. Clemente from the landscape; and about Clement III's second burial, with its apparent analogies to Paschal II's legendary exorcism of the ghost of Nero. With these examples and their methodological introduction, we have sought to set a course for our own future work on «anti-papalization» and related questions, including our contributions to the April 2013 conference on Anacletus II, which will also host a variety of other speakers, with their own approaches and methods. We are grateful for and gratified by the opportunity to publish our «anti-papers» in «Reti Medievali - Rivista» and wish to thank the editors, the anonymous peer-reviewers, the friends and colleagues who gave us much invaluable feedback, and, of course, the future readers of our articles. Our sincere hope is that these articles will be the beginning of a rich conversation about a topic whose underlying questions concerning the making, unmaking, and remaking of shared memory are both medieval and still very much with us.

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