

Uso devocional de las *Confesiones* de San Agustín. Evidencia manuscrita de la Inglaterra medieval

ABSTRACT

In this article, I present late-antique and medieval models of reading, with the evidence surrounding Augustine's *conf.* as primary testimony. By examining the manuscript tradition of *conf.*, especially as it evolved in medieval England, I suggest that recent historical, philosophical-theological and text-critical scholarship about the circumstances of Augustine's writing notably corresponds to pre-modern forms of literacy which characterize manuscript cultures. To that end, I first (1) introduce Augustine's *conf.* in their spiritual and social framework, within the literary world of late antiquity; second, (2) I discuss the patristic heritage of 'spiritual reading' as it was developed in the medieval world; third, (3) I identify key features of the manuscript tradition, building upon the major contributors to modern text-critical scholarship; fourth, (4) I compare these traditions, with insights from the context in medieval England; and, finally, (5) I conclude with reaffirmations of the spiritual *praxis* of reading *conf.* identified by modern authors.

KEY WORDS: Augustinian formation, prayer, spiritual reading, hermeneutics, medieval literacy, theological anthropology.

RESUMEN

Propongo que las recientes investigaciones históricas, filosófico-teológicas y de crítica textual sobre las circunstancias en que escribió San Agustín corresponden a formas premodernas de alfabetismo características de las culturas manuscritas. Con ese fin, primero (1) sitúo las *Confesiones* de San Agustín en el contexto espiritual y social del mundo literario de la Tardía Antigüedad; segundo (2), analizo la herencia patristica de la «lectura espiritual» tal como se desarrolló en el mundo medieval; tercero (3), identifico los rasgos claves de la tradición manuscrita, a partir de las contribuciones más importantes de la crítica tex-

tual moderna; cuarto (4), comparo estas tradiciones con perspectivas de la Inglaterra medieval; y finalmente (5), concluyo con una reafirmación de la praxis espiritual de lectura de las *Confesiones* identificada por autores modernos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: formación agustiniana, plegaria, lectura espiritual, hermenéutica, alfabetismo medieval, antropología teológica.

Augustine may have prayed the most overheard prayer in the *Confessions* (*conf.*), and like the Psalmist, his words and the Scripture within them have inspired and nourished thousands upon thousands of souls seeking for God. Beyond their original context of the late Roman empire, when Christian scholarship was first beginning to take shape, *conf.* spread throughout Europe from North Italy and the Loire valley, with profound and lasting effect upon its readers. It is not surprising that Augustine's corpus is the most frequently quoted auctoritas in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, who along with other medieval saints drew from the Augustinian spring at every turn of their contemplation of God. Yet unlike the *Summa Theologiae* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Augustine's work is a prayer, directed toward God, from which men and women can benefit spiritually. Augustine's meditations on the soul, and the doctrine of the soul he presents, at once Neoplatonic and Christian, captivate and mystify his readers. The devotional practice of reading Augustine was a constant presence in medieval spirituality, and though *conf.* were read by secular scholars and intellectual Christians, the devotional aspect of its reading remained ever-present. What preeminence Augustine grants the heart in telling his story is perhaps the foremost reason why *conf.* have found such a wide readership. As my discussion of the manuscripts will show, the path *conf.* took give some indication of the weight of so many human hearts who pored over Augustine's words; and as the preservation, safekeeping and transmission of the manuscripts testify, together with comments and marginalia by men such as John de Exeter, *conf.* had—as the author intended—a powerful ability to excite the human '*intellectum et affectum*' to the just and good God.

1. THE PRAYER OF AUGUSTINE

The *Confessions* are a work of art. In these thirteen books, Augustine expresses some of the deepest human longings, for God, for intimacy, and for praise, in an intricate narrative. The first lines, «magnus es domine et laudibilis valde,» (Conf. 1.1) sound the opening lines of this prayer directed to God, resounding with words of the Psalms. As readers, we are overhearing Augustine's conversation with God as he tells him of his past. Theologically, it is equally God speaking, telling the story of grace, through Augustine. As Francis Young has shown, this is more than autobiography: it is also a conversation in theology.¹ Thus, '*theo-graphia*' or «the story of grace» might resemble better names, in view of what *conf.* are truly about and their most proper classification in terms of genre. From beginning to end, *conf.* are in a certain sense about Augustine's life, especially books 1 through 9, which can give readers the impression that Augustine is most interested in his own path to conversion. From a narrative viewpoint, the climax is the scene in the garden, in book 8. Book 9 resolves the tension between sin and grace, and the rest is a sort of appendix. In this way, the narrative running from Augustine's earliest days, to his days as a Manichean hearer, and his time spent in Milan and elsewhere in Italy, form a distinct contrast to the plateau of book 9, in which he spends time with his mother before her death. However, book 10 gives us the problem of grappling with current sin in Augustine's life.

Placed between the conversion narrative and the final books on Genesis, this seems out of order. Yet, taken theologically, and from the perspective of Christian theology, which accounts for the fall, sin, redemption, and grace, as developed by Augustine, book 10 tells the story of mankind struggling for perfection and Christ-likeness. Garry Willis claims that Augustine uses book 10 to purify himself for the interpretation of Scripture in books 11, 12 and 13, much as the *Confiteor* spoken at the beginning of a contemporary Catholic mass prepares the people to receive Christ in word and sacrament.² In the same way, according to the Willis' interpretation, Augustine spent the short, intense period of 397 – 401 purifying himself for the purpose of further

1 YOUNG, F., «The Confessions of Saint Augustine: What Is the Genre of this Work?» *Augustinian Studies*, 30 (1998) 1-16 for discussion.

theological reflection, in *conf.* and later works such as *The Trinity*, his work on Genesis and the *City of God* (*ciu.*). The closing three books, 11, 12, and 13, enter the biblical narrative at Genesis 1, at the time of creation, and move into philosophical speculations about the nature of time and humanity in the place of the cosmos. Through it all, *conf.* understands God as the final end of Augustine and his readers. Sin and death are major themes, for example in book 4 with the loss of a friend and the tragic consequences it has for Augustine's damaged spirit. Lives, and friendship, too, find a way into the powerful current of Augustine's narrative: from the beginning, he is concerned about his friendships with God and man. In short, for so many reasons, *conf.* was and is a vision of the soul aspiring after what is most divine in us.³

The context of these Confessions stretches deep into the 4th century CE. Born in 354, Augustine wrote Confessions in the year 397, most likely, though it may have been as late as CE 401.⁴ Bishop of Hippo at the time, Augustine writes with a great audience in mind, including the Almighty. Augustine is the inheritor of at least one great tradition, that of the Platonists, who had a distinct worldview bearing upon all dimensions of man's existence—spiritual, emotional, psychological, social, physical, and eternal. At the time of Augustine, Neo-Platonism had emerged, which synthesized Aristotelian metaphysics and epistemology with Platonic elements, especially the doctrine of the soul taught in Plato's *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Symposium*. The Hellenistic Roman philosopher Plotinus (CE 204-70)

2 See WILLIS, G., *Augustine's 'Confessions': A Biography*, Princeton 2011, *passim* for insightful commentary. Among numerous perspective comments on literary structure, composition and genre, the author calls book 10 the 'hinge' of *conf.*, which Augustine himself validates: 'A primo usque ad decimum de me scripti sunt: in tribus caeteris, de Scripturis sanctis, ab eo quod scriptum est, *In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram* usque ad sabbati requiem' (*retr.* 2.6.1).

3 On literary structure, cf. *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions*, Paffenroth, K. and Kennedy, R. (eds.), Louisville 2003, *passim*.

4 These are traditional dates; however, WILLIS sets a *terminus ante quem* at CE 403, citing HOMBERT P.-M., *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, Paris 2000, p. 9-23. On the background of Augustine's life and career, BROWN, P. *Augustine: A Biography*, Berkeley 2000, is indispensable. BROWN contextualizes *conf.* in *Augustine*, p. 69-175. Though BROWN's emphasis is on Augustine the bishop, his telling of Augustine's early life remains useful.

is responsible for much of this synthesis, though others in the Christian tradition and beyond are contributors as well. Augustine himself is certainly Neoplatonic in his doctrine of the soul and his understanding of the world as created by God, imperfect and yearning for perfection, and driven by the earnest desire for love.

Augustine narrates his experience in North Africa with certain sects, which he found wanting in the end, in books 2 and 3. In addition to the religious searching of Augustine's early days, he encountered Vergil and Cicero, the great Roman poet and the distinguished statesman and orator, respectively. Both of these, along with his training in rhetoric profoundly influence Augustine's manner of thinking: on the one hand, he conceives of his journey as a sort of odyssey through time and space, from his home town in Thagaste to Carthage and Rome and Milan, then back again, while God was calling him inwardly, using the external events to shape his being in the world and receptivity to grace. On the other hand, and perhaps more powerful, is the influence of rhetoric. Augustine complained (Book 1, especially) about memorizing and reciting the story of Dido, regarding her in hindsight as pathetic and pitiful. Yet when he encountered Cicero, privately perhaps, Augustine discovered a new thirst for wisdom, which was not found in the verses of Homer.⁵ While he may have appreciated the Aeneid at the time of his reading, he claims later, at the time of his writing of *Confessions*, that he excelled in his presentations in public primarily for the winning of applause. It was not until his encounter with the Hortensius of Cicero (Conf. 3.4.7) that the later Augustine considered himself on the road to wisdom. While the text of Cicero that so affected him is not extant, this is an indicator of Augustine's encounter with the rhetorical tradition, which tempers his self-presentation and literary awareness throughout the work.

The very text of *conf.* testifies to the nature of literary culture in late Roman society, a pervasive concern among scholars of late antique and medieval history alike. Harry Gamble,

5 For example: TAYLOR, J. «St. Augustine and the 'Hortensius' of Cicero,» *Studies in Philology*, 60 (1963) 487-98. HAMMOND thinks Augustine read Cicero's *Hortensius* as part of the normal curriculum in rhetoric, as opposed to philosophy. On this theme, also see CHADWICK, H. *Augustine*, Oxford 1986, and BROWN, *Augustine*, p. 69ff.

for one, gives extensive contextual information about literacy in the early Christian world in his *Books and Readers in the Early Church*.⁶ Through most of the opening books, concerns about reading and education dominate the narrative. Augustine describes his experience with Cicero, Virgil, and Homer; later, he read the bible, but not until his days in Italy did he find much use for it. Early on, he preferred Cicero, and later, the «books of the Platonists» which he received from a friend in Milan, the imperial seat where Ambrose was bishop. The sermons of Ambrose, as well as the books of the Platonists began to have an effect on him, and his reading included Scripture to a greater degree.

As Book 8 suggests, the form of these books, the codex, was a relatively new piece of technology, replacing the scroll. This in part influenced Augustine's description of himself finding new meaning in one of Paul's letters.⁷ In another example, Augustine describes himself observing Ambrose reading: *oculi ducebantur per paginas et cor intellectum rimabatur, vox autem et lingua quiescebant*, his eyes darted across the pages and his hear understood the sense; his voice and tongue, however, were silent.⁸ As Augustine tells his readers, the example of Ambrose alone in the study was perhaps an exception to common practice.⁹ Instead, it was the norm to read in public before an audience, almost as an exercise in declamation, on the part of the speaker; and, on the part of the audience, as Willis nicely puts it, the book almost served as a musical score to animate conversation.

Paul the apostle gives some precedent for authorship during the Roman empire, as letters frequently distinguish whether Paul wrote with his own hand (e.g. 1 Cor. 16:21, Gal 6:11)

6 See GAMBLE, H., *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*, New Haven 1995.

7 On this, see FERRARI, L., «Science and the Fictional Conversion Scene,» in *A Reader's Companion*, p.127-36.

8 *conf.* 6.3.3. See HILL, M., «Reading without Moving Your Lips: The Role of the Solitary Reader in Liberal Education,» in *Augustine and Liberal Education*, Paffenroth, K. and Hughes, K. (eds.), Aldershot 2000, p. 179-197.

9 Concerning the status of written literature in an oral society, see WILLIS, *Augustine*, 1-17. Also see STEINHAUSER, K., «Manuscripts,» in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, Fitzgerald, A. (ed.), Grand Rapids 1999, p. 525ff. and PETRUCCI, A., *Public Lettering: Script, Power, and Culture*, Chicago 1993.

or dictated to a scribe (as in Rom. 16:22). Beyond the mechanics of dictation, we should also consider the role of memory. Paul and Augustine both relied extensively on memorized passages in their composition. Not only does Augustine explore memory in Book 10 explicitly on its own terms in detail, he is forever citing from Scripture and other ancient authorities throughout the text. The opening line, cited above, «*magnus es domine*,» is itself a quotation from the Psalms. Paul's letter to the Romans is another favorite, which Augustine also uses in the first paragraph: «*quomodo credent sine praedicante?*» These small examples are the tip of an enormous body of literature memorized to some degree by the saint. In short, techniques of memorization and reference to outside authority form the core of Augustine's method of composition.¹⁰

The audience which Brown identifies, the *servi dei*, was the group of immediate close associates to Augustine, such as Alypius and Paulinus, men who were in the same circle of friends, sharing books, reflections and prayers on their way to heaven. In other words, Augustine wrote as a prayer to God, but he also wrote for fellow Christians, especially perhaps for those who shared his attraction to the ascetic life. It may be that Augustine also wrote to defend himself against accusations of lingering Manichaeism, or Platonism for that matter, which may nevertheless persist as a dominant trend in his thought, at the same time, Augustine was defining an ideal of Christian asceticism. Apart from his self-denial, Augustine's asceticism was also a position within society; for as much as he was a monk, emphasizing prayer, chastity and humility, Augustine was also a bishop and a priest, responsible for consecrating the elements, performing other pastoral duties, hearing cases of those in the community, and above all preaching the word of God. He himself was a servant of God, administering the life of the Spirit to those around him. Thus, his ascetic practice and lifestyle allowed him nevertheless to engage the community of his town in North Africa, Hippo Regius. The Confessions only extended his influence. According to Brown, Augustine as the ideal man of God, bishop and monk, in the world acting with authority

10 On memory, also see YATES, F., *The Art of Memory*, Chicago 1966, and CARRUTHERS, M., *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge 1990, and *eadem*, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and The Making of Images*, Cambridge 2000, p. 7-59.

yet retreating within for prayer, lasted into the Carolingian period and flourished in the early Middle Ages.¹¹

2. SPIRITUAL READING

It is worth remembering that *conf.* are a prayer of Augustine, designed to give praise.¹² The comparison to the Psalms, therefore, brings out the nature of Augustine's uniqueness in the tradition of biography among Greco-Roman philosophers; for rather than write a treatise on the nature of God and his relation to the world, he began with an invocation that continues right on through to the end. The entire *Confessions* is an invocation, and while Christians already baptized were the primary readership intended, the true audience was God. It was not an apologetic piece except by accident. We know men such as Pelagius read Augustine's *Confessions*. Contrary to the reaction recorded by Augustine in *retr.* 2.6.1 *Confessions* was not as edifying to Pelagius or Julian of Eclanum as much as they were stimulus to advance the opposite opinion, to correct the wrongs of *Confessions*. This debate continued in the later Middle Ages, which means perhaps that Augustine's intended aim was thwarted in the hearts and minds of some of his readers, who were inspired less to pray and more rather to debate. Thus, it was more as a philosopher that Augustine was read by such an audience.

That is not to say the audience was exclusively learned disputants during the Carolingian Empire; monks, learned or not, perhaps the same ones who discussed predestination at length, likewise used *conf.* as a means for devotion, as Teresa Webber demonstrates. Augustinian monks, a smaller population than Benedictines, must have read *Confessions* and *De Trinitate* (*trin.*) alongside their gospels. Liturgical readings, too, contain portions from key parts in the narrative, such as the feast day of Moni-

11 BROWN, *Augustine*, p. 151-75. Also see ROUSSEAU, P., *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian*, South Bend 2010, and LEYSER, C., *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great*, Oxford 2000. See STRAW, C., *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection*, Berkeley 1988, as a point of comparison.

12 See O'DONNELL, J., *Augustine*, Oxford 1992, vol. 2, on *conf.* 1.1.1 for at least three senses of the word *confiteor*: «praise (*confessio laudis*), self-blame (*confessio peccatorum*), or (least common in A. and in *conf.*) determined avowal (*confessio fidei*).»

ca, his mother, which includes a passage from Book 9 when Augustine narrates her death.¹³ The educational aspect, too, was important, particularly in the cathedral schools and, eventually, the universities.¹⁴ *Confessions* was a keystone of the medieval educational curriculum, and not surprisingly the increase of the number of MSS coincided with the rise of the universities.¹⁵

Although God is the audience of *conf.*, for the purpose of Augustine's secondary audience—himself and, more importantly, other men and women—Augustine presents an invitation to a new life. At the same time, he provides a well-rounded liberal arts education to his readers.¹⁶ Brown's biography of Augustine identifies the educational aspect among of *conf.* even readers of Augustine's day, for it was an innovative approach that Augustine attempted in *conf.*, accepted warmly by the literate friends who read Scripture and saints lives but had little appreciation for Greek philosophy.¹⁷ It could serve as Cicero's Hortentius did for him, acting as a protreptic introducing the reader, presumably already baptized, to a life of ascetic discipline.¹⁸ As an educational device for the purpose of learning pagan literature and becoming acquainted with the trends which shaped Mediterranean culture for centuries, not to mention acquiring the Christian *paedeia* which flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries, many students read *Confessions* with an eye toward intellectual, spiritual or personal development.¹⁹

In *conf.*, as the working out of salvation, Augustine rejected his arranged marriage and committed himself to the practice of celibacy.²⁰ This decision led to his ordination in 391 and

13 For example: *Benedictine Daily Prayer: A Short Breviary*, Johnson, M. (ed.), Collegeville 2005, p. 2066-2067.

14 BISCHOFF, B., *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, Cambridge 2007, contains relevant material for the Carolingian period.

15 See OLSON, L., «Reading Augustine's *Confessiones* in Fourteenth-Century England: John de Grandisson's Fashioning of Text and Self,» *Traditio*, 52 (1997) 201-57 for fourteenth century evidence of use in the curricula at Paris.

16 MARTIN, T., «Augustine's *Confessions* as Pedagogy: Exercises in Transformation,» in *Augustine and Liberal Education*, p. 25-54 uses this approach.

17 BROWN, *Augustine*, p. 151-77.

18 HADOT, P., *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Malden 1995, and *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Cambridge 2004, advances this perspective.

19 See BROWN, P. *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, Madison 1992, p. 35-70.

20 Immediately after the garden scene, Augustine tells us of his mother's double joy—Augustine's conversion to Christianity and his commitment

eventually consecration as bishop five years later. It was a particular state of life, or habit, he had chosen—to be prayerful, to be faithful to his community, and to remain celibate. Above all, as bishop, his habit included preaching the Word of God for the people who attended his regular mass. Not surprisingly, as the new movement of Christian monasticism developed in the fifth and sixth century, became regulated and spread across Europe, the writings of the Fathers were a constant presence in the monasteries, including Augustine's *Confessions*. Like the *Life of Antony*, which Augustine references multiple times in the narrative of Book 8, *conf.* in a way are a support of Christian monasticism and ascetic practice. This is a claim of genre and literary interpretation, but what I would like to explore here is how widely Augustine's manuscripts circulated in Europe and for what purpose.

In a way similar to how Augustine read the text of the bible, later men and women read *conf.*—as devotional material, in order to be formed in the way of Christ. Ailred of Rievaulx is one example of using *conf.* as a model for his own spiritual pilgrimage.²¹ In Augustine's *retractatio*, which scribes copied on the front pages of English manuscripts from the eleventh century, he makes clear he intended his *Confessions* to be read devotionally and for the purpose of spiritual formation.²² As Eric

to the ascetic lifestyle: 'convertisti enim me ad te, ut nec uxorem quaererem nec aliquam spem saeculi huius, stans in ea regula fidei in qua me ante tot annos ei revelaveras, et convertisti luctum eius in gaudium multo uberius quam voluerat, et multo carius atque castius quam de nepotibus carnis meae requirebat' (*conf.* 8.12.30).

21 See *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx* by Walter Daniel, POWICKE, M. (ed.), Oxford 1950, p. 50 and WEBBER, T., «The Diffusion of Augustine's Confessions in England During the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,» in *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey*, Oxford 1996, p. 29-45 at 44. In the words of his biographer, Walter Daniel, «legebat autem libros quorum litera lacrimas elicere solet et edificare mores, et maxime confessiones Augustini manibus portabat assidue, eo quod illos libros quasi quasdam introducciones habebat cum a seculo converteretur»—my emphasis.

22 O'DONNELL reproduces the statement (*retr.* 2.6.1) in his edition, on the first page of his introduction: «confessionum mearum libri tredecim et de malis et de bonis meis deum laudant iustum et bonum atque in eum excitant humanum intellectum et affectum. interim quod ad me attinet, hoc in me egerunt cum scriberentur et agunt cum leguntur. quid de illis alii sentiant, ipsi viderint; multis tamen fratribus eos multum placuisse et placere scio.»

Jager shows, it was characteristic medieval practice to read with the heart, centered in one's emotions.²³ Ailred is one case, but there are others such as John de Exeter, later in the fourteenth century. Webber's example of Goscelin recommending *Confessions* to Eve for the purpose of devotion and Latin learning adds to this portrayal, for although both Goscelin and Eve were former members of religious houses, both were a part of the medieval monastic culture which preserved and disseminated Augustine's *Confessions*, and both were clearly interested in *conf.* for devotional purposes.

By the time of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Augustine's *Confessions* had gained status in the eyes of monastic readers, including one instance cited by Teresa Webber.²⁴ Goscelin, a former Flemish monk, recommended *conf.* of Augustine in a letter written in the 1080s to Eve, a former nun from a nearby town. At this point, *conf.* were inseparable from the works of other Fathers, and Goscelin also suggested works of Jerome and Gregory the Great, along with Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Eusebius. This breadth suggests that Goscelin was among the most literate men of his time, and Weber makes clear that such a program of reading was not common in the religious houses of England in the eleventh century. In fact, after a 200-year period without evidence, he was at the front edge of a resurgence of manuscripts of *conf.* in England.

A further example can be found in the fourteenth century in John de Exeter, a bishop who as a student carefully read and marked his copy of *conf.*²⁵ Born to Sir William and Lady Sibilla de Grandisson in 1292 at Herefordshire in Ashperton, the second son in his family, his parents named him John and he was known as John de Grandisson until he became bishop of Exeter, when he took the name John de Exeter, which signified for him a break with his former self.²⁶ Before he became bis-

23 See JAEGER, E., *The Book of the Heart*, Chicago 2000, especially the second chapter, on Augustine.

24 WEBBER, «Diffusion,» *passim*.

25 Here see OLSON, L., «Reading Augustine's *Confessiones* in Fourteenth-Century England: John de Grandisson's Fashioning of Text and Self,» *Traditio*, 52 (1997) 201-257.

26 OLSON, *ibid.*, p. 237-38 documents the «transformation from student to bishop which Grandisson achieved with Augustine's autobiographical assistance.»

hop, John marked and annotated London, Lambeth Place MS 203, while a student at the University of Paris. Later, he would donate this manuscript to his cathedral at Exeter so that readers would learn from Augustine and his own notes. At the time of writing, John was preparing himself for the life of a bishop, with the hope that he might take that office. Although John and his contemporaries frequently made such commentaries, Olson demonstrates the eminent value of MS 203 for its inclusion of John's comments, particularly for their self-reflective nature. As Olson writes, concerning the end matter which described John's gift and his corrections that accompanied the manuscript,

«[these comments] indicate Grandisson's efforts to improve and reshape a twelfth-century copy of the *Confessiones* for the use of a learned fourteenth-century reader, and they imply his wish for these improvements to benefit those of his cathedral community, those individuals within his spiritual cure. They are, in fact, a profoundly sophisticated manifestation of how Grandisson [John of Exeter at the time of the gift] inscribed himself into this volume both as a student in France and a bishop in England; and inherent in their grammar are murmurs of the ways in which Augustine's autobiography was itself inscribed upon the developing character of Grandisson.»²⁷

Throughout her paper, which highlights the nature of comments made by Grandisson and their location within *conf.*, Olson shows the transformation of an individual from an aspiring student with clear moral aims and interest in serving the Church into a refined churchman, capable of sharing his knowledge with others. By looking to Augustine as an exemplar, John learned to look for the image of God within himself, determining in the end to model his behavior on the high calling of direct relationship to the Almighty, which counsel he provides to those of his cathedral who would read the manuscript. Olson makes us believe that *conf.*, and MS 203 in particular, were a «living manuscript» in the hands of John Grandisson, one that «grew and changed along with its owner over the years.»²⁸

27 For the end leaf comments in which John donates MS 203 to his church, see OLSON, «Reading Augustine's *Confessiones* in Fourteenth-Century England,» p. 201-202.

28 OLSON, *ibid.*, p. 217. Of particular interest is John's use of the *Confessions* for describing a curriculum for lower levels of education, based on Augustine's own reflections of his early days and his encounter with Virgil, p. 219f., which emphasized his use of the theme of «spiritual exile.» On the

Finally, another important entry point for discussing Augustine's reception is Linda Olson's work on women readers.²⁹ The social and ethical questions involving female readers of Augustine expands our horizon and raises important issues about power and authority in the transmission of Augustine's Confessions. That women should read Augustine's Confessions and find in them worth, specifically spiritual value for the purpose of cultivating the inner life, and the life of the mind, shows the inherent value of Augustine's text and comments on the nature of spiritual authority, in contrast to that of pagan classics.

To give one example of a devotional reading, I reproduce here one of the most inspiring passages in *conf.*—a well-known section (Conf 10.27.38) which leads to *sero te amavi*, late have I loved thee. Maria Boulding's version has it indented to indicate its poetic quality; it is a love poem written from one man's heart to God: Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, *sero te amavi*. It is a terrifyingly beautiful passage: *pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova*, late have I loved you! And behold, *ecce intus eras et ego foris*, you were within and I was without.³⁰

*Sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi! Et ecce intus eras et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam, et in ista formosa quae fecisti deformis inruebam. Mecum eras, et tecum non eram. Ea me tenebant longe a te, quae si in te non essent, non essent. Vocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam; coruscasti, splenduisti et fugasti caecitatem meam; fragrasti, et duxi spiritum et anhelum tibi; gustavi et esurio et sitio; tetigisti me, et exarsi in pacem tuam.*³¹

whole, John's interest was to improve education among lay people and clergy, which he attempted to do by pointing out the relevant issues in Augustine's *Confessions* such as his analysis of motivation in Book 8. Other examples of men who used the *Confessions* as a model for personal conversion are two famous archbishops, Thomas Bradwardine and Richard FitzRalph, who each wrote similar spiritual autobiographies.

29 See OLSON, L., «Did medieval English women read Augustine's *Confessiones*? Constructing feminine interiority and literacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries,» in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, p. 69-96, Jones, S. (ed.), Turnhout 2003.

30 BOULDING, M., O.S.B, *Saint Augustine: The Confessions*, New York 1998, p. 222; my translation from the edition of Verheijen: '...You called, shouted, broke through my deafness... *mecum eras*, you were with me, *et tecum non eram*' (*conf.* 10.27). Gorman begins with *conf.* 10.24 in his evaluation of the textual tradition for the work as a whole.

31 VERBAAL, W., «The Writer's Love. Love and the Act of Reading: Plato, Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux,» in *Medieval Manuscripts in Transition*:

3. MANUSCRIPT TRANSMISSION

From the time of Augustine's composition (397-401/3) of *conf.*, there is no manuscript witness to the text. By common consensus, the earliest manuscript is a half-uncial mid-sixth century MS, Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Sessorianus 55.³² Bernhard Bischoff also identifies an Italian manuscript of noted antiquity, now lost, which contained some part of *conf.*³³ Of the ten or twelve manuscripts which form the basis of most modern critical editions, all except Sessorianus 55 (S) date from the ninth and early tenth centuries. Gorman tells us the readership was limited to the Loire valley during the ninth century, after which copies proliferated throughout the continent. English MSS which survive date from 1066, after the Norman Conquest, as Teresa Webber has shown.³⁴ The main branches of the stemma, upon which Verheijen, Gorman, and O'Donnell agree for the most part are *á*, from which S derives along with Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1911 (O)—Verheijen's favorite, a ninth century copy—*â*, from which most other ninth century MSS come, and lastly, a possible third branch, consisting of the sixth century florilegia of Eugippius.³⁵

The quality of the manuscripts differs. For instance, the oldest is not necessarily the best, an axiom which holds in this case. Sessorianus 55, our oldest evidence, is, according to O'Donnell, not the premier document, despite its age. This apparent advantage pales in comparison to its relative flaws: haste and lack of careful attention by the scribe. «It is the work of a man in a hurry,» leaving out words and even whole phrases at a time or

Tradition and Creative Recycling, Claassens, G. and Verbeke, W., (eds.), Leuven 2006, p. 326-29, cites *conf.* 10.27.38 comments on the hyper-awareness in Augustine's mind of his audience: «Why has it been written for someone to read? What does it mean for him who may have read it? *Quid ad nos?*»

32 The MS is documented in LOWE, E., *Codices Latini Antiquiores* 4. 420a, 421, and 420b, Oxford 1947, discussed below.

33 GORMAN, M., «The Earliest Manuscript Tradition of St. Augustine's 'Confessions',» *Journal of Theological Studies*, 34 (1983) 114-15, where Gorman cites Bischoff's personal correspondence about this missing MS, Madrid, Convento de la Encarnacion, located in LOWE, C. L. A. 11.1640. Also see VERHEIJEN, L., «Un fragment du VI^e siècle,» *Augustiniana*, 24 (1978) 13-17.

34 WEBBER, «Diffusion,» *passim* provides extensive analysis of the MSS. Also see Linda Olson, «Did medieval English women read Augustine's *Confessiones*?» *passim*.

35 GORMAN, «The Earliest Manuscript Tradition,» *passim*, where he delves into study of Eugippius.

misinterpreting one word for another closely related word. By contrast, O, late in comparison with S, O'Donnell calls the «best single manuscript.»³⁶ Of later medieval manuscripts, hundreds exist for Confessions, as many as four hundred, perhaps, with up to one-fourth yet to catalogue by Verheijen's count.³⁷

Sessorianus 55, our oldest known copy of *conf.* of Augustine, was a palimpsest in part, written on parchment of good quality. Scholars date the MS to the mid-sixth century.³⁸ Rewritten leaves which once contained Pliny's Natural History (foll. 169-176) now contain portions from the latter half of *conf.* Although leaves 68-69 were restored by later hands in an «early Italian pre-Carolingian miniscule,» the remaining leaves were written in a small half-uncial with a rich brown ink, however titles occur in red uncial. The scribes were, in the opinion of E.A. Lowe, «very expert.» While the MS does not contain any decorations, the restored leaves 68-69 were written in a pale olive ink and contain small flourishes. Marginalia commenting on the text, perhaps contemporary to the writing of the MS, written in «expert cursive,» occur on many pages, e.g. foll. 29, 33v, 179, 182 et passim. Lowe notes distinctive features of the abbreviation, lettering and punctuation, and identifies the origin as Northern Italy, based on script from the text and margins.

Among the several hundred catalogued manuscripts of Confessions in central Europe during the medieval period, the «overwhelming proportion» occurs in or after the twelfth century.³⁹ This refers, however, to extant copies of the complete manuscript of the work, not including florilegia such as Eugippius's Excerpta which may have circulated earlier. In the seventh and eighth centuries there are citations given by Bede from Book 1 in his *De orthographia* and from Books 12-13 in his commentary on Genesis. Other examples include Alcuin (d. 804 A.D.),

36 O'DONNELL, J., *Augustine: Confessions vol. 1*, Oxford 1992, p. lvii, notes that Knöll favored the first and Verheijen favored the second.

37 See O'DONNELL, *Augustine*, p. lvi, n. 107. The most recent exhaustive publication listing known MSS of Augustine's *Conf.* is *Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung der Werke des Heiligen Augustinus*, Wien 1969-2010.

38 LOWE describes Sessorianus 55 as sixth century; BISCHOFF prefers *fifth*.

39 WEBBER, «Diffusion,» p. 31 n. 10 cites catalogues of *conf.* including Skutella, Verheijen, and A. WILMART, A., «La Tradition des grand ouvrages de saint Augustin', *Miscellanea*, 2 (Rome, 1931) 259-68, adding New Haven, Yale University Library, MS Beinecke Marston 157 (s. xii) to their lists.

who may have known Confessions, and the late eighth century Royal Prayer Book (London, BL, MS Royal 2.A.xx), which elaborates or echoes parts of Book 1 of *conf.*. This is the latest example, and afterwards there is no testimony to manuscript knowledge in England until Goscelin in the eleventh century. Most readers, in fact, were in the Loire Valley from the eighth to the eleventh centuries, so England was not alone in its «lack of interest.» Viking invasions, too, may have been a significant factor in causing this deficit in witnesses: and there are no surviving manuscripts known to have existed in England prior to the Viking invasions. Webber summarizes her impression, confirmed in part by its absence in book lists before the late eleventh century, «Augustine's Confessions was not present in England in the two centuries prior to the Norman Conquest.»⁴⁰

In some manuscript copies, the front end-leaf included Augustine's retractatio or reconsideration of Confessions, which emphasized the devotional reading. Marginal annotations, such as those found in Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Sessorianus 55, exist in other manuscript copies, most of which are brief references either to notable figures or philosophical and theological controversies. According to Teresa Webber, all later English manuscript copies derive from one of two: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 1913A and Boulogne-su-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 46 are the two heads of transmission. Of these, the tradition which drew upon Paris 1913A spread more. An abbey at Ghent, St Peter's, held Paris 1913A from the mid-eleventh until the late twelfth century, when monks traded it to Saint-Thierry, an abbey in Rheims, for a copy of four homilies by St Bernard. Afterwards, it spread through manuscripts copied widely across England, and was used by the Maurists in their 17th century critical edition of *conf.*⁴¹

40 WEBBER, «Diffusion,» 32 cites examples of these book lists, of which all can be found in LAPIDGE, M., «Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England,» *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, Lapidge, M. and Gneuss H. (eds.), Cambridge 1985, p. 33-89. The earliest list that includes *conf.* is a summary of the gifts made to Durham Cathedral Priory by William of St Calais, who died in 1096, found in TURNER, C., «The Earliest List of Durham MSS,» *Journal of Theological Studies*, 19 (1918) 121-32. Although *conf.* was on the list, a copy does not survive.

41 Among the derivative manuscripts, Webber lists Hereford Cathedral, MS O.iv.8 (s. xii *med.*, Hereford Cathedral), London, Lambeth Palace Library, MSS 365vol. 1 (s. xii *in*, Lanthony) and 336 (s. xii *med.*, Lanthony), and Lincoln Cathedral, MS 214 vol. 2 (s. xii, Lincoln). The fourth is unknown.

On the other hand, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 46, written between the mid-eleventh and early twelfth century, originated perhaps from Saint-Bertin at the scriptorium which was flourishing there. Two manuscripts independently came from Boulogne 46, one at Christ Church, Canterbury and one at Durham.⁴² Though errors exist within this family of manuscripts there is «an exceptionally close» resemblance between Boulogne 46 and Trinity B.3.25, according to Webber's research. For both traditions, Webber mentions the possibility or likelihood of an intermediary which stands between the archetype of either Paris 1913A and Boulogne 46 and later manuscript copies like Trinity B.3.25, Durham B.IV.6, and Lincoln Cathedral 214. Affinities such as «layout, display script, and scribal practices» indicate the proximity of a copy and its exemplar. Practices such as orthography, preferences for abbreviations and word spacing, and the presence of common end matter are other factors in drawing comparisons.

From these two sources, Paris 1913A and Boulogne 46, we can see the whole English tradition developing. After the Conquest, Webber speculates, Flemish monasteries were responsible for the influx, not the Normans themselves, for even the Normans were lacking in patristic literature. In fact, the earliest copy held by the Normans (Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 82) dates from the late eleventh century. The commonly renewed interest in the patristic sources of Christian thought, present in all of Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, occurred independently from the Conquest, and from Italy to modern Belgium it caused the building of monastic libraries that were rivaled only by prior Carolingian collections. These libraries obtained items not solely for devotional reading or ethical instruction, but also for intellectual and polemical purposes. Naturally the curators developed a canon of patristic authors, primary among them, «Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory.»⁴³

The Confessions passed through many hands, and many scribes copied its letters; more still, perhaps, benefited as read-

⁴² These are Christ Church, Canterbury (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.3.25) and the composite manuscript Durham, Dean and Chapter, MS B.IV.6.

⁴³ See WEBBER, «Diffusion,» 42, where she adds also Hilary and Cyprian, whom Cassiodorus recommends in Book I of *Institutiones divinarum litterarum* in his discussion of learned writers.

ers. Monasteries were the leading force in this preservation and transmission, though the spread of copies of Confessions was not uniform. As I have shown, the introduction of two important manuscripts, Paris 1913A and Boulogne 46, led to the widespread use of Augustine's writings in English devotions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, thanks to the Flemish monasteries which housed them between 800 and 1000 A.D. Because there were so many MSS written after the twelfth century, as many as 334 according to most counts, later editors, such as the Maurists, had plenty of evidence with which to construct their preferred text, although the earlier witnesses are inadequate for establishing the textual tradition.

4. COMPARING MANUSCRIPTS AND CRITICAL EDITIONS

Not least among the late medieval supporters of patristic literature in general, and Augustine and his Confessions in particular, were the Maurists, a Benedictine congregation established in 17th century France. A renewal within the Benedictine tradition, the Maurist brotherhood developed a reputation for combining devotional life with scholarly concern for texts, especially manuscripts, which led to their publication of the collected works of Augustine in a new critical edition (1679-1700). Michael Gorman has evaluated the Maurists in light of manuscripts used in their edition of Confessions, which J.P. Migne reproduced in his 19th century *Patrologia Latina*.⁴⁴

The Maurists, though working post-print, are important for the study of the manuscript tradition of Confessions and their transmission throughout Europe because of their extensive, if imperfect, knowledge of the sources. For example, the Maurists identified a ninth century manuscript as «most ancient», while later they called a sixth century manuscript the same thing, '*vetustissimus*'. To Michael Gorman, at least, this demonstrates a lack of precision in dating techniques available to the Maurist editors: as he says, «it is important to recall that the Maurists possessed only a vague idea of the relative age of their manu-

44 On this, see GORMAN, M., «The Maurists' Manuscripts of Four Major Works of Saint Augustine, With Some Remarks on Their Editorial Techniques,» in *The Manuscript Traditions of the Works of St Augustine*, Sismel 2001, p. 62-104.

scripts.»⁴⁵ Gorman identifies twenty-seven manuscripts used in the Maurist edition, mostly French, dating from the ninth through the fourteenth centuries. The English source cited by Teresa Webber, Paris 1913A, Gorman identifies as their Codex Albinensis. Many of their sources, five of the total number twenty-seven, are either missing or unaccounted for in Gorman's tally. On the whole, Gorman has much to say in favor of the Maurist edition. He finds only a few mistakes in their references to variants in the manuscripts, and even less in their citations of the variants. In citations, Gorman notes, the Maurists did not distinguish among emendations, marginalia, corrections and erasures.⁴⁶ At times, in unique cases, there was an asterisk placed to indicate a word had come from the margin or elsewhere, but the author only lists a handful. His final view is that their achievement was a «paradox,» «ahistorical,» and not yet surpassed by modern editions.

In a series of articles published between 1984 and 1987, Michael Gorman dealt with the manuscript tradition of Confessions, and his work is a useful starting point not only for learning about the stemma of Augustine's Confessions, but also a good way to learn about the series of critical editions and scholarship on Augustine in the modern era. Gorman's results were still upheld in the 1990s by J. O'Donnell, who reproduced Gorman's stemma with only minor revision. Gorman is noteworthy for his effort to reveal the usefulness of Eugippius's Excerpta, a florilegium of Augustine's works, for the purpose of establishing a text for *conf.* To highlight the significance of using manuscripts in addition to critical editions, Gorman explains how he compared the versions of Knöll and Skutella with copies of the anthology produced by Eugippius, with important results. He documents dozens of *mis*-readings, as he sees them, in both editions—particularly that of Skutella.⁴⁷

The passage considered here by Gorman (*conf.* 10.24ff.) continues after 'sero te amavi... tetigist me, et exarsi in pacem

45 He does not think the Maurists used Sessorianus 55. For the list, see GORMAN, «The Maurists' Manuscripts,» in *The Manuscript Traditions*, p. 69-70 and p. 88ff. for critical remarks of their methods and editorial principles.

46 See also MIGNE, J., *Patrologia Latina* 32.

47 GORMAN, M., «The Early Manuscript Tradition of St. Augustine's *Confessiones*,» *Journal of Theological Studies*, 34 (1983) 120-33 on the author's adventures with Eugippius and Augustine.

tuam' with other memorable Augustinian phrases and sentiments; for example, «Give what you command, and then command whatever you will; da quod iubes et iube quod vis.»⁴⁸ Though it inspired the Pelagian controversy for its emphasis upon divine as opposed to human action, within its context, this passage continues the sort of enflamed love poetry which characterized «Late have I loved you.» For the decisions Gorman makes, he uses a citation style which depends on the pagination of Skutella's critical edition, rather than the more standard paragraph and section number used by O'Donnell and Verheijen alike, along with most English translations, including Maria Boulding's, Frank Sheed's, and Henry Chadwick's, helpful to the reader wanting to compare the evidence for himself. To his credit, he highlights a beautiful passage, notable for its deeply moving effect on the reader.⁴⁹

5. CONCLUSION: READERS AND THEIR RESPONSES

The interpretation and analysis of *conf.* today is at an important turning point, exhibiting a new direction of research and commentary. Along with Pierre Hadot, many of Augustine's contemporary readers are recovering the late antique and medieval practice of reading Augustine 'devotionally'. Thomas Martin, for example, blends the devotional and educational uses of Augustine's work, and he has analyzed *conf.* as a primary textbook in acquiring a liberal education during the Middle Ages.⁵⁰ He locates

48 Augustine *conf.* 10.29.40. It was this passage which revolted the great counterpart to Augustine in the later debates of the early fifth century, Pelagius, upon his hearing of such a deplorable appreciation of human free-will: '*continentam iubes*, you demand continence, so give what you command – *iube quod vis*'.

49 On *conf.* 10.27.38, CHADWICK notes: «Augustine's Latin in this chapter is a work of high art, with rhymes and poetic rhythm s not reproducible in translation.» See *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, Chadwick, H. (trans.), Oxford 2008, p. 201, where the author claims that Augustine «is fusing imagery from the Song of Solomon with Neoplatonic reflection on Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, and simultaneously summarizing the central themes of the *Confessions*.» The use of five spiritual senses the same author traced to Origen in the third century, which occurs above in Augustine *conf.* 10.6.8 with likewise memorable effect.

50 MARTIN, T., «Augustine's *Confessions* as Pedagogy,» 25-54 presents *conf.* as a learning tool in the same vein as Hellenistic philosophy, the schools of which sought to train followers in a particular *way of life* using distinct 'spiritual exercises' such as learning to live, to dialogue, to die, and to read.

several remarks of Augustine which allude to the sort of audience intended in his *Confessions*. In addition to what Martin describes as the 'theological-pastoral' purposes of *conf.*, namely polemic against Donatism, Manichaeism or Pelagianism, there are several occasions on which Augustine breaks from his main narrative in order to pray on behalf of those who will read his work, making it clear he has a distinct audience in mind.⁵¹ To these, one may add *Confessions* 10.1.1, where Augustine prays as Saint Paul, «Let me know you...», 'cognoscam te, cognitor meus, cognoscam, sicut et cognitus sum'.⁵²

In a similar vein, Andres Niño, a psychologist and retreat leader, discusses the value of *conf.* as a spiritual manual.⁵³ Though Martin presents somewhat of a more historical picture of the 'ascetic' or devotional reading of Augustine, with Nino we find an author in direct continuity with the late antique and medieval strategies of reading. Not only does Nino present a plausible method for incorporating the various exercises he identifies into one's reading of Augustine, he is not altogether unlike a John de Exeter in his effort to impart his understanding to others under his care. For instance, the first example he gives is finding coherence, or meaning, and learning to narrate one's past experiences. Following biblical precedent, Augustine

51 For example, see *retr.* 2.6.1, cited above, and in the *conf.* see 2.3.5, 2.7.15 and 9.13.37, where Augustine asks readers to pray for his parents; 10.3.3 and 10.3.4, on the dimensions of reading and listening present in the work; and 10.4.5, and 10.4.6. MARTIN, «Augustine's *Confessions* as Pedagogy,» p. 36 writes, «This incorporation of the reader into the narrative suggests the pedagogy of the *Confessions*: this is also the story of his companions in joy and sharers in mortality.» On this topic, again see HADOT, *Philosophy as a Way of Life, passim*.

52 Augustine concludes: 'ecce enim veritatem dilexisti, quoniam qui facit eam, venit ad lucem. volo eam facere in corde meo coram te in confessione, in stilo autem meo coram multis testibus', «For see, you have loved truth, because he who does the truth comes to the light. This I would do, in my heart, in your presence, in confession, and with my pen before many witnesses» (*conf.* 10.1.1). He wishes to make himself known to God, to be known by God, and to bring his heart before his audience.

53 Andres NIÑO, «Spiritual Exercises in Augustine's *Confessions*,» *Journal of Religion and Health*, 47 (2008) 88-102 expands and deepens the paradigm set forth by HADOT and MARTIN. While NIÑO recognizes the pioneering work of HADOT, and he makes note of MARTIN's article, he goes further along the path paved by these two, showing explicitly what Augustinian spirituality can be at its best. Rather than limit «spiritual exercises» to a false asceticism, NIÑO makes clear that these «lessons from ancient wisdom» consist of universal values such as community and centering in Christ.

does this to powerful effect, so much so that to many *conf.* are known as the world's first autobiography.

Also in the same vein of scholarship is Paul Kolbet, who first locates Augustine within the rhetorical tradition of Greece and Rome, then seeks to show in what way he transformed it.⁵⁴ Again relying on Pierre Hadot, Kolbet identifies the practice of *psychagogy*, or leading of souls, practiced by ancient Roman rhetoricians, which practice Augustine sought to employ in his lectures at Cassicacum, for example. By adapting himself to the needs of his students, recommending appropriate readings, and imparting Scripture to them clearly, Augustine preformed the role of physician of souls.

Another modern commentator, Brian Stock, has several book-length accounts of the relationship between St Augustine and reading, not to mention his articles. Perhaps one of the most prolific contemporary writers on Augustine, along with J.J. O'Donnell, Stock gives extended discussion of the issue of reading, as it occurred to Augustine in the course of his literary career, and as the later tradition interpreted it. For example, he compares the two poles of readership that exist from Plato's time to the present day, the aesthetic and the ascetic, emphasizing the role of Augustine and his readers in developing the ascetic, ethical method of reading, which constitutes the medieval practice of *lectio divina* or *lectio spiritualis*, meditation on a text. By this comparison, Stock connects the ascetic and devotional reading of Augustine, and he identifies them with each other. It was an expression of devotion for Augustine to renounce career and status within late-antique Roman society, and if all readers of the *Confessiones* do not follow Augustine into celibacy, many nevertheless delight when reading Augustine's words. Just as form and content meet in Augustine's writings to powerful effect, the ascetic does not exclude the aesthetic reading.⁵⁵

54 KOLBET, P., *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal*, Notre Dame 2010.

55 See STOCK, B., *Ethics through Literature: Ascetic and Aesthetic Reading in Western Culture*, Hanover 2007, p. 1-7 for summary of the two positions. As the author writes, «Plato and Augustine are talking about a contrast between a literary culture that offers entertainment and one that promotes moral improvement.» The topic occurs in frequently in STOCK's work, and Petrarch is one of his favorite examples of a medieval reader of Augustine. See STOCK, B., *After Augustine*, Philadelphia 2001; «Reading, Writing, and the Self: Petrarch and His Forerunners,» *New Literary History*, 26 (1995) 717-30.

The *Confessions* have been a vehicle for the formation of many readers from late antiquity to the present, especially in England and France after the Norman Conquest. This tradition, as Teresa Webber and Linda Olson have shown, expanded once *conf.* were reintroduced on the island, and English devotional use of them grew to the point that John de Exeter was using Augustine's meditations as the basis for his personal formation. This theme of Augustine *the teacher*, able to train students at every level, from grammar and rhetoric to philosophy and theology, we find preeminently in John's use of *conf.* for the education of his parish. He is not alone. Countless believers and unbelievers alike read or heard Augustine's prayer, and it has echoed down to us, intact thanks to scribes, readers, curators and benefactors, for now more than 1500 years.

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