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In Tempora Dissilui: **Time, Memory, and Narration**
in Augustine's *Confessions*

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In Tempora Dissilui: Time, Memory, and Narration

in Augustine's *Confessions*

by

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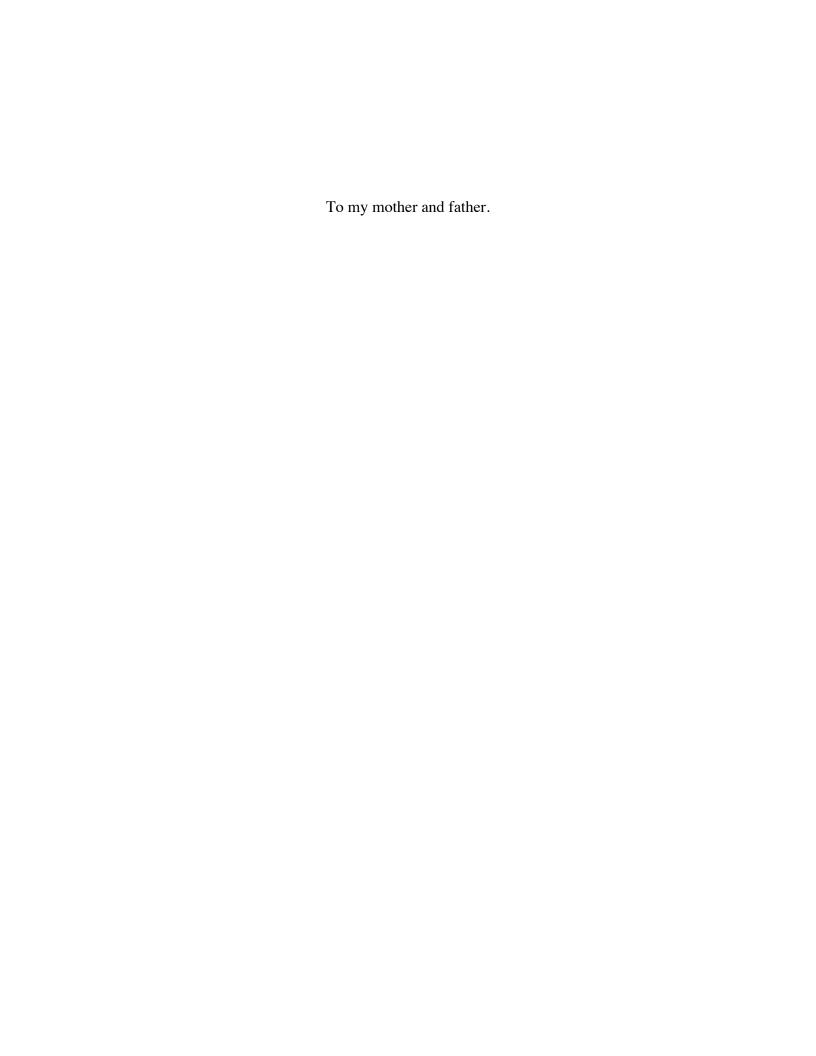
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To my mother and father.

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In Tempora Dissilui: Time, Memory, and Narration
in Augustine's *Confessions*

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This dissertation examines the narrative of Augustine's *Confessions* in light of his conception of memory and time. It responds to two long-standing scholarly debates about the work. The first of these concerns the historicity of Augustine's autobiography in Books 1-9, for Augustine's version of events is not always consistent with the historical record. The second concerns what the last four non-historical books (Books 10-13) have to do with this autobiography.

The first chapter argues that the story of the *Confessions* is about the present author as he narrates the content of his mind. Thus, it shows how all thirteen books may be considered equally autobiographical. The second chapter proposes that Augustine judges the veracity of his stories according to his memory of events, since he does not believe that he has access to the events themselves as they once unfolded in time. Due to his unequivocal condemnation of lying and deceit in *De mendacio* and elsewhere, he must have considered his story in the *Confessions* to be true from this perspective. The third chapter explains how Augustine's view of memory allows his story to be considered

true even when it diverges from the historical record. Memory is imperfect, and Augustine believes that memories, too, have agency in recollection. Thus, the historical innacuracies in Augustine's story may in fact be understood as evidence of the veracity of the account as he recalls it rather than as evidence against the story's historicity. The fourth chapter explores Augustine's proposal that time is a *distentio animi*, or a fragmented swelling of the mind. Augustine believes that the mind may find respite in an activity called *intentio* through which one may experience eternity while the body still participates in time. The conclusion suggests that confession was for Augustine a means by which one could practice *intentio*. Thus, the *Confessions* is a story about the author/narrator as he progresses through his present, from the presence of his past in Books 1-9 to the presence of God in Books 10-13.

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Introduction: The Problem of the Last Four Books

The *Confessions* is conventionally understood as a work divided into distinct parts.[1] At *Retractationes* 2.6.32, Augustine himself says that the first ten books of the *Confessions* were written "about me" (*de me*) and the last three "about holy scripture" (*de scripturis sanctis*).[2] In the first nine books, Augustine tells stories of his past, from his infancy in 354 to the death of his mother in 387. It is therefore unsurprising that these first nine books would be interpreted as distinctly *historical* autobiography.

After Book 9, Augustine turns from historical narrative to philosophical ruminations. Book 10 is about memory, and Books 11-13 derives from an interest in Genesis. Thus, by *de scripturis sanctis*, one is inclined to categorize the last *three* books (11-13, though not Book 10) as exegetical. In this way, the *Confessions* appears to be divided into two generically distinct parts: one part historical autobiography; one part biblical exegesis.

On this view, however, Book 10 is a problem. Although Augustine includes it with the books "*de me*," in it he does not tell stories of his past. But, in Bright's words, Book 10 may be seen as "a kind of existential reflection summing up the first nine books of the *Confessions*." In this way, it is "the logical and literary conclusion to the search for

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[1] I use O'Donnell's 1992 text of the *Confessions*. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[2] *Retractationes* 2.6.32: *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 legerunt cum scriberentur, et agunt cum leguntur. quid de illis alii sentiant, ipsi viderint; multis tamen fratribus eos multum placuisse et placere scio. a primo usque ad decimum de me scripti sunt; in tribus ceteris, de Scripturis sanctis, ab eo quod scriptum est, In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram, usque ad sabbati requiem.*

God that Augustine announced in Book One."[3] In all ten of these books, Augustine explores his memory: in the first nine books, he engages with particular memories of his past, while in Book 10 he explores larger questions about what memory is and how recollection works. In this way, there is a thematic unity that justifies the inclusion of Book 10 with the first nine books. However, as Bright continues:

> Books One to Nine are much more obviously a literary unity. . . . The seemingly abrupt change of style from the earlier narrative accounts of Books One to Nine, together with the appropriateness of the dedicatory prayer for his parents at the end of Book Nine as a fitting conclusion to the narrative of his conversion, was justification enough for a number of truncated versions of the *Confessions* that excluded the last three or four books.[4]

Because Book 10 does not fit with what is seen as the "literary unity" that encompasses the first nine books, and because in Book 10 Augustine does not tell stories from his past, when we speak of the "autobiographical" books of the *Confessions*, we speak only of Books 1-9, despite what Augustine himself says about the work in his *Retractationes*.

So far, then, Book 10 appears not to belong with Books 1-9. Nor, however, does it belong with Books 11-13 since its content is not inspired by Genesis. Therefore, Book 10 seems to stand on its own.[5]

It is misleading to understand by *de scripturis sanctis* that Books 11-13 are

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[3] Bright 2003: 155-6. This is not exactly the interpretation for which Bright herself argues. I will return to her proposed interpretation later in the introduction.

[4] Bright 2003: 157. Cf. also Starnes 1990: xi: " . . . the first part of the *Confessions* [Books 1-9] is composed of a single connected *argument* in addition to its more obvious historical and autobiographical character" (emphasis his).

[5] In support of the work's *tri*partition, see (among numerous others) Knauer 1955, Lancel 2002: 208, and Bright 2003: 157; 165, who proposes that Book 10 has a "Janus-like" function in that it looks back to the first nine books and forward to the last three.

generically exegetical. For instance, although Augustine's discussion of time in Book 11 is introduced with the question of what God did before he created heaven and earth, Augustine spends the remainder of the book exploring the question of time's measurement from a presentist point of view.[6] Genesis and the question of what God did before he created heaven and earth is not the topic of this discussion but merely its catalyst. Doubtless, the philosophical emphasis of these last four books, inspired by scripture or not, is what has led Book 10 to be included with Books 11-13, and all four to be designated as "philosophical" in genre. Of course, Books 1-9 are also highly philosophical, but they differ from the last four books in that Augustine's philosophical enquiries derive from specific events in his past, while the philosophy in Books 10-13 does not. As a result, we diverge from Augustine's assessment of his own work and assume a generic divide between Books 9 and 10 rather than 10 and 11. In this way, we can speak of a work split into roughly equal halves: the first half is "autobiographical"; the second "philosophical."[7]

The last four books, however we categorize them, were once considered irrelevant

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[6] Augustine proposes the question of time at *Conf.* 11.10.12-11.12.14 and returns to Genesis at 11.30.40, the conclusion of the book. What intervenes has to do with human psychology and the measurement of time, which is unrelated to the interpretation of Genesis.

[7] When we consider the second part of the *Confessions* to be "philosophical," encompassing the last four books, the ratio (using page numbers in O'Donnell's 1992 edition) is 43% (Books 10-13) to 57% (Books 1-9). But if we consider the second part to be "exegetical," encompassing only the last three books *de scripturis sanctis*, the ratio drops significantly to *ca.* 28% (Books 11-13) to *ca.* 71% (Books 1-10). Therefore, we can only speak of "halves" if we consider Book 10 along with Books 11-13, and even then the halves are not exactly equal. Book 10 itself is 14% of the work as a whole, thus just longer than the mean average of two of the first 9 books. Perhaps the length of Book 10 suggests a special status. That is, perhaps Book 10 is, in fact, pivotal to the work as a whole, as Bright 2003 suggests.

to the "literary unity" of Books 1-9.[8] Thus, the *Confessions* was seen as a work divided into two not only distinct but also unrelated parts. The first nine books appeal to the historically-minded reader because they appear to contain information with which the life of one of the West's greatest figures can perhaps be reconstructed. They also appeal to the spiritually-minded reader, for they offer an immensely personal view into the religious struggles of one of the most important Christians in the Western tradition. Doubtless for these reasons the "autobiographical" half of the *Confessions* has been seen not only as the more interesting half but also—and more problematically—as the intended centerpiece of the work.[9] As a result, certainly Books 11-13 but typically Book 10, as well, have been dismissed as irrelevant.[10]

Several studies have recently sought to understand how these last four (or three) books belong to the *Confessions*. This is what Young has called "the puzzle of the last four books."[11] Implicit in the scholarship both of Young and, following her, Kotzé is the

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[8] See n.9 below.

[9] For the lack of interest in the latter books, see O'Donnell 1992: 3.153-54; Kotzé 2004, 14 n.21. An additional reason for this favortism is a result of modern interests in psychology. As Kotzé 2004: 10 n.12 explains: "Psychological readings of the *Confessions* became increasingly popular during the previous century. . . . these studies are often less concerned with the work as a literary artefact than with modern categories of psycho-analysis. What they do illustrate—partly unintentionally—is one of the main reasons for the popularity of the *Confessions*: people remain interested in other people because they remain interested in themselves." In the same note, she includes an extensive bibliography of works that derive from or relate to this psychological self-centricity.

[10] They have not only been ignored, they were once excluded entirely from editions. See Williger 1929: 81-106; Steur 1936: 17; Theiler, 1933: 60-69; Courcelle 1968: 25-26; O'Meara 1954: 16; Blaiklock 1983. Lancel 2002: 205 assumes that books 10-13 were added after the publication of Books 1-9. Even if he were right, it would not mean that these books belong to a different project.

[11] Young 1999: 3.

contention that the traditional emphasis on Books 1-9, the "autobiography," has been excessive.[12] To be sure, the attention given to these books has reduced the last four to little more than a "loosely appended" and "less interesting addendum."[13] However, they commit precisely the same mistake as those who favor Books 1-9. By suggesting that the last four books, instead, are the real centerpiece of the work, and that the first nine serve merely as their introduction, they too run the risk of neglecting the content of over half of the work and overlooking any implicit connections between the two parts.[14]

MacDonald, however, proposes a balance between the two parts, arguing that Augustine uses his autobiography in Books 1-9 to offer real-life examples of the otherwise abstracted philosophical discussions in Books 10-13.[15] However suggestive and, in many ways, persuasive this proposal is, like Kotzé it still derives from the assumption that the work is divided in two generically distinct parts.

I believe that the approach to the *Confessions* from a reconciliatory rather than integrative perspective causes further problems for the study of the *Confessions*, if only (though not exclusively) in that it reinforces what I see as an artificial segregation of its

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[12] Kotzé 2004.

[13] Kotzé 2004: 13: "loosely appended"; 14 n.21: "a less interesting addendum."

[14] As Kotzé 2006: 79 concludes, " . . . it is easier not to see the conversion story as a goal in itself but as a device aiming at something beyond itself: in the *Confessions*, the last four books." There are several examples of autobiographical introductions to works before the *Confessions* (see Courcelle 1963: 89-197; Malherbe 1986: 34-37; and Kotzé 2006). For instance, there is the *De trinitate* of Hilary of Poitiers, the *Ad Donatum* of Cyprian of Carthage, and the *Dialogus cum Tryphone* of Justin Martyr. Of course, as Courcelle 1963: 96 says, "Je ne pretends nullement qu' Augustin ait connu et utilisé tous ces texts autobiographiques."

[15] MacDonald 2003.

supposed parts.[16] Scholarship on the *Confessions*, particularly on the last four books, has often studied the material in question in abstraction from the work as a whole. No matter how valuable these contributions are to our understanding of Augustine's thought, something is lost when we do not consider the larger context. In fact, interpretive problems can arise.[17] Take, for instance, Augustine's exploration into the question of time's measurement in Book 11. When treated as a formal account of time, it appears to contradict his views at *De civ*. 11.5-6 and 12.16.[18] The consensus seems now to be that Augustine's account in Book 11 complements rather than competes with or contradicts his views elsewhere on time.[19] I suggest that the initial confusion arose and has at times continued precisely because Book 11 has been read as separate from the work in which it appears. On a grander scale, this dissertation attempts to read all books of the *Confessions* as participating equally in a single whole.

Although MacDonald's article presupposes the work's segmentation, it provides a critical bridge between the philosophical material in the first "half" and that in the second. But, to understand the *Confessions* as a work in thirteen books, a new approach—one that does not derive from assumptions of the work's segmentation—needs to be encouraged. This is where I hope my dissertation will make a contribution. As Kotzé says: "The whole issue surrounding the presence of these [last four] books is a problem created by

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[16] Kotzé 2006: 65 rightly blames modern assumptions of genre.

[17] Cf. O'Donnell 1992: 3.151.

[18] See also *De genesi ad litteram* 3.8. On the incompatible nature of the two thoughts, see Sorabji 1983: 29-32; Matthews 2005: 76-85.

[19] Matthews 2005: 84; Nightingale 2011: 7-9.

the illegitimate assumptions later readers carried into their reading."[20] I believe that the problem is relevant to all supposed parts of the work, not just the last four books. This is not to deny that there are differences between the earlier and later books; this is obvious enough. But a unity can have internal contrasts. For instance, the first six books of the *Aeneid* are distinct in both tone and topic from the last six. We may say of the first six books that they are *de Odyssea* and of the last six that they are *de Iliade*.[21] The second "half" even has its own proem. However, no one would deny that the two halves belong to a single coherent story that is the *Aeneid*, even if—as is the case with the *Confessions*—far more attention is given to the first half than the second by both scholars and laymen alike.[22] In the case of the *Aeneid*, we do not need to reconcile the two parts or justify the existence of one part in light of the other, for the story clearly does not end when Aeneas arrives in Italy. Rather, we may talk about how the story develops from one context to another and across transitional boundaries (in the case of the *Aeneid*, the underworld). One way to do this is by watching the development of the protagonist, Aeneas, as the story develops.[23] This is precisely what I propose to do with the *Confessions*.

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[20] Kotzé 2006: 65.

[21] The distinction is obvious, but see Knauer 1964.

[22] O'Donnell 1992, 3:153-4.

[23] Mackay 1955: 184: ". . . the chief directing theme in the [underworld] journey is certainly its direct personal relevance to the character of Aeneas and his role in the story." Here, Otis 1959 is particularly helpful. To summarize his argument, by confronting his past and future in the underworld (*Aen*. 6), Aeneas undergoes a psychological shift: his attention turns from the past, which has haunted him all the way to his entrance to Elysium, toward the present in order to pave the way for the future that his father revealed to him. As I argue in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, precisely the same thing can be said of Augustine qua author/narrator in the *Confessions*.

A Summary of my Response

In my first chapter, I argue that the protagonist of the *Confessions* is the narrator, not the narrated younger Augustine whose life is often discussed in Books 1-9. To do so, I distinguish between four Augustines, two of whom exist in the text, two outside.

The *historical Augustine* is the actual person whose experiences of *res*, or objects in the world, resulted in the acquisition of memories (*imagines*) that remain in the author's memory. This is the Augustine whose life is discussed in *Confessions* 1-9. The *author* is the actual Augustine at a particular moment in time, specifically the time in which he composed the *Confessions*. Although the historical Augustine no longer exists from the author's perspective, his once present experiences (now in the author's past) provide the memories with which the author may use to construct a narrative.

When Augustine the author enters his memory to tell a story of his past, he (the author) recalls memories (*imagines*) of things in the world (*res*) that he qua historical Augustine experienced in the past: if he had not at one time experienced them, he would not now be able to recall them. The distinction between the *author* Augustine and the *historical* Augustine may seem unnecessary, but I make this distinction in order to reject the contention that Augustine's past life may be reconstructed from the text of the *Confessions*. The historical figure is not within the text, although many wish to find him there. Because he is not in the text, many readers are frustrated by what they then conclude is authorial deception. So, I propose a temporal distinction between the historical Augustine and the author Augustine in order to specify which temporal Augustine we find in the text.

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I propose a third Augustine, namely Augustine qua *narrator*, though not because I conceive of this Augustine as essentially distinct from the author of our text. He is not Bal's "fictitious spokesman."[24] Rather, narrator refers to the author—Augustine himself—as he engages in recollection and narrates (by using?) his memories.[25] Although the two activities (recollection and narration) are distinct, I argue that Augustine's narration must accurately represent what he recalls, even if he admittedly does not tell us everything.[26] My supposition is that Augustine the narrator must accurately transcribe his memories (see Chapter 2), even if those memories do not always accurately reflect real events. If what he wrote on paper differed from what he actually recalled, then the story that we read in the *Confessions* would be fiction, not autobiography. And Augustine would have lied. For this reason, I conflate recollection (a sort of inward narration) with narration in the sense of conveying a story to someone else.

The product of this recollection and narration is a *character* of the historical Augustine. This is the Augustine we find in the text when the author/narrator discusses his past. It is not *the* historical Augustine who lived the events described but rather a literary product that results from Augustine's attempt to remember him. For this reason, as I discuss in Chapter 2, we cannot truly find *the* historical Augustine in the text, for he

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[24] Bal 1999: 8.

[25] Whether Augustine is narrating his memories or narrating his historical self *using* his memories is a question I will address later.

[26] Cf. the counterfactual at *Conf.* 12.6.6: *et si totum tibi confiteatur vox et stilus meus, quidquid de ista quaestione enodasti mihi, quis legentium capere durabit?*

appears only as a literary construct.[27] However, there is at least one real Augustine in the text, and this is Augustine qua author/narrator, for it is his voice that we hear.

The argument of my first chapter has significant ramifications for our understanding of another question surrounding the *Confessions* that is historically prior to the question of unity.[28] This is the question of the historicity of Augustine's account of his past life in Books 1-9, the subject of my second chapter. The story that we read in the *Confessions* is so replete with exaggerations and understatements that it appears—as is typically argued—that Augustine intentionally distorted, if not even fabricated, his past. However, as Augustine himself says, the *Confessions* is about himself "now," not the historical Augustine who lived the events described.[29] Augustine explains that memory is "a presence of the past" (*praesens de praeteritis*).[30] Accordingly, the *Confessions* is about the *praesens* (what the memories "look like" now, and how they affect the author in his narrative present), not strictly the *praeterita*—the events, or *res*, as they once occurred at a time that no longer exists. Although in at least some instances we may correctly say

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[27] That this Augustine is a literary product does not mean he is fictional. Rather, the question is to what degree the character and historical Augustine are or are not the same. Thus, instead of speaking of fiction and nonfiction in binary terms, perhaps we would do better to speak in terms of degrees of fictionality.

[28] Feldmann 1994: 1135 suggests that it is this debate that sparked scholarly interest in the *Confessions* in the first place. The modern debate begins in 1888 with the independently published articles by Harnack and Boissier. See Chapter 2 for discussion.

[29] *Conf.* 10.3.4: . . . *etiam hominibus coram te confiteor per has litteras adhuc quis ego sim, non quis fuerim? nam illum fructum vidi et commemoravi. sed quis adhuc sim, ecce in ipso tempore confessionum mearum . . .* ; *Conf.* 10.4.6: *hic est fructus confessionum mearum, non qualis fuerim sed qualis sim . . . indicabo ergo talibus qualibus iubes ut serviam, non quis fuerim, sed quis iam sim et quis adhuc sim . . .* It is worth noting that Augustine's claim that the first ten books are *de me* does not necessarily mean that they are "about myself in the past." *De me* may instead mean "about myself in the present."

[30] *Conf.* 11.20.26.

that Augustine's account of his past is unfaithful to the events as they actually unfolded in time, I argue that Augustine is telling a true story if what he says faithfully represents what he encounters when he metaphorically enters his memory. As we will see in Chapter 3, Augustine is aware that memory is imperfect; thus what one remembers to be true may in fact not be. But, his narrative in Books 1-9 is about the past as it exists now, in memory, and it is a true story if this is what it accurately represents.

In my third chapter, I turn to Augustine's account of the structure of memory and the activity of recollection as presented in Book 10. Here, he describes memory as an infinitely expansive outdoor landscape with natural features and manmade structures in which memories live. With unusual consistency, he calls these memories *imagines*.[31] In the context of the metaphor, the term *imago* suggests a painting, a statue, or an ancestral wax mask. But, unlike *imagines* used in the mnemonic known as the Method of Loci, Augustine's are mobile. Thus, his use of the term *imago* is also suggestive of ghosts.[32] For this reason, and because the space of his memory is not fixed, he differs significantly from his predecessors who discuss memory.

According to the Method, *imagines* are static objects within a house that are ordered along fixed pathways. Thus, from a given *imago*, one may proceed forward or

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[31] Augustine defines his use of *imago* at *Conf.* 10.8.13-14 as being an internal object of memory that is created by and refers to a *res* in the external world, and that retains the sensory features from our experience of that *res*. His use of this one term exclusively is unusual, as his predecessors (namely, the Auctor of the *Rhetorica*, Cicero, and Quintilian) use a number of terms—specifically *imago*, *simulacrum*, and *effigies*—interchangeably. Elsewhere, Augustine uses the term *imago* in a variety of ways (see *Epistula* 7 and Breyfogle 1999: 442-43); but, in Books 10 and 11 of the *Confessions*, he is consistent with its use in this one particular sense. And that is significant.

[32] For *imagines* and ghosts, see Johnston 1994: 100-101 and Felton 1999: xii; 22-25.

backward, and in no other way. To adopt Aristotle's example of the Greek alphabet, from Γ one may either move back to B or forward to Δ, but not, say, to E, unless Δ is missing or forgotten.[33] According to this account of memory, historical narratives may be judged as objectively correct or incorrect, for one should remember what happened in precisely the same way as the events themselves unfolded in time.

I suggest that Augustine's conception of memory is unlike Aristotle's and instead resembles Vergil's conception of the Underworld in *Aeneid* 6. As Augustine says, some memories are static and immobile, easily accessible by the one actively recalling them. But others have a metaphorical life of their own: they find their own homes and, of their own accord, rush at the one recalling them in a cloud, or a mob.[34] Thus, recollection is fluid and the result is something subjective.[35] What the author sees, and how he sees it, is dependent on mood, intent, the metaphorical recollective pathway taken through memory, etc.[36] Thus, while Augustine is in part the agent of recollection, memories have agency, too.

If this interpretation is correct, Augustine's account of memory explains why he

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[33] Aristotle, *De mem*. 452a17ff. Herodotus (2.143-4) provides a similar example of using statues in actual space to record genealogies.

[34] *Conf*. 10.8.12.

[35] This will be one of the only times I use the term "subjective" in this dissertation. Nightingale 2011: 56 rightly avoids the term on the grounds that, although it is commonly used of Augustine's philososphy, it carries far too much baggage with it. Instead, I favor terms such as "first-personalism."

[36] For instance, if Aeneas re-entered the underworld, the ghosts of the "mythological Hades" (for the term, see Otis 1959: 165) that he encounters in this second *katabasis* may not be the same (or in the same order) as the ones he encountered the first time. Likewise, Anchises' narrative of the Parade of Heroes may, in Aeneas' second descent, be different, both because the *imagines* may group themselves in a new way and because Anchises may find an alternative narrative pathway through them to the one he found the first time.

includes and excludes what he does, and why the narrative appears to be sloppy from a literary perspective.[37] We are following the author as he ascends into memory. As a result, his narrative is a sort of stream of consciousness that reflects his inward journey rather than an *artificial* literary narrative. But only in this way is the *Confessions* truly an autobiography. And, for this reason, it is even more personal than it is already understood to be: Augustine not only *tells* us about himself and his past life but he also *shows* us his self, in the present, as he goes.

The central thesis of this dissertation, which I address directly in Chapter 4, is that, to Augustine, participation in time exists in degrees. In Book 11, he says that time is a "distention of the mind" (*distentio animi*).[38] To put it another way, through *distentio* our minds participate fully in time. God does not participate in time at all, and the saints in heaven participate only minimally—instead of *distentio*, they engage in an activity called *intentio*.[39] Like *intentio*, Augustine believes that *distentio*, or participation in time, is a mental activity. And the narratorial act of confession as performed in the *Confessions* is for him a means by which *distentio* may be decreased in order to achieve a saintly state of timeless, "intended" concentration while still alive.

Distentio is a fragmented swelling of the soul's attention toward past and future times that do not exist and away from the present that does exist, where truth and wisdom are found. Memory causes *distentio*, because it contains (among other things) memories,

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[37] Crosson 1989: 86: " . . . the virtually unanimous critical judgment is that [the *Confessions*] is hastily put together, moves by fits and starts, dallies here and hurries there."
[38] *Conf.* 11.23.30; 26.33.
[39] For my definition of *intentio*, see pp. 15-16 below.

or *imagines*, that depict things (*res*) that once were experienced but that no longer exist. Memory itself is present, and for this reason Augustine calls it *praesens de praeteritis*, or a "presence of past things."[40] Memory, though typically associated with the past, is also responsible for future expectations, because one may expect a future F to happen when one recalls a past F. Augustine calls this future *praesens de futuris*, or a "presence of future things." It, too, is present in that the expectation is present, even though what is expected is in the future.

In *Confessions* 11, Augustine denies the objective reality of time: only the present exists, but, through memory our attention is directed toward nonexistent objects in the past and future. This multi-directional attention[41] is *distentio*, and it is psychologically painful.[42] It is also problematic because the objects of that attention do not exist. Thus, it

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[40] *Conf.* 11.20.26: *quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec futura sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur, `tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum,' sed fortasse proprie diceretur, `tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris.' sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam et alibi ea non video, praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio.* For the *praesens memoria*, see O'Donnell 1992 3:175; *Conf.* 4.1.1: *sine me, obsecro, et da mihi circuire praesenti memoria praeteritos circuitus erroris mei et immolare tibi hostiam iubilationis.* This, of course, appears to contradict Aristotle's claim that one does not remember the present (*De memoria* 449a.9ff.). However, Augustine is clear that *imagines* exist in the present: *pueritia quippe mea, quae iam non est, in tempore praeterito est, quod iam non est; imaginem vero eius, cum eam recolo et narro, in praesenti tempore intueor, quia est adhuc in memoria mea* (*Conf.* 11.18.23). Even if *imagines* depict something that happened in the past, recollection is still of that which is present. In Book 10, Augustine includes among the objects of memory things that surely do not "depict" any past thing, such as acquired skills (*Conf.* 10.8.15), ideas (*Conf.* 10.10.17), principles and laws (*Conf.* 10.12.19), and emotions (*Conf.* 10.14.21). Since these can be recalled, like *imagines* they must exist as present objects in memory.

[41] Cf. *Conf.* 11.29.39: *in multis per multa*.

[42] After all, there is a correlation between depression and anxiety and "multitasking" (for one study, see M. W. Becker, et al. 2013). I include this anecdotally to illustrate the reality of psychological distress caused by fragmented attention. On the psychological distress caused by *distentio*, see *Conf.* 11.29.39: *nunc vero anni mei in gemitibus, et tu solacium meum, domine,*

distracts from that which is real. Thus, *distentio* may, in fact, lead us to sin.

Like God and the saints in heaven, we exist at an eternal present.[43] For this reason, as best as possible I avoid the terms "temporality" and "eternity," for they suggest irreconcilably distinct categories of existence. This does not appear to be what Augustine has in mind when he speaks of time as a *distentio*.[44] Rather, time and eternity—terms I use to characterize mental constructs—appear to be opposite ends of a spectrum of participation: those whose minds are distended may be said to participate fully in time, while God does not participate at all. The saints in heaven participate minimally, for, it appears, one cannot entirely not participate in time unless one is God.[45] Thus, I talk in terms of *degrees* of participation in time.

The state of minimal participation in time is what I suggest Augustine means by

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pater meus aeternus es. at ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui. As we will see, this passage is central to Augustine's distinction between psychological *distentio* and *intentio*.

[43] That the present has/is no time at all, cf. *Conf.* 11.15.20: *si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum; praesens autem nullum habet spatium*.

[44] Cf. Sorabji (1983, 30): "[Augustine's] solution, that past, present and future can all be available at once as a *distentio* in the mind, has the paradoxical effect of making time more like eternity. Time is frozen for inspection, and available all together. . . . The effect of making time sounds more like eternity cannot, however, be intended by Augustine: he wishes to *contrast* God's eternity with our time" (emphasis his). See also Kennedy 2003: 167-8. It is certainly true that Augustine wishes to contrast our experience with that of God (and of the saints in heaven), but I think that Augustine wants to present an ontological foundation shared both by God and by us. Distention may be an imperfect means of copying God's eternity; and I say "imperfect" because, while times are "available all together," none of those times are real for us, whereas all times are equally real for God. What we share fundamentally in common is existence at an eternal (or atemporal) present—though one that does not quite exist for us (*Conf.* 11.14.17). It is distention that distinguishes our existence from that of God and the saints.

[45] Nightingale 2011: 33-35.

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intentio. As I define it, *intentio* is the (re)orientation of the mind's attention toward that which exists, namely the present and wisdom and truth therein.[46] Thus, *intentio* is both a state and a process. Although it is enjoyed by the saints in heaven, one may practice *intentio* as a means of decreasing *distentio* while still corporeally alive.[47] Augustine claims to have attained *intentio* with his mother, Monnica, in a mystical vision while at Ostia.[48] They did so by inward contemplation through which they decreased their participation in time from *distentio*, "where words have a beginning and end" (*ubi verbum et incipitur et finitur*), to the minimal participation enjoyed by the saints in heaven. My larger argument is that the act of narration of the sort in which Augustine engages in the *Confessions* is an intellectual (and hermeneutical) means by which *intentio* may be performed. In Books 1-9, we find a fully distended author/narrator preoccupied with events from his past that no longer exist. Significantly, it is once he arrives at his memory of the vision at Ostia that the narrative of the *Confessions* turns from preoccupation with the past (Books 1-9) to metaphysical explorations (Books 10-13). In O'Donnell's words:

> The first half of [Book] 10 renews the ascent theme . . . What [Augustine] learned to do at Ostia he now *does*, in writing this text. This is no longer an account of something that happened somewhere else some time ago; the text itself becomes the ascent. The text no longer narrates mystical experience, it becomes itself a mystical experience (for [Augustine]; it will further become in [Books] 11-13 a mystical experience for the reader as well). The failure to make the adjustment

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[46] What I identify as *intentio* Pranger 2001: 379 n.4 identifies as *attentio animi*. But this is Pranger's own terminology, not Augustine's.

[47] Avramenko 2007 also sees Augustine's formulation of *distentio* as allowing for a "salve" for time, but he does not precisely identify that salve as *intentio*.

[48] *Conf.* 9.10.23-25. Cf. Sorabji 1983: 167-8.

has led to serious failures to see the purport of this and the later books of [the *Confessions*].[49]

To return to the question of unity, Bright proposes that Book 10 acts as a transition between the "restlessness" of Books 1-9 and the "rest" of Books 11-13 in much the same way as the Hexameron moves from restlessness to rest, which I think is precisely right.[50] There is precedence for this sort of view in, for instance, Knauer's interpretation of the *Confessions* as a *peregrinatio animi* from past (Books 1-9) through the present (Book 10) toward the future (Books 11-13).[51] Similarly, I see time and temporal progression as the key element underlying the structure of the *Confessions* as a whole, particularly at the level of narrative. Bright is right, in my view, to contend that the narrative of the *Confessions* moves from restlessness to rest: as I put it, from "distention" to "intention." However, as I see it, it is not Book 10 that marks the transition between the two states but rather Augustine's vision at Ostia at *Conf*. 9.10.23-25.[52] It is only once Augustine relives the experience in his narration that the narrator can (attempt to) achieve *intentio* himself in Books 10-13.[53]

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[49] 1992: 3.151 (emphasis his).

[50] Bright 2003: 157-8. This is, of course, fitting considering Augustine's obsession with Genesis not only in the last three books of the *Confessions* but throughout his theological career. It is, however, hard to say that Augustine is any more at rest while discussing time in *Conf*. 11 than he is at any earlier (or later) point in the *Confessions*.

[51] Knauer 1955.

[52] This point is supported by the view that the mystical vision at Ostia is parallel to Aeneas' *katabasis* in *Aen*. 6. In this instance, by narrating (and, therefore, re-experiencing) what he experienced at Ostia, Augustine the author/narrator undergoes a psychological reorientation from past to present, just as Aeneas does in the Underworld (Otis 1959: 168-70; Williams 2004: 459; Bennett 1988: 65).

[53] Cf. O'Donnell 1992: 1:xxxiv.

Knauer correctly detects a temporal *peregrinatio* in the *Confessions*, and this complements rather than competes with Bright's view. However, while Knauer sees the temporal progression of this *peregrinatio* as being from the past through the present to the future, I see it necessarily as from past to present—or, more specifically, from a *presence of the past* to a *presence of the present*. After all, it is the timeless present of heaven (the presence of the present) that Augustine seeks, and attention given toward the temporal future is as misguided as is attention given toward the past.

Chapter 1: Augustine in the *Confessions*

> It might be said that each of us constructs and lives
> a "narrative," and that this narrative *is* us, our identities.
> —Oliver Sacks

From a literary perspective of the *Confessions*, there are several "Augustines" about whom we may speak: Augustine as author, Augustine as narrator, Augustine as historical figure whose life is discussed in the first nine books of the *Confessions*, and Augustine as literary character—that is, the younger Augustine whom we find in the text. These "Augustines" have different characteristics, even if they all are (or all belong to) the same person. Therefore, they should be considered separately. As a result of this four-part classification, the narrator of the *Confessions* emerges as the story's protagonist. In this way, I begin my proposal for a literary solution to questions about the unity of the work as a whole. I also lay the foundation for my response to concerns about the historicity of Augustine's autobiography, which is the topic of my second chapter.

Augustine lived between the years 354, when he was born, and 430, when he died. For our purposes, I isolate the moment in which this historical figure composed the *Confessions*—let us say in the year 397—and call him at this particular moment in time the *author* Augustine.[1] In Books 1-9, Augustine tells us about things he remembers

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[1] We will never know precisely when Augustine began composition of the *Confessions* nor how long he took to compose it. There are two views. The first is that he produced the work in a single go in 397. Of this view, O'Donnell 1992: 1.xli explains, "Rhetorical and stylistic unity and the intensity that runs through the book like an electric current makes it easiest to read as a work written entirely in 397." He further speculates that Augustine may have dictated the work while undergoing medical treatment (1992: 1.xli.n.62). O'Donnell cites *Epistula* 38.1, which provides evidence only of his illness, not of any work done in the duration. The second and far more

having lived, experienced, and done in his past, specifically between the years 354 and 387. I call this Augustine—the person who lived and experienced and did things between these years—the *historical* Augustine. The author Augustine and the historical Augustine are essentially identical, but for literary and historical purposes we may isolate the point in time at which Augustine composed the *Confessions* and draw a distinction between himself then and his past self:

the historical Augustine   the author Augustine

354   387   397   430

Our third Augustine is the *narrator*, though I use the term "narrator" in perhaps an unusual way. In narratological terms, the narrator is the "fictitious spokesman" upon whom the author calls when he (the author) withdraws from the text.[2] Thus, in a narratological context, "narrator" refers to the voice that is found within the text and that

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common view holds that the date of composition is from 397-401, though the *terminus ante quem* is particularly speculative. As O'Donnell 1992: 1.xli explains, "Those who emphasize the disparity of the parts of the *Confessions* and find plausible the arguments for a double redaction or for the later insertion of Bk. 10 also find arguments for extending composition down to 401." Cf. Williger 1929, who proposed that Book 10 was inserted later, and, following him, Theiler 1933: 60-69; Courcelle 1950: 25-26; and O'Meara 1954: 16. There is, however, no evidence for a double redaction or the later insertion of Book 10 (see O'Donnell 1992: 3.153 for discussion). Thus, this argument for extending the composition up to 401 is invalid. For another argument for extended composition, cf. Solignac 1962: 45-54. For the sake of simplicity, in what follows I use the single date 397 as the date of composition. Whether Augustine composed the *Confessions* during the year 397 or began composition in 397 ultimately has no bearing on my argument.

[2] Bal 1999: 8.

is distinct from the author who creates it.[3] In contrast, by "narrator" I refer to the person who engages in what I call "narrative recollection," by which I mean not the mere recollection of memories and/or ideas (as may occur, say, when one dreams) but the cogency given to memories and/or ideas when they are recalled. In other words, if "recollection simpliciter," an internal act of cognition, is of the "raw data" that belong to what narratologists call a fabula,[4] narrative recollection, which is also an internal act of cognition, involves story building: it is when one makes sense, logically, chronologically, etc., of this raw data prior to the presentation of it as a story for external consumption. Thus, if I simply recall my raw memories of things that occurred earlier today, I do not narrate but merely engage in recollection simpliciter. However, if I recall and interpret those memories, thereby putting them into a coherent story, I engage in narrative recollection. In so doing, I become a narrator. Thus, I make a distinction between Augustine as author, the real person who physically produced the text of the *Confessions*, and Augustine as narrator, the same individual but engaged in the cognitive process of narrative recollection. However, insofar as the narrator is the author engaged in a particular activity, I will frequently refer to the two together as "author/narrator" (though see p. 38ff. for further discussion).

Now we have three ontologically equivalent Augustines that differ in aspect only: the historical Augustine, who lived and experienced things between the years 354 and

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[3] Cf. de Jong 2014: 17: "It is an important principle of narratology that the narrator cannot automatically be equated with the author; rather, it is a creation of that author, like the characters." In my account here I do equate the narrator with the author. In this way, my approach differs from narratology.

[4] Bal 1999: 5; de Jong 2014: 38. See page 38 for discussion.

387; the author Augustine, who composed the text; and the narrator Augustine, who made sense of memories he, qua author, has of things he, qua historical Augustine, once experienced. But there is also a "fourth Augustine" that must be identified.

When Augustine the author metaphorically enters his memory and engages in narrative recollection, thus acting as narrator, he engages with, among other things, memories that depict his past.[5] These memories exist in his, the author's, present memory precisely because his historical self once experienced them. However, when the author engages in narrative recollection, the Augustine that emerges in the story is not the real historical Augustine but a derivative Augustine who is constructed both from what is accessible at that particular moment of recollection and from the sense given by the narrator to the memories that he has recalled. In narratological terms, this Augustine—the one that emerges in the story—is the result of narrating focalization.[6] And I identify him as the *character* Augustine. This character *represents* the historical Augustine about whom the author wants to tell us. So long as the author/narrator does not lie, he may be understood to be the historical Augustine *as seen by* the author/narrator at one given moment and whom *we find* in the text.[7]

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[5] The key passage is *Conf.* 10.8.12 discussed at length in Chapter 3.

[6] de Jong 2014: 65: "*Experiencing focalization* means that the narrator-focalizer recounts events exactly as he saw and (mis)understood them at the time of experiencing them, while *narrating focalization* means that he draws on the understanding possessed at the moment of narration, which is often that of a wiser but sadder person" (emphases hers). Cf. *Conf.* 10.14.21: *aliquando et e contrario tristitiam meam transactam laetus reminiscor et tristis laetitiam*. See p. 42 below for further discussion.

[7] For instance, Augustine might narrate his historical self differently at a different time, which would produce a different "character." See Chapter 3 for discussion.

To summarize my discussion so far, the historical Augustine experienced things and, as a result, is responsible for the memories that exist in the author's memory years later. The author Augustine wants to tell us about his younger self. To do so, he recalls the memories that he considers to be relevant to this project. In so doing, he acts as narrator, and it is his voice we hear in the *Confessions*. And, as a result of this activity, a literary character emerges in the text who is a reconstruction or representation of the historical Augustine.

I argue that the protagonist of the *Confessions* is the author/narrator. I derive my conception of narrator primarily from Augustine's account of memory and time in Books 10 and 11, and I conclude that the author Augustine, when engaged in the act of narrative recollection, thereby acting as narrator, provides the sole voice of the *Confessions* as a whole.[8] As a result, the story, Augustine's autobiography, is found throughout the thirteen books of the *Confessions*, not within the historical episodes that appear in the first nine books alone. The historical reflections in Books 1-9 and the seemingly abstract philosophical ruminations in Books 10-13 are both part of the same narrative activity. Thus, when we follow the voice of the narrator of the *Confessions*, we find no fundamental distinction between what occurs in Books 1-9 and 10-13, even if the topics discussed differ.

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[8] Specifically, Augustine is the primary internal narrator (cf. de Jong 2014: 19-20). He is "primary" in that he is the first narrator encountered in the text; he is internal in that he is also a character of the story. For a possibly useful literary parallel, see Winkler's 1985: 137 discussion of narrator and actor in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*: "Most critical second-readers seem to forget that the *ego* of this narrative is only gradually *discovered* to be the central character in a plot" (emphasis his). For further discussion, see the conclusion of this dissertation.

The first nine books of the *Confessions* have been of special interest to historians who hope to find the historical Augustine in them.[9] But, this historical Augustine does not appear in the text of the *Confessions*, at least not directly. That is, the historical Augustine is responsible for the memories that the author is able to recall and, as narrator, turn into a story. But again, the younger Augustine who appears in the text is a literary byproduct. The historical episodes contained in the first nine books—for instance, Augustine's theft of pears (*Conf*. 2.4.9-10.18) and the conversion scene described in Book 8 (*Conf*. 8.12.28-30)—are stories presented by a narrator who is essentially indistinct from the author. These stories are certainly "about" the historical Augustine, but we find a character of him in the text, not the real historical Augustine himself.

Again, by narrator I mean the author who is engaged in *narrative recollection*—the activity of inward reflection upon memories in a way that creates a story. There must, of course, still be a narrator in the traditional sense—namely, the author's spokesman whose voice emerges from the text. However, this voice cannot be inconsistent with that of the narrator as I define him: Augustine as author must take full ownership of the voice that appears in the text, for otherwise the *Confessions* would not be autobiography (see Chapter 2). Augustine must believe that his stories (what he did) and his interpretation of them (how he now understands them) are true. Thus, there can be little, if any, distance between the narrator in my use of the term and the narrator in its narratological sense.

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[9] There is a wealth of scholarship on this issue. See for example Alfaric 1918, Nørregaard 1923, Gibb & Montgomery 1927: ix-lxx, and Gilson 1943, who all sought to reconstruct an historical Augustine from the *Confessions*. The search for the historical Augustine continued after Courcelle 1950 (who argued otherwise) in O'Meara 1954 and Brown 1967. For a thorough discussion of the issue, see Starnes 1990: 277-89.

I derive this interpretation from what Augustine himself seems to have believed he was doing in the *Confessions*. When the contents of Book 10, which contains an account of the cognitive structure of memory and the activity of recollection, and Book 11, wherein Augustine explains that time is a product of memory, are read as part of a single discussion, what emerges is a sort of "proto-narratology," or historiographical methodology. Insofar as this theoretical material is found within the *Confessions* itself, I justify applying these thoughts—and, insofar as possible, these thoughts only—back to the text of the *Confessions* as a whole: in these books, Augustine tells us what he has been up to the whole time.[10]

The Jesuit Martin Delrio, writing in the 16th century, observed that "the best commentary of Seneca is Seneca himself."[11] And Porphyry says of the interpretation of Homer, "I considered it worthwhile to clarify Homer out of Homer, who himself explains what I was indicating . . ."[12] In other words, where possible it is best to rely on the author himself when interpreting his work, especially when the material used for interpretation appears in the same work that is being analyzed, as is the case with the *Confessions*. What Augustine says in the *Confessions* about memory, time, and narrative is precisely

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[10] Cf. Fredriksen 2012: 98: "Not until reaching the complex final books of the *Confessions* can the reader understand the strategy of Augustine's autobiographical narrative in Books 1-9. (Again, the clarity of such retrospection underscores the epistemology explored in Books 10 and 11.)"

[11] ". . . optimum Senecae commentarium ipsum Senecam," said in his note to *Hippolytus* 163 = *Phaedra* 164 (*Syntagma tragoediae latinae*, Antwerp 1593-4; Paris 1620).

[12] Porphyry, *Quaestionum Homericarum liber i (recensio V* [and *X*]*)* 56.3-6: ἀξιῶν δὲ ἐγὼ Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὁμήρου σαφηνίζειν αὐτὸν ἐξηγούμενον ἑαυτὸν ὑπεδείκνυον, ποτὲ μὲν παρακειμένως, ἄλλοτε δ᾽ ἐν ἄλλοις. See Mansfeld 1994: 204-5. Of course, Porphyry refers to philological questions in Homer while I refer to the literary interpretation of the *Confessions*. But his statement is applicable nonetheless in that intratextual analysis is to be preferred.

what he does—or at least thinks he does—throughout the *Confessions* as a whole. The advantage of this interpretive approach to the work is that it is self-contained and, therefore, minimizes extra-textual and theoretical anachronisms. This is the primary approach I will use as the basis for my analysis of the text, although I occasionally look to other works of Augustine and use terms from contemporary narrative theory to elucidate the concepts Augustine describes in the *Confessions*.[13]

In order to substantiate my claims that the author/narrator is the protagonist of the *Confessions* and that *we* find a character of the historical Augustine in the text, not the real historical Augustine himself, I turn first to his proposal that past times exist only as present memories. In Book 11 of the *Confessions*, he attempts to provide a definition of time, but his discussion revolves primarily around time's measurement.[14] For Augustine, the idea that times can correctly be said to be, for example, "long" or "short" is problematic due to his infamously presentist approach to time and ontology.[15] He assumes a first-person perspective and speaks of time according to what McTaggart

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[13] For instance, I have already used Bal 1999 for levels of narration and de Jong 2014 for issues concerning the narrator. Augustine himself also appears to recognize these concepts and issues in his discussion of memory in Book 10 of the *Confessions*. Thus, I refer to modern theories of narrative simply in order to clarify terms.

[14] The discussion begins at 11.15.18 and continues almost to the end of the book. However, it is worth noting that traces of this concern can be seen elsewhere in the *Confessions*, e.g. 9.10.24: *et suspiravimus et reliquimus ibi religatas primitias spiritus et remeavimus ad strepitum oris nostri, ubi verbum et incipitur et finitur*. This is not to say that Augustine was not trying to define time in Book 11. But his enquiry leads him primary to the question of how time can be measured.

[15] There is historical reason to call Augustine's philosophical presumptions infamous. For instance, Bertrand Russell's 1948: 212 claim that Augustine's views and his preoccupation with sin led him to "excessive subjectivity."

called the "A-series": past, present, and future.[16] But Augustine presumes that past and future times, by virtue of their non-presence, do not exist.[17] Thus, duration cannot be a property of past or future times.[18] And, since they do not exist, they cannot be seen.[19] Accordingly, we are wrong to attribute duration (or any other predicate) to any time but the present, as Augustine explains at *Conf*. 11.15.18:

> Nonetheless, we speak of a "long time" and a "short time," and we do not say this except of the past or future. For example, we call the past time "long" [when it has the duration of a hundred years]. But we call the past "short" [when it was], say, ten days ago and the future "short" [when it will be] ten days ahead. But how can what does not exist be "long" or "short"? For the past no longer exists and the future does not yet exist. So let us not say, "it *is* long," but let us say of the past, "it *was* long," and of the future, "it *will be* long."
>
> My Lord, my light, will not even this truth of yours mock people? For what "long" past time was there? Was it "long" when it was already past, or when it was still present? For then, what was long, when it existed, was able to be "long." But, at that time the past no longer existed; therefore it could not have been "long," because it did not exist at all. So, let us not say, "the past time was long," for we will not find what was "long" when, once it has passed, it does not exist. But let us say, "that present time was long," because it was "long" when it was present. For it had not yet passed so that it would not exist, and that which ceases to exist ceases to be "long."[20]

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[16] McTaggart 1908: 458. On Augustine's first-personal perspective, cf. Matthews 2005, 1-6; 2010, 41-60. It is Augustine, after all, who foreshadowed Descartes' *Cogito* with the condition *si fallor sum* (*De civ*. 11.26). See Matthews 1992: 29-38; Horn 1997.

[17] This is an implicit premise *passim*. But see the opening chapter of his discussion of time at *Conf*. 11.14.17: *duo ergo illa tempora, praeteritum et futurum, quomodo sunt, quando et praeteritum iam non est et futurum nondum est?*

[18] Of past and future times, cf. *Conf*. 11.15.18: *non ergo dicamus, 'longum fuit praeteritum tempus'; neque enim inveniemus quid fuerit longum, quando, ex quo praeteritum est, non est . . .*

[19] *Conf*. 11.17.22: *neque enim potest videri id quod non est.*

[20] *et tamen dicimus longum tempus et breve tempus, neque hoc nisi de praeterito aut futuro dicimus. praeteritum tempus longum verbi gratia vocamus ante centum annos, futurum itidem longum post centum annos, breve autem praeteritum sic, ut puta dicamus ante decem dies, et breve futurum post decem dies. sed quo pacto longum est aut breve, quod non est? praeteritum*

Augustine finds his conclusion problematic, for he insists that we are correct to speak of past and future times as having duration. Thus, he wonders:

> Who is there who would say to me that there are not three times, just as we learned as boys and [just as] we teach boys, [namely] past, present, and future? But only the present [is], since those other two times are not. Or do even [past and future times] themselves exist, but they proceed from some hidden place when they become present out of the future and recede into some hidden place when they become past out of the present? For, those who sang of things to come: where did they see them if they were not yet present? For it is not possible to see that which does not exist. And those who narrate past times: they would not at all narrate true things if they did not discern those things in their mind. If none of these things existed, it would not at all be possible to discern them. Therefore, both past and future times exist.[21]

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enim iam non est et futurum nondum est. non itaque dicamus, 'longum est,' sed dicamus de praeterito, 'longum fuit,' et de futuro, `longum erit.' domine meus, lux mea, nonne et hic veritas tua deridebit hominem? quod enim longum fuit praeteritum tempus, cum iam esset praeteritum longum fuit, an cum adhuc praesens esset? tunc enim poterat esse longum quando erat, quod esset longum; praeteritum vero iam non erat, unde nec longum esse poterat, quod omnino non erat. non ergo dicamus, `longum fuit praeteritum tempus'; neque enim inveniemus quid fuerit longum, quando, ex quo praeteritum est, non est, sed dicamus, `longum fuit illud praesens tempus,' quia cum praesens esset, longum erat. nondum enim praeterierat ut non esset, et ideo erat quod longum esse posset; postea vero quam praeteriit, simul et longum esse destitit quod esse destitit (emphases are, of course, mine). As we will see later, Augustine rejects the claim that the present can have duration (*Conf*. 11.15.20). In fact, he questions whether the present can exist at all (*Conf*. 11.14.17).

[21] *Conf*. 11.17.22: *quisnam est qui dicat mihi non esse tria tempora, sicut pueri didicimus puerosque docuimus, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum, sed tantum praesens, quoniam illa duo non sunt? an et ipsa sunt, sed ex aliquo procedit occulto cum ex futuro fit praesens, et in aliquod recedit occultum cum ex praesenti fit praeteritum? nam ubi ea viderunt qui futura cecinerunt, si nondum sunt? neque enim potest videri id quod non est. et qui narrant praeterita, non utique vera narrarent si animo illa non cernerent. quae si nulla essent, cerni omnino non possent. sunt ergo et futura et praeterita.* Note that I punctuate the text differently than O'Donnell does in my translation: I suggest that the question-mark after *sunt* be placed earlier, after *futurum*, leaving the remainder of the sentence, as it appears in the Latin, its own statement.

Paradoxically, Augustine believes that prophets say true things of the future,[22] and that historians say true things of the past.[23] If nothing knowable can be said of things that do not exist, then one must conclude that, somehow, past and future times in fact do exist, and they exist now, in the present. As Augustine says, *sunt ergo et futura et praeterita*. Note that this is not a rhetorical position that Augustine will refute. Rather, it is a working proposition that he will revise later.

In order to explain how past and future times can exist at the present, Augustine proposes that by past, present, and future, we mean instead, *praesens de praeteritis*, *praesens de praesentibus*, and *praesens de futuris*, and he equates these with *memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio*, respectively.[24] Chadwick translates these terms as "a present of things past", "a present of things present," and "a present of things to come." The inclination to translate *praesens de praeteritis* as "present of things past" is

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[22] Cf. *Conf.* 5.3.4: *mente sua enim quaerunt ista et ingenio quod tu dedisti eis et multa invenerunt et praenuntiaverunt ante multos annos defectus luminarium solis et lunae, quo die, qua hora, quanta ex parte futuri essent, et non eos fefellit numerus. et ita factum est ut praenuntiaverunt, et scripserunt regulas indagatas, et leguntur hodie atque ex eis praenuntiatur quo anno et quo mense anni et quo die mensis et qua hora diei et quota parte luminis sui defectura sit luna vel sol: et ita fiet ut praenuntiatur.*

[23] Cf. *Conf.* 11.18.23: *quamquam praeterita cum vera narrantur . . .*

[24] 11.20.26: *quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec futura sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur, 'tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum,' sed fortasse proprie diceretur, 'tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris.' sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam et alibi ea non video, praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio.* In other words, as I discuss in Chapter 4, Augustine proposes in the *Confessions* that time is a consequence of memory. Cf. Nightingale's 2011 *passim* discussion of "psychic time."

The notion that the present is the only time that exists, and that the mind is oriented from it in three "directions" (toward past, present, and future things simultaneously) is fundamental to Augustine's conception of *distentio* (cf. *Conf.* 11.23.30; 26.33). Pranger 2001: 279 correctly identifies Augustine's proposed three present times as a gloss for *distentio*, when he says that *distentio* is "the spreading out of the soul in the region of dissimilitude as the present expectation of the future, the present memory of things past, and the present intuition of things present."

understandable in that memories, which are present, are created by and depict past experiences. Thus, *memories* (as distinct from memory) are "of" past things. But this understanding of *de* does not work when we speak of memory as a faculty or for the other two *praesentia*. Instead, I suggest that we understand *de* to refer to the foundation of the cognitive faculties of memory, concurrent observation (my translation of *contuitus*), and expectation. By this I mean that the mind, which exists at the present (hence *praesens*) is at any given moment simultaneously "concerned with" things that have happened (*praeterita*), which qua memories are present to the senses (cf. *Conf*. 10.8.12ff.), things in the world (*res*) that are immediately present to the senses (*praesentia*), and (judging from what has happened in the past and how things are now at the present) things that are likely to happen (*futura*). The preposition *de*, then, refers to that about which the mind is concerned.

Because past and future times exist in some way in the present, it still holds both that only the present exists and that nothing knowable can be said of that which does not exist. And it still holds that we can in fact say true things of past and future times, though with qualification, namely that past and future times are both accessible in the present.[25] As Augustine explains, the confusion must be due simply to linguistic deficiencies: although we talk about the existence of three distinct times, when we speak about periods of time, we are really speaking solely of the present, albeit a present whose referent may,

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25 *Conf*. 11.17.22-18.23.

in the case of the past and future, be something that does not exist.[26] Ino ther words, there is only one distinct time, and that is the present. In order to explicate more fully Augustine's proposal that the past exists as a *praesens de praeteritis*, and his account of narration from memory, I now turn to Augustine's concepts of *res* and *imagines*. What follows is not a claim that Augustine's theory is (or is not) correct. Rather, it is intended to explain what he thinks he is doing in the *Confessions*.

Much of *Confessions* 10 is devoted to the cognitive structure of memory and the activity of recollection that occurs therein.[27] At 10.8.12, Augustine describes memory as an outdoor landscape filled with natural features and manmade structures.[28] This space is understood to be *internal* in that it exists *within* one's mind.[29]

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[26] That we are wrong to speak in terms of past, present, and future: *dicatur etiam, 'tempora sun tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum', sicut abutitur consuetudo; dicatur. ecce non curo nec resisto nec reprehendo, dum tamen intellegatur quod dicitur, neque id quod futurum est esse iam, neque id quod praeteritum est. pauca sunt enim quae proprie loquimur, plura non proprie, sed agnoscitur quid velimus* (11.20.26).

[27] One of Augustine's questions in Book 10 is whether God can be found in memory. This renews the question introduced at the very beginning of the *Confessions* (1.1.1ff.) of how we can know God—for if we know God, then God presumably must be somewhere in our memory—as well as the theme of ascent in Augustine's vision at Ostia (*Conf.* 9.10.23). On memory and the introductory discussion of it in the initial chapters of Book 1, Augustine wonders whether it is possible for God to enter a human (*Conf.* 1.2.2), because it is presumably there that one can find (and know) God. Doubtless, Augustine means to ask whether God is or can be found in one's memory, for, in Book 10, Augustine searches for God there (cf. 10.27.38: *et ecce intus eras et ego foris*). In this way, Book 10 continues the theme first introduced in Book 1.

On the relationship between Book 10 and Augustine's mystical vision in Book 9, see O'Donnell 1992: 3.151 quoted on pp. 16-17 above. For correspondences between the mystical vision at Ostia and Augustine's account of memory, see O'Donnell 1992: 3.152.

[28] One of the most noteworthy terms that Augustine uses in his metaphorical description of memory is *thesaurus*. This term may bring to mind *thesauri* such as those at Delphi and Olympia, thereby suggesting a natural landscape with self-standing manmade structures. But, a *thesaurus* of this sort would be translated into Latin as *aerarium*. As I explain in Chapter 3, the term *thesaurus* is instead used to refer to rooms that are interior to a building. *Thesaurus* may also refer to a strongbox, such as those found at Pompeii and Herculaneum, wherein things of particular

In Augustine's conception of memory as an interior space, there are also "doors" (the senses) through which an individual is able to interact with the world external to him or her.[30] And it is through the activity of the senses that memories, or *imagines*, are created in one's memory.[31] But, in order to explain what memories, or *imagines*, are, I must first discuss what Augustine means by *res*.

The term *res* has a diversity of meanings. In Books 10 and 11 of the *Confessions*, *res* refers specifically to perceptible things that exist externally to and independently of

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importance are kept. However, Augustine is able to enter these spaces (cf. *Conf*. 10.8.12: *ibi quando sum*), so we must think of *thesauri* as larger spaces such as closets, or *cellae*.

[29] For instance: *intus haec ago, in aula ingenti memoriae meae* (*Conf*. 10.8.14); *. . . intus in memoria mea viderem* (*Conf*. 10.8.15); *. . . per se ipsa intus cernimus* (*Conf*. 10.11.18); *. . . intus agnovit eas* (*Conf*. 10.12.19); *verum tamen si forte aliquid ab oculis perit, non a memoria, veluti corpus quodlibet visibile, tenetur intus imago eius et quaeritur, donec reddatur aspectui. quod cum inventum fuerit, ex imagine quae intus est recognoscitur.* (*Conf*. 10.18.27). For a useful anatomical metaphor that undoubtedly locates memory internally, cf. *Conf*. 10.14.21 (*nimirum ergo memoria quasi venter est animi*) for one reference to memory as the mind's stomach. See my discussion in Chapter 3.

[30] See *Conf*. 10.8.13: *quae omnia suis quaeque <u>foribus intrant</u> ad eam et reponuntur in ea*.

[31] On the senses and the creation of *imagines*: *haec omnia recipit recolenda cum opus est et retractanda grandis memoriae recessus et nescio qui secreti atque ineffabiles sinus eius: quae omnia suis quaeque foribus intrant ad eam et reponuntur in ea. nec ipsa tamen intrant, sed rerum sensarum imagines illic praesto sunt cogitationi reminiscenti eas. quae quomodo fabricatae sint, quis dicit, cum appareat quibus sensibus raptae sint interiusque reconditae?* (*Conf*. 10.8.13).

For the creation of *imagines* by both external and internal perception, note that, if *imagines* are created from the experience (*passio*) of a *res*, and if *imagines* themselves are *res* (see n.33 and n.36 below), and if *imagines* are also experienced by the senses (e.g. Augustine says that he metaphorically "sees" them), then an *imago* should also be created from the experience (*affectio*) of an *imago*. This is perhaps relevant to Augustine's "inner man": cf. Nightingale 2011: 123-8 and (among other passages) *Conf*. 10.6.9: *et direxi me ad me et dixi mihi, 'tu quis es?' et respondi, 'homo.' et ecce corpus et anima in me mihi praesto sunt, unum exterius et alterum interius*. But, for our purposes here the corporeal world of *res* is "outer," the conceptual world that includes *imagines* is "inner."

human minds.[32] In contrast, an *imago* exists within, and is dependent on, a human mind.[33]

In Augustine's metaphorical landscape of memory there exist innumerable *imagines*. Regardless of how they were created (a question to which Augustine has no answer),[34] these *imagines* are typically the result of one's experiencing *res*: they are internal copies of external *res* that preserve the sensory information obtained when one experiences the *res*. *Imagines* are retained in one's memory; thus, they are present in that they exist presently there.[35] The *res* which *imagines* depict no longer exist—at least, they no longer exist *from the perspective* of the one who once experienced them.

To explain this last point, take the following two examples. On the one hand, I have *imagines* that depict a *res* that was my father. And, because my father died long ago, the *res* that was my father certainly no longer exists—my father is no longer present. Thus, when Augustine discusses his father at, for instance, *Conf*. 2.3.4ff., he discusses the *imagines* of him rather than the *res* that no longer exists. But, on the other hand, I also

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[32] For Augustine's definition of *res* in the context of memory, see *Conf*. 10.8.12ff.

[33] Insofar as an *imago* is internally perceptible, it too perhaps qualifies as a *res*. If this is correct, then *imagines* also succumb to time and change. Like paintings and wax masks, they may fade or lose definition over time. They may also be touched up and remoulded.

[34] Cf. *Conf*. 10.8.13 quoted above: *quae quomodo fabricatae sint, quis dicit . . . ?*

[35] *Conf*. 11.18.23: *si enim sunt futura et praeterita, volo scire ubi sint. quod si nondum valeo, scio tamen, ubicumque sunt, non ibi ea futura esse aut praeterita, sed praesentia. nam si et ibi futura sunt, nondum ibi sunt, si et ibi praeterita sunt, iam non ibi sunt. ubicumque ergo sunt, quaecumque sunt, non sunt nisi praesentia. quamquam praeterita cum vera narrantur, ex memoria proferuntur non res ipsae quae praeterierunt, sed verba concepta ex imaginibus earum quae in animo velut vestigia per sensus praetereundo fixerunt. pueritia quippe mea, quae iam non est, in tempore praeterito est, quod iam non est; imaginem vero eius, cum eam recolo et narro, in praesenti tempore intueor, quia est adhuc in memoria mea.* See below for a translation of this passage.

have *imagines* that depict a restaurant I went to yesterday. Although surely the *res* that is the restaurant I went to yesterday still exists now, my *imagines* do not depict the restaurant as it exists now but rather the restaurant when I experienced it yesterday. For instance, presumably the tree that stood in the garden in Cassiciacum in 386 still stood in 397 when Augustine composed the *Confessions*. However, the tree to which he refers at *Conf.* 8.12.28 is the tree as he experienced it then, not the tree as it existed at the time of composition. It is for this reason that I say the *res* no longer exist from the perspective of the one who experienced them. And so, by the *praesens* in the phrase, *praesens de praeteritis*, I understand Augustine to mean the presentness of memories, or *imagines*, that were created by and that depict things, or *res*, that were once experienced when those *res* were present. In this way, the mind, at the present, may concern itself with the present *imagines* of past *res*. But the *res* as they existed then, when they were experienced, are no longer present now and, therefore, do not exist in the same way as they were experienced.

With that in mind, I return to the issue of the nonexistence of the historical Augustine in the text of the *Confessions*. Augustine himself has a response to this puzzle when, at 11.18.23, he says:

> If past and future times exist, I want to know where they are. But, if I am not yet strong [enough to know this], I nonetheless do know that, wherever they are, they are not there as future or past [times] but as present [times]. For if future [times] exist even there, they do not yet exist there; if past [times] exist even there, they do not now exist there. Therefore, wherever they are and whatever they are, they do not exist except as present [times]. When true stories of the past (*praeterita . . . vera*) are narrated, the things themselves (*res ipsae*) that have passed do not come forth from one's memory but [rather] words conceived from the images (*ex imaginibus*) of those things [the *res*] which fixed [images of them] in the mind, just like footprints, through the senses, by means of passing [through the present].

Indeed, my boyhood, which now does not exist, exists in a past time that now does not exist. But it is the image (*imaginem*) of it that I look at (*intueor*) in the present time when I recall and narrate [my boyhood], because [the image] still exists in my memory.[36]

Thus, when one makes statements about the past, one uses memories (*imagines*) of the things (*res*) one has experienced. This limits the statements one may make: one can speak only of what one remembers or faithfully reconstruct from memories that one can recall.[37] Thus, in the historical episodes of the *Confessions*, we do not find the real historical Augustine. Rather, Augustine presents us with an inevitably imperfect representation of him. For this reason, we find a literary character—a byproduct of Augustine's recollection.

At this point it is worth taking a moment to examine the connotations of the word *imago*. In the context of Augustine's metaphor of memory as a landscape inhabited by *imagines*, I suggest that the term *imago* evokes among other things ancestral wax masks,

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[36] *si enim sunt futura et praeterita, volo scire ubi sint. quod si nondum valeo, scio tamen, ubicumque sunt, non ibi ea futura esse aut praeterita, sed praesentia. nam si et ibi futura sunt, nondum ibi sunt, si et ibi praeterita sunt, iam non ibi sunt. ubicumque ergo sunt, quaecumque sunt, non sunt nisi praesentia. quamquam praeterita cum vera narrantur, ex memoria proferuntur non res ipsae quae praeterierunt, sed verba concepta ex imaginibus earum quae in animo velut vestigia per sensus praetereundo fixerunt. pueritia quippe mea, quae iam non est, in tempore praeterito est, quod iam non est; imaginem vero eius, cum eam recolo et narro, in praesenti tempore intueor, quia est adhuc in memoria mea.* This passage appears to provide evidence for Cary's 2000: 128 contention that Augustine "needs a conception of memory that will support the claim that not only the imprint of sensible things but also the reality of intelligible things (the *res ipsae* of the intelligible world) are found within the mind." Insofar as *imagines* are perceptible, they are a sort of *res*.

[37] Cf. Carruthers 2008: 29: "Partialness is also a characteristic of memory. This is true not only because memory and recollection proceed by means of *imagines rerum* rather than the things-themselves, but because a part of the original experience is inevitably lost or "forgotten" when the memory impresses the *imago* of a *res*."

states, and paintings,[38] especially if Augustine understands *thesauri* to refer to storerooms and closets rather than treasuries (e.g. of the sort we find at Delphi) in which these objects were likely to have been stored. And, if Augustine imagines memory as a building (or as a landscape containing buildings), all of these *imagines* would be found throughout it as decorations.[39]

Envisioned as paintings, *imagines* allow Augustine to visualize scenes he once saw (e.g. a fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum in 386). As wax masks (and as ghosts), *imagines* serve the dual function of representing individuals and of being mobile (for instance, when worn in parades), as they are at *Confessions* 10.8.12.[40] Furthermore, these

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[38] For the use of the term *imago* to refer to wax masks, busts, paintings, and statues, see Flower 1996: 32ff. For the use of the term to refer to ghosts, see Johnston 1994: 100-101 and Felton 1999: xii; 22-25.

[39] See Chapter 3 for a full treatment. Flower 1996: 206 says that *imagines* were essential decorations of the atrium and its alae, and that they were often kept inside *armaria*, or cupboards. Again, this cannot be what Augustine means by *thesauri*, for a *thesaurus* has to be big enough for him to enter and to hold multiple *imagines*. For paintings, see Flower 1996: 211ff. Significantly, the paintings she discusses depict *res gestae*, or important events in one's past. Thus, with wax masks and statues of people in the past, and paintings of past events, a Roman villa would be a literal *domus memoriae*. Of course, the question is whether the tradition of displaying (or simply having) wax masks in one's house continued on to the time of Augustine. Flower 1996: 264-69 notes the unfortunate dearth of evidence to respond definitively one way or another to this question, but it seems clear that masks remained objects of significance at the very least to aristocratic families in late antiquity.

[40] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *ibi quando sum, posco ut proferatur quidquid volo, et quaedam statim prodeunt, quaedam requiruntur diutius et tamquam de abstrusioribus quibusdam receptaculis eruuntur, quaedam catervatim se proruunt et, dum aliud petitur et quaeritur, prosiliunt in medium quasi dicentia, `ne forte nos sumus?' et abigo ea manu cordis a facie recordationis meae, donec enubiletur quod volo atque in conspectum prodeat ex abditis. alia faciliter atque imperturbata serie sicut poscuntur suggeruntur, et cedunt praecedentia consequentibus et cedendo conduntur, iterum cum voluero processura.* That Augustine's *imagines* are animate has huge repercussions for what we are able to recall, and how we are able to recall it, for it means that our memories are not fully under our control. The historical use of *imagines* in funereal parades will be important when I suggest in Chapter 3 that Vergil's depiction of the underworld in *Aen.* 6 is a conceptual model, or parallel, for Augustine's account of memory in Book 10.

objects are also subject to the passage of time: paintings fade and wax masks lose detail. Yet, in response to this decay, they may also be altered, e.g. by being retouched or polished.

However, although *imagines* are mobile, and the details of what they depict may change over time, they are nonetheless snapshots: paintings and wax masks or statues depict merely one particular moment in time. This point is entailed also by Augustine's account of time. Because, as he explains, any "time" may be further subdivided into a past, present, and future, the present time—the only "time" that exists—must have a measure of zero (and is, therefore, not a time at all).[41] Because we experience *res* at the present, and because the present has no duration, therefore, these *imagines* necessarily do not themselves have duration: they are merely snapshots akin to, say, the individual frames of a cartoon.[42] For this reason, what I have called recollective narration is distinct from recollection simpliciter: to create a story, one must navigate through a series of *imagines*, thereby creating time, rather than simply remember single images.

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[41] *Conf.* 11.15.20: *ecce praesens tempus, quod solum inveniebamus longum appellandum, vix ad unius diei spatium contractum est. sed discutiamus etiam ipsum, quia nec unus dies totus est praesens. nocturnis enim et diurnis horis omnibus viginti quattuor expletur, quarum prima ceteras futuras habet, novissima praeteritas, aliqua vero interiectarum ante se praeteritas, post se futuras. et ipsa una hora fugitivis particulis agitur. quidquid eius avolavit, praeteritum est, quidquid ei restat, futurum. si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum; praesens autem nullum habet spatium.*

[42] That said, the "snapshot" captured in an *imago* may itself problematize time. For instance, statues not only idealize human features, in a sense making them timeless, but also defy time, for instance by putting aged faces on youthful bodies. As we will see in Chapter 3, memory can do precisely the same things to memories, as well. And, to return to the topic of sequences of *imagines* within a Roman house, the selection and arrangement of *imagines* can create a continuous narrative of an individual's life that is highly contrived (Flower 1996: 212-7).

Recollection and Narration

I have explained how the author Augustine "sees" scenes from the past when recalling *imagines*. I now turn to the formation of narrative.

On Augustine's account, the faculty of memory functions as a highly productive painter does. Whenever Augustine experiences a *res*, his memory paints a picture of it. Thus, in his memory, there exist countless paintings of things—static snapshots of possibly everything he has ever seen.[43] When Augustine recalls *imagines*, he recalls the "paintings" his mind has made of the *res* that he once saw when those *res* were present. The "raw data" of Augustine's memory are what Bal might call a fabula, or "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors."[44] However, a fabula is not yet a story, and the mere recollection of *imagines* is not yet a narrative.[45] To narrate his experiences, Augustine must relate them in a particular order and tell us particular things about them.

Before Augustine can relate the *imagines* he sees in a given order and in a particular manner—that is, *narrate* them—he must first *recall* a series of them.[46] As he

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[43] Augustine seems to think his memory retains *imagines* even of things he experienced as an infant (*Conf*. 1.7.12). However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, if these *imagines* do exist, they are permanently inaccessible and irrevocably lost in his memory. Note that, although I focus on visual *imagines* in this chapter, *imagines* are of any sensorial experience (*Conf*. 10.8.13). For instance, when Augustine says he heard a child say, "*tolle lege*" (*Conf*. 8.12.29), he recalls an aural *imago*.

[44] Bal 1999: 5 (see also de Jong 2014: 38). As for the term "actor": an actor is an agent, human or non human, that causes or experiences an event, where "event" is understood to be "the transition from one state to another state."

[45] Bal 1999: 5: "a *story* is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner."

[46] I should note that, with the possible exception of *Conf*. 12.6.6, Augustine does not discuss recollection and narration as distinct activities. At *Conf*. 10.8.12, he says of what is very clearly a

explains, when he wants to recall something from his past, sometimes the *imagines* come to him in a neat sequence, "easily and in an undisturbed series," as if certain *imagines* are all neatly stored together, and as if they themselves preserve the chronology according to which the *res* was (or were) originally experienced.[47] In this instance, the memories themselves preserve temporal sequence. If what Augustine tells us is indeed precisely that which he recalls, then we can trust that certain sequences of events in the text accurately represent how certain *imagines* exist in his memory, at least at the moment of recollection.[48]

Sometimes, however, Augustine must actively seek out the memories he wants to recall, because some of them "take a longer time and are dug out as if from concealed hiding places."[49] In this instance, recollection requires a creative effort on the part of the author. And in making this effort, the author acts as narrator. This also occurs when he must sort through a "mob" (*catervatim*) of *imagines* to find the ones he is looking for, and

description of recollection that it is "*narration* from memory": *quod totum fit cum aliquid narro memoriter*. Elsewhere, he says that, when one recalls and narrates the past, one looks at *imagines* in the past: *imaginem vero eius, cum eam recolo et narro, in praesenti tempore intueor, quia est adhuc in memoria mea* (*Conf*. 11.18.23). Cf. also *De magistro* 12.39: *cum vero non de his, quae coram sentimus, sed de his, quae aliquando sensimus, quaeritur, non iam res ipsas, sed imagines ab eis impressas memoriaeque mandatas loquimur, quae omnino, quomodo vera dicamus, cum falsa intueamur, ignoro, nisi quia non nos ea videre ac sentire, sed vidisse ac sensisse narramus*. Here, he does say that he "speaks about" (*loquimur*) his memories (*imagines*) when he narrates his past. Although the two activities (recollection and narration) are inextricably linked in the context of autobiography, there is a quality of intentionality in narration that is absent in recollection.

[47] *Conf*. 10.8.12: *posco ut proferatur quidquid volo, et quaedam statim prodeunt . . . alia faciliter atque imperturbata serie sicut poscuntur suggeruntur, et cedunt praecedentia consequentibus et cedendo conduntur, iterum cum voluero processura*.

[48] See Chapter 3.

[49] *Conf*. 10.8.12: *quaedam requiruntur diutius et tamquam de abstrusioribus quibusdam receptaculis eruuntur . . .*

he must separate the *imagines* that he considers relevant to the fabula he wishes to turn

into a story from those that he considers irrelevant:

> Some rush forth in a mob, and, although some other thing is being sought and asked for, they leap forth into the middle as if asking, "aren't we the ones [you are looking for]?" And I drive them away with the hand of my heart from the face of my recollection until what I want [to recall] is removed from the cloud [of memories] and comes forth into my view from its hiding place.[50]

Moreover, the very act of putting his memories to words effects the transition from fabula

to story, from recollection to narration. Augustine had to choose words to describe the

imagines he encountered in his memory: his narrative is constituted of the "words

conceived from memories," not the *imagines* themselves.[51] Thus, he has *both* to choose

what to describe among the mob of *imagines and* to select the appropriate words that he

thinks accurately depict what he sees, hears, feels, etc.[52] In other words, Augustine must

engage in the linguistic activity of transforming *imagines* into *verba*; and, in so doing,

Augustine the author *narrates*—that is, he acts as narrator.[53]

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[50] *Conf.* 10.8.12: . . . *quaedam catervatim se proruunt et, dum aliud petitur et quaeritur, prosiliunt in medium quasi dicentia, `ne forte nos sumus?' et abigo ea manu cordis a facie recordationis meae, donec enubiletur quod volo atque in conspectu prodeat ex abditis*. There is an apparent contradiction here between Augustine selecting *imagines* that he wants to recall and the location of them in "hiding places." This is a question I address in my third chapter. For a discussion of the adverb *catervatim*, see Chapter 3.

[51] *Conf.* 11.18.23: *verba concepta ex imaginibus*.

[52] As O'Meara 1992: 79 says, "Telling the truth and nothing but the truth is, at best, an excercise in approximation. Words are never adequate to describe reality."

[53] However, at *Conf.* 6.13.23 Augustine appears to suggest that not all sensory experiences can be accurately translated into words: *dicebat enim discernere se nescio quo sapore*. (This is also his opinion in *De magistro*.) Chadwick, taking a bit too much liberty, translates the underlined phrase as "a certain smell indescribable in words." However, the literal "I do not know what smell," or "some smell," perhaps still suggests that the *sapor* cannot be translated directly and unambiguously into a *verbum*.

Finally, Augustine must not only translate his *imagines* into *verba*, he must also describe how he experiences *imagines* in the moment of recollection. Let us take as an example the famous scene of Augustine's conversion.[54] To summarize the story, Augustine is sitting in silent despair with his friend Alypius. He removes himself and sits down alone under a fig tree. There, he hears the voice of a child say, "*tolle lege*," which leads him to open his text of Paul at random and read Romans 13:13-14.

His description of what occurred is either intended to direct our attention toward certain aspects of the event instead of others, or—as I argue—it reflects the particular narrative pathway through his memory at the moment of recollection. For instance, he specifies that the tree under which he lay down was a *fig* tree, but he does not tell us anything about, for instance, the place he and Alypius were sitting—though surely he would remember some details of this as well. Similarly, although we know that Alypius was confounded when he observed Augustine in a state of silent despair, our attention is directed not toward Alypius' confusion but rather toward Augustine's distress (cf. the lengthy description of his crying and the poetic terms he uses to describe it). In other words, it *appears* that Augustine has chosen not to tell us certain things that he recalled when he metaphorically entered his memory to retrieve the *imagines* that belong to this story.[55] In this way, the author acts as narrator. However, even if—as I suggest it is—this

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54 For the complete story, see Appendix A.

55 Elsewhere, Augustine himself says as much: *et dedisti alterum responsum interim quod recolo. nam et multa praetereo, propter quod propero ad ea quae me magis urguent confiteri tibi, et multa non memini* (*Conf*. 3.12.21). Augustine appears to be aware of the difficulty of relating everything he recalls when he asks, *quando recordabor omnia dierum illorum feriatorum? sed*

is precisely how Augustine recalled the event (if, for example, he did not in fact recall any details of the place where he and Alypius had been sitting, or, metaphorically speaking, he passed by that memory as he went), simply the transformation of what is recalled into a text is narration.

Because recollection is itself an experience, Augustine necessarily engages in focalization, or the relaying of events with "a certain way of seeing things, a certain angle."[56] As Bal explains:

> Perception depends on so many factors that striving for objectivity is pointless. To mention only a few factors: one's position with respect to the perceived object, the fall of light, the distance, previous knowledge, psychological attitude towards the object; all this and more affects the picture one forms and passes on to others. In a story, elements of the fabula are presented in a certain way. We are confronted with a *vision* of the fabula.[57]

This description of narration is precisely what occurs when Augustine recalls his past: he recalls particular things in a particular way at a particular present moment with a particular state of mind, and so forth. The particular vision he has of his *imagines* becomes a narrative. Thus, because Augustine engages in focalization when recalling his past (whether he intentionally tells a story in a particular way, or he simply happens to do so), he, the author, acts as narrator. He does so even if what he narrates transmits precisely what he sees and experiences when he recalls memories of his past: in this

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nec oblitus sum nec silebo flagelli tui asperitatem et misericordiae tuae mirabilem celeritatem (*Conf.* 9.4.12). But see Chapter 3 for discussion.

[56] Bal 1999: 142; see also 78. "Perspective" may be a better term than "angle, though "angle" is appropriate in Augustine's spatial understanding of memory. See Chapter 1 n.6 for de Jong's two subcategories of focalization.

[57] Bal 1999: 142 (emphasis mine).

scenario, Augustine has still done something to transform his recollection into a narrative: at the very least, he has described his experience with words and has been selective in so doing.

One of the questions I explore in this dissertation is to what degree Augustine is responsible for these narrative decisions, and to what degree this activity is determined by the present state of his memory. If Augustine chooses to narrate something other than what he recalls (and believes to be true), then the character that emerges in the text is unrepresentative of the historical Augustine whose life we believe that he describes. And the voice of the narrator is not that of the author. If this is the case, then the *Confessions* is not autobiography. But Augustine's stories must be about his real self—or, at least, what he believes to be his real self. The self he narrates in the *Confessions* is his present self, for this is the only self that exists and is knowable. Insofar as his memories are present, this self necessarily includes his past, though not his past *per se* but instead the fragments of it that remain presently in his memory.

At no point in the text of the *Confessions* is our narrator not present: he is there equally when he tells stories from his past and when he engages in philosophical reflection. When we read the historical episodes of *Confessions* 1-9, we encounter the same narrator that we find elsewhere. Thus, there is only one Augustine present in the text, and that is the author, engaged in the activity of recollection, thereby acting as narrator, no matter what the subject is that he recalls or with which he engages. For this reason, Augustine explains that the product (*fructus*) of his confession is himself now, not who he once was:

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Good people are delighted to hear about past sins of those who now lack them, not because the sins exist but because they existed and do not exist now. And so, with that result, my Lord, my consciousness confesses to you, relying more on the hope of your mercy than on hope's innocence. For what result, I ask, do I confess to you, even in the eyes of people, through these books who I still am, not who I was? For I have seen the result and I have recalled it in detail. But many people want to know who I still am in the time itself of my confessions, both those who know me, and those do not know me, but who have heard something either from me or about me. But their ear is not at my heart, where I am whoever I am. So they want to hear me confess what I myself am inside, where they cannot concentrate (*intendere*) their eye or ear or mind. Nonetheless, those who will believe me want [to believe me], but are they able to know [me]? The grace with which they are good people tells them that I am not lying about myself, and grace itself trusts me in these things.[58]

And:

This is the product of my confessions, [namely] not how I was but how I am . . . So, to the people you command me to serve, I will reveal (*indicabo*) not who I was but who I am now and who I still am.[59]

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[58] *et delectat bonos audire praeterita mala eorum qui iam carent eis, nec ideo delectat quia mala sunt, sed quia fuerunt et non sunt. quo itaque fructu, domine meus, cui cotidie confitetur conscientia mea, spe misericordiae tuae securior quam innocentia sua, quo fructu, quaeso, etiam hominibus coram te confiteor per has litteras adhuc quis ego sim, non quis fuerim? nam illum fructum vidi et commemoravi. sed quis adhuc sim, ecce in ipso tempore confessionum mearum, et multi hoc nosse cupiunt qui me noverunt et non me noverunt, qui ex me vel de me aliquid audierunt, sed auris eorum non est ad cor meum, ubi ego sum quicumque sum. volunt ergo audire confitente me quid ipse intus sim, quo nec oculum nec aurem nec mentem possunt intendere; credituri tamen volunt, numquid cognituri? dicit enim eis caritas, qua boni sunt, non mentiri me de me confitentem, et ipsa in eis credit mihi* (*Conf.* 10.3.4).

[59] *Conf.* 10.4.6: *hic est fructus confessionum mearum, non qualis fuerim sed qualis sim . . . indicabo ergo talibus qualibus iubes ut serviam, non quis fuerim, sed quis iam sim et quis adhuc sim . . .* Cf. also *Conf.* 3.11.20: *confiteor tibi, domine, recordationem meam, quantum recolo*; 5.9.16: *. . . sicut iam recordatus atque confessus sum*; 6.6.9: *vide cor meum, domine, qui voluisti ut hoc recordarer et confiterer tibi*; 8.1.1: *deus meus, recorder in gratiarum actione tibi et confitear misericordias tuas super me.*

Augustine confesses himself as he is now. Because he—his self in the present—is the result of his past, he must also tell us about that. But, he only has access to his past as it lingers in his present in the form of memories. So, when he narrates his past, he can only tell us what he sees in his memory or can reasonably reconstruct from inference, as I discuss in Chapter 2. The first nine books of the *Confessions* are certainly about his past. But it is about his past as, and in what way, it still exists in his present.

Chapter 2: Historicity and Lying

> "Jerry, just remember: it's not a lie if you believe it."
> —*Seinfeld*, "The Beard"

My second chapter begins with a discussion of the debate surrounding the historicity of the *Confessions*. Among other examples, I focus on Augustine's conversion story in Book 9 of the *Confessions* and, in particular, his otherwise straightforward claim that there was a fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum where he converted. From there, in the second part of this chapter, I turn to the issue of lying and intentionality, which, when coupled with my argument in Chapter 1 about the narrator of the *Confessions*, provides a nuanced response to the question of historicity: Augustine cannot be lying about or intentionally distorting his memory of the past. Rather, what we find in the *Confessions* is a true narrative of Augustine's present memory of the past insofar as he can recall it, even if at times his story is factually inaccurate.

The Question of Historicity

The lengthiest and most significant debate for the academic study of the *Confessions* concerns the historical accuracy of the stories Augustine tells about his past in Books 1-9.[1] The debate has centered on his conversion story as he presents it in Book

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[1] The debate begins in 1888 when Harnack and Boissier independently called into question the veracity of Augustine's claim that he converted to Christianity in 386. Since then, numerous other details of Augustine's story have been questioned (see the beginning of this chapter). Suspicion of exaggeration goes back at least as far as the seventeenth century when J. le Clercq wrote of the *Confessions*: *redolet hoc superstitionem ethnicam, ex fortuitis vocibus omina captantem; quod nemo paulo humanior ignorat. si quis singulari providentia divina factum hoc putet, ita ut*

8, but it is relevant to everything he says about his past. The question as traditionally put involves more than simply whether what Augustine says is historically accurate or not. Starnes, for example, asks: "Are [the *Confessions*] a true historical account of Augustine's conversion, *or a version in which the facts have been altered to suit some ulterior purpose*?"[2] The assumption highlighted is that, if Augustine did not tell historically accurate stories, then he *intentionally* said false things about his past. As O'Donnell says, "the *Confessions* are indeed his full public confession of his past, *dramatically meant to mislead his readers*."[3] But to argue that Augustine *either* told true stories about his past *or* intentionally distorted his past is to create a false dichotomy. Therefore, I begin by deconstructing the question of historicity, and then I reassemble the debate from there.

The question of historical inaccuracies goes far beyond factually inaccurate statements, though there appears to be at least one instance of this in the *Confessions*.[4] It

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aestuanti Augustino editum caelitus sit monitum, oportebit ut ostendat opus fuisse eiusmodi miraculo, quo Augustinus intellegere posset sibi legendam scripturam sacram, ut ex ea resciret quid sibi agendum esset. quod cum quotidie audiret a catholicis, cum in ecclesia, tum alibi, non video cur confugiendum sit ad miraculum. sed rhetor noster, quod cum pace eius dictum sit, omnia exaggerat . . . (*PL* 47.210). For discussions of the history of the scholarly debate, see Starnes 1990: 277-89 and O'Connell 1994 and 1996: 259-309. Concise summaries of the debate are found in Feldmann 1994: 1135-36 and Kotzé 2004: 11-12 (see 12 n.17 for a comprehensive bibliography).

[2] Starnes 1990: 277 (emphasis mine).

[3] O'Donnell 2005: 53 (emphasis mine).

[4] Augustine apparently makes a factually incorrect statement when he tells us about the time he spent with the Manichees at *Conf*. 5.6.10: *et per annos ferme ipsos novem quibus eos animo vagabundus audivi nimis extento desiderio venturum expectabam istum Faustum*. He says that he spent "around nine years" with the Manichees, though the actual number appears to be eleven (cf. O'Donnell 2005: 44-45, 48). However, O'Donnell 1992: 2.297-8 presents a more nuanced view of the issue. Here, he states that the nine years Augustine mentions refers to his *religious* affiliation as a Manichee, and that the eleven years we know of from the historical record refer to his *intellectual* associations with them, which only ended when he left Rome. If O'Donnell 2005 is correct, then we have one instance of an historically false statement. If O'Donnell 1992 is correct,

also does not (at least initially) concern whether or not Augustine fabricated entire events from his past; though this too is a question.[5] The origin of the question has to do with the details Augustine gives us about particular events and claims he makes about his past in general. For instance—and this is the question that will occupy the majority of this chapter—was the tree under which he lay in the garden at Cassiciacum in 386 in fact a fig tree, or was it some other tree (assuming there was a tree at all)?[6] Furthermore, the question also involves what Augustine suggests or implies when he says (or does not say) something about his past—or what we erroneously infer. Thus, we include in the discussion of historicity and historical inaccuracies the issue of distortions, exaggerations, understatements, obfuscations, and so forth—things that, on their own, may be true but suggest things that are false.

The examples I will use are as follows. Augustine's account of his time with the Manichees provides evidence for straightforward historical inaccuracies. Augustine's minimizing of his engagement with Christianity prior to his conversion as well as his dismissal of four people who were close to him (his father, his son, his mistress, and Manlius Theodorus) from the narrative provide evidence for historical understatement. As an example of exaggeration, I also look briefly at Augustine's story of stealing pears.[7]

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then we have an instance in which Augustine *suggested* something that is historically inaccurate, for Augustine does not himself make the distinction between "religious" and "intellectual" associations.

[5] For instance, see Leo Ferrari 1992: 102: ". . . it must be concluded that the well-known conversion scene in the eighth book of the *Confessions* is essentially fictional in nature."

[6] *Conf.* 8.12.28-29.

[7] Because "understatement" and "exaggeration" are terms relative to each other, I briefly compare the roles of Ambrose and Theodorus in Augustine's life as they appear in the narrative.

Finally, I turn to the real centerpiece of the debate of historicity: Augustine's conversion scene and his mention of a fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum.

Our first question is whether what Augustine says is or is not factually true. It seems clear that many things that Augustine both said and suggested (both by what he says and by what he does not say) result in a story that is not entirely faithful to the events as they actually occurred. I begin with Augustine's account of his involvement with the Manichees as discussed by O'Donnell.[8]

In the *Confessions*, Augustine downgrades the seriousness with which he approached his Manichaeism. He presents us with a younger Augustine who was skeptical of the teachings of the Manichees early on and grew increasingly doubtful as time went on. He makes us think that his departure from the group was a result of the confirmation of that doubt when he eventually met Faustus while still in Carthage.[9] O'Donnell, summarizing the way Augustine presents himself in the *Confessions*, writes that, although Augustine had "quickly [seen] through the intellectual shallowness of the cult," he "lingered passively and curiously, finally drifting away to wait for something else to turn up," until, eventually, Ambrose (re)introduced him to Christianity in Milan. However, O'Donnell argues that the historical record shows us that "Augustine took his Manichaeism seriously," and "it was only, in the end, when he left Rome to go to a city where there was apparently no community of Manichees to take up with, that he made a

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[8] O'Donnell 2005: 48ff.

[9] See *Conf*. 5.6.10-7.13 wherein the eager Augustine at last meets Faustus and is quickly disappointed.

decisive break."[10] Augustine's story in the *Confessions* is therefore already inconsistent with the historical record as we know it.

Moreover, O'Donnell also suggests that Augustine, who doubtless would have considered advancement to the Manichee elect, could not have done so on his own, for "religious advancement in late antiquity was more often a question of being invited to advance rather than merely choosing to do so."[11] In other words, O'Donnell's suggestion is that the Manichees themselves would have also played an active role in the relationship they had with Augustine and in any prospects he may have had of advancement, though this is not what Augustine tells us.[12]

According to O'Donnell, Augustine also understated his early exposure to Christianity:

> [A]ll the intimations and inklings of Christianity in earlier life had to be minimized. Infant enrollment as a catechumen, childhood yearnings for religion, adolescent exploration, and an apparent lifetime of regular association with Christian institutions (Augustine probably never missed church on Sunday in his life, gliding from his childhood church to Manicheism in Carthage, then to the Christianity he joined in Milan, without ever missing a beat) were as nothing. On his reading, he had not been a *faithful* Christian until he entered the baptismal font in Milan on Easter eve in 387.[13]

The story we find in the *Confessions* is of someone who has *come* to Christianity, rather than of someone who has *returned* to it. Therefore, we are left with an account of an

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[10] O'Donnell 2005: 48.

[11] O'Donnell 2005: 49. For the hierarchical structure of Manichaeism, see Lancel 2002: 31-36.

[12] In fact, Lancel 2002: 36 removes any active involvement with the Manichees on the part of Augustine when he says " . . . once Augustine had been freed from [the Manichees'] grasp . . . "

[13] O'Donnell 2005: 53 (emphasis his).

Augustine who mostly "dabbled" in Manichaeism before wholeheartedly "finding" Christianity when he met Ambrose.

The argument that Augustine distorted his past through omission is furthered by the fact that four people of great importance to Augustine during these years play almost no role in the story we find in the *Confessions*. The first is his father, Patricius. O'Donnell cites Augustine's relationship with him as "the more important family relationship in Augustine's life."[14] However, "in the narrative of the *Confessions*, he vanishes early on, and we find out only dozens of pages later that he had died while Augustine was still young."[15]

Secondly, there is Augustine's son, Adeodatus, who died in 390, but who "was the pride of [Augustine's] eyes, the unspoken great loss of his life."[16] Augustine mentions his death only in passing; he "is too hidden for us to read, to know more than that he was there, that he meant something, and that he disappeared."[17] It is worth noting that

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[14] O'Donnell 2005: 57.

[15] O'Donnell 2005: 57. For Augustine's only mention of the event, where Patricius' death is revealed awkwardly and unhelpfully as a temporal marker: *non enim ad acuendam linguam, quod videbar emere maternis mercedibus, cum agerem annum aetatis undevicensimum iam defuncto patre ante biennium, non ergo ad acuendam linguam referebam illum librum, neque mihi locutio sed quod loquebatur persuaserat* (*Conf.* 3.4.7).

[16] O'Donnell 2005: 58. His death is mentioned: *cito de terra abstulisti vitam eius . . .* (*Conf.* 9.6.14). Cf. also *Conf.* 9.6.14 (*horrori mihi erat illud ingenium*) and *Contra Iulianum* 6.22 ("you're the only man in the world that I would want to outdo me in everything"). Augustine first mentions his son at 9.6.14 when he offers a most brief biography of the boy, and again at 9.12.29, when Augustine tells us in a single sentence only that Adeodatus cried at Monnica's death: *tum vero ubi efflavit extremum, puer Adeodatus exclamavit in planctu atque ab omnibus nobis cohercitus tacuit*. Because Adeodatus died three years after the timeline in question, it is significant that Augustine mentions his death at all, even (or especially) if only in passing.

[17] O'Donnell 2005: 58. Cf. also 70: "In the course of the ninth book of the *Confessions*, his mother's death is narrated, his father's is mentioned, his other friends, Nebridius and Verecundus,

Adeodatus, though he spent his entire life with his father, is only mentioned twice in the *Confessions*.[18]

Thirdly, there is Augustine's mistress—his de facto wife for sixteen years—for whom we know he cared deeply.[19] But she, too, is dismissed from the story as presented in the *Confessions*. As Brown remarks, she is "noticeably absent."[20] Augustine does not even give us her name.

Finally, there is Augustine's Neoplatonic instructor, Manlius Theodorus, about whom Augustine says almost nothing at all. However, outside of the *Confessions*, Augustine attributed his conversion to him.[21]

Reading the *Confessions*, one could easily come away with an inaccurate impression of the importance that these people and events had in his life: they sound less significant than they seem actually to have been. Compare these stories, then, to some of the stories Augustine chooses to emphasize.[22] One example is the presence of Ambrose

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slip away to die in odd moments of the narrative, and Augustine himself and Alypius, Adeodatus, and a new friend, Evodius, undertake the special form of death that is Christian baptism. *Adeodatus's bodily death is foretold in that context, and that's it. Story over*." (Emphasis mine).

[18] At *Conf.* 9.6.14, Augustine mentions his brilliance of thought and participant as interlocutor in *De magistro*, and at *Conf.* 9.12.29ff., he tells us that Adeodatus cried when Monnica died. In Augustine's *Dialogues*, however, Adeodatus plays a central role as the group's philosophical nucleus.

[19] Lancel 2002: 72; O'Donnell 2005: 38-9.

[20] Brown 1967: 61.

[21] Wills 2011: 22, citing *De beata vita* 1. In the *Confessions*, the only likely reference to Manlius is at 7.9.13, when Augustine mentions "a certain man" who introduced him to the Platonists (. . . *procurasti mihi per quendam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum quosdam platonicorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos* . . .).

[22] This is not to ignore the issue of topic. That is, *why* Augustine chooses to talk about certain things more than others. But that is a question that can be put aside until Chapter 3. Note, for instance, that there is no introduction to the work (for discussion, see O'Donnell 1992: 2.8-9), so

in the narrative, to whom Augustine perhaps retroactively gives exaggerated credit as an adoptive spiritual father.[23]

Another example is the attention that Augustine pays to his sins: he ruminates for ten chapters—from *Conf.* 2.6.9 to 2.10.18 (the end of the book); thus, for over half of Book 2—on his theft of some pears. Of the episode, MacDonald says, "Augustine might reasonably be accused of having been obsessed with sin both as a theoretical concept and as a personal affliction."[24]

> In the *Confessions* in particular, it can seem that he focuses on, indeed agonizes over, his own past sins and sinfulness to the point of excess. His confession of his own present sin, in Book 10, for example, is relentless not only in length but in detail. His attention throughout the narrative of his life to his struggles with sexual incontinence in particular can seem to border on deviance and, in Book 8, to assume a magnitude out of all proportion with reasonable self-assessment. Viewed against this backdrop of searing self-scrutiny the famous story of the theft of the pears, in *Confessions*, Book 2, can seem—and has in fact seemed to some readers—Augustine's most extreme piece of self-flagellation. He appears to scourge himself mercilessly for what might best be described as a bit of late-night adolescent mischief.[25]

we, Augustine's readers, are unsure of Augustine's intentions. The result is that, despite the modern disproportionality of attention to one event over another, when read as a whole, no matter Augustine's intent, the autobiographical narrative of the *Confessions* does present a lopsided account of Augustine's past.

[23] Cf. Wills 2012: 71: ". . . Augustine says he started learning just the things Courcelle wants him to be learning from the Sunday sermons—the existence of "pure spirit" (C 6.4) and the "symbolic" understanding of the Hebrew scriptures. But here, too, there are signs that Augustine is retroactively "adopting" Ambrose as his spiritual father. . . . . "

[24] MacDonald 2006: 45.

[25] MacDonald 2006: 45-46. Cf. also Starnes 1990: 37-38: "The incident itself was insignificant. . . . We are probably inclined to regard this kind of thing as a natural part of growing up, to be dismissed with an indulgent "boys will be boys." . . . From this standpoint, one can only look at Augustine's lengthy treatment of the incident as the pious, or neurotic, hyperbole of the great saint making much ado over nothing. This would be especially true of his implication that in this act he was even worse than the savage Catiline, the arch-villain of the Roman Republic." Courcelle 1968: 51-52, citing a similar story about Macarius the Egyptian's great grief over "a minor theft"

"To the point of excess," indeed. One would think, as Lloyd Patterson used to, that "Augustine intended to depict his early life as sinfully as possible."[26] The result of these potential omissions, embellishments, and understatements is that Augustine's narrative—even if everything he says in it is true—is of questionable historical accuracy.[27] Again, the question does not necessarily go so far as to concern whether he did, in fact, steal some pears or not. If he did not, then this is a *prima facie* case of historical inaccuracy; but we have no historical record against which to compare his narrative. An equally legitimate historical concern is whether he included this episode intentionally to distort his past. Although we do not have sound evidence to suggest that Augustine completely invented stories, there are understandable concerns about the details he relates and the weight he gives (or does not give) to aspects of his story. And, if there are concerns about the veracity of one story or detail, then we do have to wonder about every thing he says.

Harnack and Boissier, whom I have noted above, called into question the historicity of Augustine's conversion as he describes it in Book 8 of the *Confessions*. They did so because, in his Cassiciacum dialogues, written immediately after his conversion and about a decade before he composed the *Confessions*, Augustine does not

(Starnes' words), then says (1968: 48 n.48) that it's "romaine," an exaggerated statement in conformity with an ancient literary tradition that made much ado over nothing.

[26] Said by L. G. Patterson in a lecture on Augustine to his graduate seminar on early Church history (Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, December 3, 1986).

[27] Take for instance the claim, "the American Civil War was fought over slavery." The claim per se is not false, but alone it presents an inaccurately simplified account of the complexities that led to and propelled the Civil War.

appear to be the wholeheartedly converted Christian that, in the *Confessions*, he claimed

to have become in 386.[28] As Starnes writes, Augustine in the Cassiciacum dialogues

"appears to be still simply and contentedly immersed in the culture of late pagan antiquity

and concerned only with philosophical questions,"[29] whereas the *Confessions* "show

Augustine suddenly and completely converted to Christianity and thereafter moved by a

thoroughly Christian spirit."[30] As a solution to this problem, Harnack proposed that

Augustine wrote the *Confessions* according to a theological principle concerning the state

of his soul, not an historical principle about his past life. As Starnes states in reference to

Harnack, this theological principle "made it convenient for Augustine *to doctor the facts*

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[28] Starnes 1990: 277. It is worth quoting the passage in full: "There is a distinct difference in tone between the *Confessions*, written some ten years after Augustine's conversion, and his first works, known as the *Dialogues*, written right after the event. The *Confessions* show Augustine suddenly and completely converted to Christianity and thereafter moved by a thoroughly Christian spirit, grieving over his sins or rejoicing with thankfulness for the grace he has received—while the *Dialogues*, though written right after the time he says he was converted, show almost no evidence of this. In them Augustine appears to be still simply and contentedly immersed in the culture of late pagan antiquity and concerned only with philosophical questions." For the claim that the *Dialogues* are more historically accurate than the *Confessions*, see Alfaric 1918: v-vi, who is credited with this claim, and Starnes 1990: 279 for discussion. The Cassiciacum dialogues are the *Soliloquia*, *Contra academicos*, *De beata vita*, and *De ordine*. As possible justification of the use of these texts in the reconstruction of the historical record may be found in McWilliam's 1999b: 806 claim that the *Soliloquia* "[represents] Augustine's personal testimony, a more intimate witness than the dialogues to his state of mind between conversion and baptism."

[29] Starnes 1990: 277 (quoted above), where, as Starnes says, the issue comes down to one of tone. Cf. McWilliam 1999a: 136: "It is because of the dialogues' marked contrast to the *Confessiones* that the question of their historicity has arisen. The discussion finds its focus in the difficulty of reconciling the *Confessiones*' retrospectively fervent account of the period immediately surrounding his conversions with the more detached tone of the contemporary witness of the Cassiciacum writings. Although there are few factual discrepancies, at least because of this difference in tone, can they both accurately portray Augustine's mind in the autumn and winter of 386-87?" Of course, states of mind are far more complex than they are considered here, and differences in tone can be accounted for by differences in subject. Here, however, my concern lies primarily with a response to the scholarly debate surrounding the question of historicity. For this reason, McWilliam's question is absolutely valid.

[30] Starnes 1990: 277.

and to present his conversion as a sudden break, when it must actually have been a slow, cumulative process stretching years beyond the time when he wrote the *Dialogues*."[31] Furthermore, to explain the differences in tone between the *Dialogues* and the *Confessions*, it has even been suggested that, in 386, Augustine converted not to Christianity but to Neoplatonism.[32]

I have conceded above that the suggestion that the *Confessions* may not be perfectly historically accurate is correct. However, the original grounds for calling the historicity of the work into question are unsound. First, it assumes that the *Dialogues* can be used for historical information about the author who wrote them. But the *Dialogues* belong to the genre of philosophical dialogue that uses the author as an interlocutor (as is the case with Cicero's dialogues, for example).[33] Thus, they belong to the realm of philosophical enquiry rather than to history. All we can say about their importance to the historical record is that Augustine may have had conversations that resemble these.[34]

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[31] Starnes 1990: 277 (emphasis mine).

[32] As O'Donnell 2013 wonders, "Augustine's reading of the writings of certain Platonists were instrumental in effecting his conversion to Christianity. How important a part did they play? Perhaps the events of 386 amounted not to a conversion to Christianity at all, but to a conversion to Neoplatonism." (I should note that O'Donnell 2013 is an online essay accessed in 2013, not an essay composed in 2013. O'Donnell appears to have composed it prior to the publication of his 1992 commentary.)

[33] O'Donnell 2013: "The disparities between the *Confessions* narrative and the Cassiciacum dialogues need not be significant, first of all, and can be explained by attending to the differences of literary style and purpose between those works. The dialogues were philosophical works in a Ciceronian mold, in which personal passions fit uncomfortably." On the historicity of one of Cicero's dialogues in light of its genre, see Burton 2007.

[34] Cf. Kries 1999, whose assessment of *De magistro* can also be applied to the Cassiciacum dialogues: "According to the *Confessions* passage [9.6.14], the dialogue is based on the sorts of conversations Augustine and his adolescent son engaged in; nevertheless, the dialogue is carefully constructed and does not exhibit the rambling nature of historical discourse." Although

Although they were written closer to the time of Augustine's purported conversion, they should not be considered more historically accurate than a work whose first ten books the author himself says were written *de me*—that is (presumably) autobiographically.[35]

Secondly, this line of reasoning assumes that, as Starnes puts it, being "still simply and contentedly immersed in the culture of late pagan antiquity and concerned only with philosophical questions" is inconsistent with the writings of a converted Christian.[36] It is true that these works are not as intensely theological as Augustine's later works, but the circumstances under which he wrote the *Dialogues*, on the one hand, and his later works, on the other, are different—as, of course, are their subjects and objectives.

De magistro is not a Cassiciacum dialogue, because it was written between the *Dialogues* and the *Confessions*, I suggest that it is still relevant to the question at hand. On the process whereby the *Dialogues* were composed, see Stock 1996: 131. He claims that the actual conversations were recorded and then turned into the literary works that we have now. Even if this is true, while they reflect real conversations, they cannot be the conversations that actually occurred: they are conversations that have been transformed into literary works.

[35] *Retractationes* 2.6.32: *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 legerunt cum scriberentur, et agunt cum leguntur. quid de illis alii sentiant, ipsi viderint; multis tamen fratribus eos multum placuisse et placere scio. a primo usque ad decimum de me scripti sunt; in tribus ceteris, de Scripturis sanctis, ab eo quod scriptum est, In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram, usque ad sabbati requiem.*

[36] Cf. McWilliam 1999b: 135: "Augustine himself perceived a discrepancy in tone between his Cassiciacum writings and his description of the same period in his life in the *Confessiones*. Although he tells us in 386 that his learning would be totally submissive to the authority of Christ ("Mihi ergo certum est nusquam prorsus a Christi auctoritate discedere," *c. Acad*. 3.20.43), a dozen or so years later he saw his writings of the Cassiciacum retreat as still marked by academic pride ("Ibi quod egerim in litteris jam quidem servientibus tibi, sed adhuc superbiae scholam . . . ," *conf*. 9.4.7)." However, this does not mean that Augustine was not as devout in 386 as he says in 397 that he was (nor does it mean that he was). This is an assessment of the bishop Augustine, the author and narrator of the *Confessions*, as he looks back on his early life.

A third argument is that Augustine may have felt uncomfortable expressing his newfound faith to those who knew him but had themselves not converted. As Mallard says of the dialogues, they are "an understatement of something strongly held . . . since we know that because of the nature and purpose of the dialogues, Alypius pressed for the exclusion of the name of Christ altogether."[37] And, to quote O'Donnell,

> The very proximity of the dialogues to the events of the conversion explains their reticence. (The dialogues were dedicated to some of his Milan friends; but it was just those friends to whom Augustine regrets having given a disingenuous explanation for his retirement: 9.2.2-4.) Having converted to a religion of humility and self-effacement, Augustine would not have trumpeted his inmost feelings so soon and in so self-serving a way. A full decade had to pass before he could devise the literary means, in the *Confessions*, to speak of his most private experiences without pose or brag.[38]

A fourth concern is the assumption that there was a clear distinction between Middle- or Neoplatonism and Christianity, and that it was to the former that Augustine converted in 386, not the latter. The two were so closely intertwined during the early Patristic period that it would be unwise, if not simplistic, to consider them two distinct creeds. As King explains, Christianity was for Augustine "the *true* philosophy" and "a clear philosophical improvement on pagan neoplatonism."[39] King's use of the phrase "improvement on" instead of, say, "alternative to" is apt, as it captures the intellectual culture inherited by Augustine's Christianity. Furthermore, although the abundance of heated debates between Neoplatonists and Christians may imply that these two "groups"

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[37] Mallard 1980: 89 n.7. See also McWilliam 1999b: 136.
[38] O'Donnell 2013.
[39] King 2010: xiv.

were at irreconcilable odds with each other, the intensity of these debates is precisely due to the fact that they were uncomfortably similar: one cannot argue so intensely with those who share no common ground.[40] After all, the recorded debates were between particularly argumentative *individuals* from a shared background, whether "Christian" or not, and do not necessarily represent the views of the groups at large.

Lastly, there is the question of what conversion entails. There is nothing inconsistent in the idea that conversion is both "a sudden break" and "a slow, cumulative process stretching [over] years."[41] It requires both. To use my undergraduate career as an analogy, I can recall the precise moment I switched majors to Classics after years of "wanderings" (as I might now put it) from my childhood, when I was surrounded by classicists, to the study of graphic design, neuroscience, and Italian, finally and formally back to Classics. I can remember the moment so vividly that I can easily write a narrative of it. It was for both me then and now, looking back on it, a sudden and wholehearted moment of "conversion." Still, I did not *become* a classicist at that moment—that took years of intensive study and professional development, and at no point along the way could I have suddenly said with certainty, "*now* I am a classicist!" (It should be noted that Augustine never does say, "at that moment I became a Christian," vel sim.) Augustine's story ends not long after the revelatory moment, the "sudden break," of his conversion in 386. Although we do not hear of the "slow, cumulative process" that doubtless occurred

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[40] This is a common ancient trope. For instance, Aenesidemus refers to disputes in what he considers to be the insufficiently skeptical Academy as "Stoics fighting with Stoics" (see Photius, *Library* 169b18-170b3 = LS 71 C).

[41] Starnes 1990: 277.

between 386 and 397, there is no reason to think that this was not part of his conversion as well.

Although the discrepancy between the *Dialogues* and the *Confessions* is an unconvincing reason to doubt Augustine's conversion, there is nonetheless still reason to be suspicious. For instance, since Augustine's account of his time with the Manichees is not perfectly accurate, we should wonder about the veracity of his conversion story, as well. Augustine would have wanted to defend himself with respect to his involvement with the Manichees while simultaneously arguing for his devotion to catholic Christianity.[42] Thus, if one matter concerns us, so should the other.

In 1950, Courcelle made a decisive contribution to the debate about the historicity of the *Confessions*, suggesting that the conversion story as reported in Book 8 is figurative and, for this reason, not intended to be understood as a literal account of the events described.[43] This has become the *communis opinio*. To push the matter further, Ferrari then argued that "the well-known conversion scene in the eighth book of the *Confessions* is essentially fictional in nature."[44] Ferrari's reason for concluding this derives from what he calls "reference analysis."[45] Augustine's references to Romans 13:13-14 (the text he picked up and read at *Conf*. 8.12.29; the text that was central to his

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[42] For a discussion of Augustine's need to defend himself in light of his past, see O'Donnell 2005: 41ff.

[43] Courcelle 1950 (reprinted 1968). Following Courcelle are, among many others, Madec 1989, Ferrari 1989 and 1992, O'Meara 1992, Bonner 1993, and Bochet 1996. Prior to Courcelle, the belief was that the historical Augustine could be reconstructed from the text (see p. 24 n.9).

[44] Ferrari 1992: 102.

[45] Ferrari 1992: 98ff.

conversion) are found predominantly in the works written around the time of the *Confessions* (397-401), not in the early works. So, Ferrari concludes that, because the passage was on the mind of the author Augustine in 397, he inserted it into his story: the Augustine of 386 did not pick up and read this passage. Under the assumption that Augustine fabricated his conversion story, Ferrari wonders how Augustine's "scrupulous honesty" (to which I will return momentarily) can be reconciled with the "essentially fictional" story that he tells us in the *Confessions*, for "he is presenting as fact that which is not fact."[46]

So, is there a way in which Augustine did not lie? Ferrari's solution begins with the claim that the *Confessions* was meant as a script for a dramatic performance.[47] And he cites Augustine in *De mendacio*, who says "the truth is spoken not merely with the tongue, but in the heart. Those whose ears are opened by charity will hear and understand."[48] Ferrari interprets Augustine's comments as follows:

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[46] Ferrari 1992: 102.

[47] Ferrari 1992: 102: "the text is really a script for a dramatic performance, which throws an entirely different light on the whole question about the factuality or fictionality of the conversion scene." I quite like the thought of this, especially if it is true also for the last four "philosophical" books. Although we mine these latter books for statements of philosophical interest, the first-reader encounters them as part of Augustine's story, not as formal accounts to be studied in abstraction from the narrative to which they belong. In fact, to read them as narrative offers new emphasis to their content. For example, Book 11 contains Augustine's famous claim that time is a distention of the mind (*distentionem . . . animi*; 11.23.30), which is what this book is known for. However, this statement comes in the midst of a monologue throughout which Augustine remains aporetic about the definition of time. Instead, he concludes with a discussion of the psychological pain that results from participation in time (11.29.39). Reading the text as a narrative makes clear that Augustine's concern is with the effect of temporal participation, not time's definition. Thus, something important is lost, both in emphasis and in dramatic effect, when we do not read these books as narratives.

[48] Ferrari 1992: 103, citing *De mendacio* 16.31 (this is Ferrari's translation).

Augustine readily admits the legitimacy of allegory and figurative speech as expressions of the truth, particularly in regard to spiritual matters, as in the case of the Bible (paras. 7-9, 26 and 42). I believe that if there were any further need to justify the dramatic liberties of the conversion scene, it would be found under this category and by a special justification . . .[49]

Ferrari is oversimplifying a complex issue. Augustine does indirectly justify the false utterances of "those in authority" in the Old Testament when the figurative significance of the utterance is true.[50] Sarah and Jacob, for example, said what was reported to them, and did so in a prophetic spirit.[51] They told the literal truth, and the figurative significance of what they said was also true. Thus, no one will be deceived, even if they do not understand the figurative significance. As I will argue, this must be the case for Augustine.

The only example of "exemptions" for liars in the Old Testament is found in the case of the Egyptian midwives, which Augustine also discusses in *De Mendacio*.[52] They literally lied in order to help others, and, unbeknownst to them, their lie turned out to be true. God rewarded them, though not because they had signified something true while saying something literally false, but because they had made moral progress, from lying

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[49] Ferrari 1992: 103-104.

[50] Interestingly, he quotes statements by others who are disturbed by the lies of the Old Testament rather than saying it himself (though Augustine belongs to the group that now speaks): *nec illis, quae de veteribus libris mendaciorum exempla prolata sunt, terreri se dicunt: ubi quidquid gestum est, figurate accipi potest, quamvis revera contigerit; quidquid autem figurate fit aut dicitur, non est mendacium* (6.7).

[51] *De mendacio* 5.5.

[52] *De mendacio* 5.5.

with the intent to harm to lying with the intent to help.[53] If Augustine indeed fabricated

parts of the *Confessions*, he certainly did not do so in the spirit of helping others (after all,

the Noble Lie is still a lie), nor did he do so in a way that indicated moral progress on his

part (for otherwise he would indicate that he both used to lie and still does).

Although Augustine has to defend instances of lying in the Old Testament on the

grounds that there are liars who go unpunished, instances of lying in the New Testament

are an entirely different story. Augustine could not be clearer on the issue when he says:

> In regard to the books of the New Testament, *with the exception of figurative
> signification of the Lord*, if you consider the life and customs, the deeds and
> words, of the saints, *nothing can be adduced that would permit the telling of a
> lie*.[54]

Thus, God can say something literally false by means of figurative language, but we

cannot. To justify Ferrari's claim that Augustine would have considered himself in a

category of "special justification," we must then assume that Augustine considered his

statements as belonging either to the exceptions in Old Testament literature or to the

figurative language of God. We can exclude the latter possibility. Regarding the former,

Augustine qualifies cases of lying in the Old Testament significantly. Moreover, his

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[53] Cf. Mann 2003, 493: "The Hebrew midwives who lied to the king of Egypt (Exodus 1:15-21) found favor with God because their lie was motivated by mercy and concern for the welfare of others. Their behavior was evidence of progress towards spiritual perfection. But it would be a mistake to think that their spiritual perfection would be aided by their cultivating a disposition to lie whenever they find themselves in a position fitting the pattern of conditions (a) [that it does not pertain to religious doctrine] and (b) [that it is such that a greater evil can be avoided by telling it than by telling the truth] . . . " Augustine discusses this issue, raised by Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 7:13, at *De mendacio* 16-17.34.

[54] *De mendacio* 5.8: *et ideo de libris novi testamenti exceptis figuratis significationibus domini, si vitam moresque sanctorum et facta ac dicta consideres, nihil tale proferri potest, quod ad imitationem provocet mentiendi* (emphases mine).

treatment of martyrdom in *De civitate dei* may also be useful for indicating why Augustine would not have considered himself a special case.[55] His contention there is that the praise of martyrs does not mean that suicide or martyrdom are acceptable now; God himself must have *once* given a special sort of permission for such a thing to happen, and it is unambiguous when he does so. This may well mirror Augustine's treatment of lies in the Old Testament: they do not change the rule that lying is unacceptable.

There is an additional concern with Ferrari's argument. He supposes that Augustine is justified in saying false things when he says these things to make a point allegorically, because those who have grace, or charity, will understand what he meant.[56] This is a reasonable conclusion to draw for the same reason that I may make a private joke publicly because I know that my target audience will understand what I say.[57] However, as Mann explains,

> when orthodox Christians reveal their true beliefs at the conclusion of a campaign of deceit, their pattern of duplicity tends to confirm in heretics the erroneous

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[55] *De civ.* 1.20-21.

[56] Ferrari 1992: 103, quoted above: "Those whose ears are opened by charity will hear and understand."

[57] This is, again, to assume authorial intent and talk in terms of direct references. Cf. Mann 2003: 490: "Another kind of pretending, however, is unilateral. In an effort to impress someone I have just met I might pretend to be a Nobel laureate in philosophy. If the person is not in on my pretense, the pretense is unilateral. Because not all parties in unilateral pretending are on the same cognitive footing, unilateral pretending is more open to abuse and therefore to moral criticism. Its consequences to the factually ignorant victims can range from minor annoyance through humiliation up to loss of life."

opinion that lying is sometimes permissible, along with distrust about whether the orthodox are telling the truth *now*.[58]

We should be hesitant to suggest that Augustine would have thought that he could get away with literally lying because certain auditors would have understood what he figuratively meant, unless he thought he was writing for an audience so small that it comprised only those who would "get it." Of course, due to the nature of allusion, it is not clear precisely what one is supposed "to get."[59] For Augustine's story to be autobiography, he must have believed that what he said was literally true, whether or not there was also a figurative truth underlying his story or parts thereof. I believe this is evident when we look at his views of lying. This is not to say that we can definitively know the author's intentions. Instead, I suggest we can limit the range of possibilities to circumstances that are more likely than others.

O'Donnell provides a measured and more diplomatic response to the issue of the historicity of Augustine's conversion story when he writes:

> The climactic scene that follows in the garden at Milan is unobtrusively surrounded with echoes of other moments. The fig tree that will appear, for example, may very well have stood in that garden, but we cannot notice it without recalling another fig tree in the gospel (Jn. 1.48-50). Once again we are drawn to consider the questions of historicity raised by this account, but if we are prudent, we will dismiss them as irrelevant. The personal authenticity of what Augustine recounts to us makes his reliability as an observer of surrounding events at the moment of secondary importance. *Whether it happened this way or not (to an*

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[58] Mann 2003: 489 (emphasis his). For the erroneous belief that lying is sometimes permissible, he cites *Contra mendacium* 3.4-5; for the potential distrust of the orthodox, 4.7.

[59] Hinds 1998: 17-51.

outside observer's judgment), it is perfectly clear that this is the way it was lived, and that is all that matters.[60]

O'Donnell is right that "this is the way [the episode] was lived." However, it cannot be the case that "that is all that matters," for, if Augustine says things that he intends us to believe though he himself does not believe (e.g. that there was a fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum), then Augustine lies.

Augustine Lying under a Fig Tree

We would like to believe that everything Augustine says is historically accurate, but this cannot be the case. As I have shown in the first part of this chapter, there are

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[60] O'Donnell 2013 (emphasis mine). My response to this passage is the topic of an article in progress. Augustine's fig tree is presumed to be a direct reference to the fig tree under which Jesus saw Nathanael in the Gospel of John (1.48: *cum esses sub arbore fici vidi te*) and which Nathanael took as evidence that Jesus was Christ. Courcelle 1963:192 argues that we know this because Augustine said *fici arbore* rather than *ficu* or *arbore ficu*. Citing several passages in Augustine's work outside of the *Confessions*, O'Donnell 1992:3.58 concludes that the tree "embraces original sin, *concupiscentia carnis*, *verba sine fructu*, and *umbra mortis* (*conditio carnis*)" all at once, and that is what the reader will have understood when reading *Conf.* 8.12.28. Furthermore, as the argument goes, because Augustine's tree is a direct reference, therefore he invented it when he composed the *Confessions*: there had been no actual fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum. However, fig trees in Italy were as ubiquitous in the late 4th century as they are now (Mariotti Lippi et al. 2013). Thus, Augustine's mention of one is not necessarily remarkable. However, his use of *quadam*—"a *certain* fig tree"—may suggest that it was an allusion, though not a direct reference. There is not a philological argument for concluding as Courcelle does that it has to be the tree of John 1.48, for, when Augustine discusses that tree, he invariably retains the proper word order (*sub arbore fici*). And, even if John's tree is the tree Augustine imagined his own to be, it is not clear that his audience would have understood. Augustine published the works in which he discussed John's tree after he composed the *Confessions*. There are no less than 60 mentions of figs, fig leaves, and fig trees in biblical literature, rendering John 1.48 less obvious as the referential target. And figs play a prominent role in classical Latin literature and philosophy, as well (e.g. Cicero, *Pro Flacco* 41; Horace, *Ep.* 16.46; Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 15.74-78; Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.58; Epictetus 1.15, 3.9, 3.24; Marcus Aurelius 3.2). Finally, the reader had first encountered figs at *Confessions* 3.10.18, where Augustine mocks the Manichaean elect who believe that eating figs allow one "to burp up bits of God (*particulas dei . . . ructando*)." This is most likely to be the intratextual allusion to which the reader responded.

numerous examples of discrepancies between the historical record and the story Augustine presents in the *Confessions*. In response, the scholarly consensus since the middle of the twentieth century is that Augustine distorted and perhaps even fabricated the events of his past.[61] Advocates of this view attempt to salvage what they see as a fictitious autobiography by arguing that Augustine's stories are meant allegorically, not factually. But this, too, cannot be the case.

Augustine must not have intentionally distorted his past. If he did so, then he would have considered himself a liar and, as a result, condemned his soul eternally. Nor can it be the case that Augustine fabricated his past, for, if he did so, his *Confessions* would be rendered not only useless but even potentially harmful both to himself and to his auditor.[62] Therefore, his stories must be true. I conclude that the truth of Augustine's autobiography must be assessed with respect not to the events as they factually occurred but rather to his recollection of them in 397. These stories are (or must be) true from the perspective of Augustine the narrator.

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[61] Cf. especially Courcelle 1950, who established this interpretive avenue, and the numerous articles by Ferrari that pursue the same line of enquiry. In particular, see 1989 and 1992, discussed below, in which he proposes that Augustine's conversion story is fabricated. O'Meara 1992 (cf. especially 77-78) argues as I do that Augustine's narrative cannot be perfectly accurate due to it being narrative. However, it is necessary to avoid O'Meara's claim that the *Confessions* is therefore a literary construct, because this implies fiction. (Note that O'Meara and Ferrari differ in that Ferrari seems to believe that the *Confessions* was intended as fiction, whereas O'Meara does not.) If the *Confessions* is fiction, then it can serve no educational purpose. See n.62 below.

[62] Augustine does not object to "pagan" literature on religious grounds. The problem with it is that its content distracts us from that which is real, and through it our attention is drawn problematically toward nonexistent objects. It is for this reason that he laments about having cried for Dido when he read the *Aeneid* (*Conf*.1.13.20-22). If his story in the *Confessions* is fictitious, then it is at least equally corruptive.

I begin by outlining Augustine's own attempt at a definition of lying and use this to evaluate the question of whether Augustine fabricated parts of his *Confessions*. The question is not whether Augustine is, in fact, lying but whether he believes he is lying. Even if his intention was to imply that something were true by allegory, he is, by his own account, still lying if he does not believe that the details of what he explicitly says are also true. Moreover, he believes that he errs even if he simply permits his auditor to believe something that he himself does not believe to be true. Thus, under no circumstances—except those in which Augustine qualifies what he says—should it be the case that he says something that he does not believe to be true, at least if we subject him to his own professed standards.

In 396, a year before he composed the *Confessions*, Augustine wrote a short treatise on lying called *De mendacio*. Since so little time elapsed between the two works, it is likely that the author held the same views when writing both. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Augustine temporarily changed his mind about the issue especially when one considers how severe he believed the punishment for lying was: in his view, a lie, no matter the circumstances, condemns one's soul eternally. Further support for this claim should be found in the fact that, 26 years after composing *De mendacio*, Augustine presents the same view on lying in *Contra mendacium* as he did in 396.[63]

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[63] Of *De mendacio*, Augustine says: *sane quisquis legis, nihil reprehendas, nisi cum totum legeris; atque ita minus reprehendes. eloquium noli quaerere; multum enim de rebus laboravimus et de celeritate absoluendi tam necessarii cotidiane vitae operis: unde tenuis, ac prope nulla fuit nobis cura verborum* (*De mendacio* 1.1). It is hard to believe that a literary figure like Augustine would have *prope nulla . . . cura verborum*. But, at *Retractationes* 1.26 he complains about the work only on the grounds that he found it "vague, complicated, and entirely irksome" (trans.

For Augustine, lying entails damnation. With the exception of Ferrari 1992, no one has considered the question of historicity in light of Augustine's thoughts on lying.[64] This I undertake to do.

Implicit in both *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium* is the assumption that lying is intrinsically sinful.[65] Augustine never explicitly articulates this assumption because, as Mann suggests, "for Augustine, the answer [to the question why lying is wrong] is too obvious for words." It is the Decalogue, after all, that prohibits lying: *non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonium*.[66]

Augustine is, however, explicit about what he understands the consequence of lying to be when at *De mendacio* 6.9 he interprets Psalm 5:6, which reads:

> O Lord, you hate all those who work iniquity;
> you destroy all those who tell a lie.[67]

Of these lines, Augustine suggests either that the *mendacium* is the *iniquitas* that God hates, thus resulting in God both hating and destroying those who tell a lie, or that the

Bogan 1968: 117). Thus, he intended *Contra mendacium* to supersede *De mendacio* on literary grounds, not for philosophical reasons (cf. Mann 494 n.2). For this reason, I suggest that Augustine held the same views on lying throughout at least this period of his life and certainly while he composed the *Confessions*.

[64] As I argued earlier in this chapter, Ferrari mistakenly believed that Augustine would have considered himself on par with biblical examples of exemptions from sin. As he explains of martyrs in his more recent past, suicide was permissible only by divine command then (*De civ*. 1.20-21). It is quite unlikely that Augustine believed that God had commanded him to lie to his reader.

[65] Mann 2003: 488; 491. Interesting for Augustine's moral philosophy is Mann's 2003: 488 suggestion that there are no actions that are intrinsically good or intrinsically right; there are only actions that are intrinsically bad or intrinsically wrong. As I will momentarily explain, a lie is wrong simpliciter, no matter how good one's intentions may be. This belief underlies Augustine's entire discussion of lying.

[66] Exodus 20:16. As we will see, the entire question hinges on what it is to be *falsum*.

[67] *odisti, domine, omnes qui operantur iniquitatem, perdes omnes qui loquuntur mendacium*.

two lines are separate thoughts, entailing that "God hates one person somewhat mildly so that he will not destroy him; but the one whom he destroys he hates so much more vehemently as he punishes him more severely."[68] In both cases, the consequence of lying is unquestionable for Augustine: "[God] hates all those who work iniquity, and (*at*) he destroys all those who tell a lie."[69]

Throughout both *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium*, Augustine holds unwaveringly to the conclusion that telling a lie under any circumstance destroys one's immortal life.[70] This, again, is because lying is intrinsically sinful. This is true no matter how good the liar's intentions are and no matter how harmless or beneficial the outcome of that lie would be. For instance, as he explains, lying is not justifiable even if it is used to save the physical or spiritual life of another.[71] One's eternal life is more important than one's physical life; under no circumstance should the former be sacrificed for the latter. Thus, because lying is innately sinful, Augustine emphasizes that there is no circumstance in which lying will not destroy one's eternal life. The prohibition could not be any clearer. So, the next question is: what is a lie?

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[68] *forte enim odit aliquem deus aliquanto mitius, ut eum non perdat; quem vero perdit, tanto vehementius odit, quanto severius punit.*

[69] *odit autem omnes, qui operantur iniquitatem; at omnes, qui loquuntur mendacium, etiam perdit.*

[70] For proof, Augustine cites Wisd. 1:11: *os autem, quod mentitur, occidit animam.*

[71] For the prohibition of lying in the event that, by lying, one could save a physical life, see *De mendacio* 6.9 and *Contra mendacium* 18.36. The prohibition of lying even in the event that, by lying, one could save another's soul—thus, an even exchange—is implicit in the example given at *Contra mendacium* 9.20, 9.22. On the issue, see Mann 2003: 491. God would not let such a scenario occur (though one can certainly imagine a situation in which such an exchange were possible). Moreover, for Augustine the commandment, "treat your neighbor as yourself," does not mean "treat your neighbor better than yourself."

In both *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium,* Augustine proposes a number of cases, some of which depict clear examples of lying, and some of which are for him ambiguous. But in neither work is he able to propose even a working definition of lying. This matter is especially important in light of the consequences of even harmless or beneficial lying. If Augustine does not know what *definitively* constitutes a lie, then surely—assuming he is acting responsibly—he must want to avoid anything that *could be* an instance of lying.

In Book 8 of the *Confessions*, Augustine explains that his conversion to Christianity occurred suddenly in a garden in Cassiciacum in the year 386.[72] As I have already indicated, one detail of this story has stood out as particularly contentious. That detail is Augustine's statement that he "lay down in some way under a certain fig tree."[73] We can reduce this further to the simple unqualified claim that there was a fig tree there.

Because Augustine says without qualification that there was a fig tree, he presumably intends us to believe that there was, in fact, a fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum in 386. The first question is whether it matters that there was or was not a fig tree there. As Augustine says, "a person is to be judged as lying or not lying according to the will (*sententia*) of his own mind, not according to the truth or falsity of the things themselves (*rerum ipsarum*)."[74] In this instance, the *res ipsa* is the fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum. Thus, Augustine needs only to believe that there was a fig tree, whether

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[72] The episode appears at *Conf.* 8.12.28-29. See Appendix A.

[73] *Conf.* 8.12.28: *ego sub quadam fici arbore stravi me nescio quomodo.*

[74] *De mendacio* 3.3: *ex animi enim sui sententia, non ex rerum ipsarum veritate vel falsitate mentiens aut non mentiens iudicandus est.*

or not it is true that one was there. This assertion contravenes what Matthews calls the

Falsity Condition.[75] According to Matthews' standard analysis of lying, the following

conditions must all be present in an utterance if it is to be called a lie.[76] The first

condition, which I have just mentioned, is the "Falsity Condition": that what a person

says *is* false. The second condition is what he calls the "Believes-False Condition": that a

person *believes* what he says is false. And the third condition is what he calls the

"Deception Condition": a person *intends to deceive* another person about what he says.[77]

Augustine's rejection of the Falsity Condition is related to my claim in Chapter 1

that the historical episodes in *Confessions* 1-9 are narratives from the author's present

perspective and are not to be judged according to modern standards of objective

historiography. So, when he says, *ego sub quadam fici arbore stravi nescio quomodo*, he

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[75] Matthews 2005: 127. Matthews 2005: 129 also dismisses the Falsity Condition. As Mann 2003: 494 n.6 explains: "Everyday users may be surprised to find out that by this account they take as a lie a *true* assertion believed to be false by its speaker . . . In fact, it is a consequence of Williams's definition that whether a person has lied does not depend on the way the world is; it depends solely on what is in the speaker's head." (For Williams's definition, see n.77 below.) Mann 2003: 487 calls a lie in which the falsity condition does not obtain an "internal lie," as distinct from a "full-blown lie." That is, a full-blown lie is "(a) a false statement, (b) the content of which the speaker believes to be false, (c) which is made with the intention to deceive the hearer with regard to that content." An internal lie satisfies (b) and (c) only, but it is still a lie: "Described in this way, internal lies can seem to be truncated, lies that never make the big time in the external world. They are, nevertheless, in Augustine's view, morally serious." I, however, argue that internal and "full-blown" lies are morally equivalent for Augustine and equally sinful.

[76] Matthews 2005: 127.

[77] There is no universally accepted definition of lying (Kagan 1998: 113), but the most commonly accepted definition is that of Williams 2002: 96: "an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, which is made with the intention to deceive the hearer with regard to that content." Matthews' follows Williams except with the addition of the falsity condition. I follow Matthews in my analysis because the falsity condition is crucial for the modern debate about the historicity of the *Confessions*, and it is one of Augustine's initial concerns, as well.

tells us what he sees in his memory, not necessarily what in fact happened in the past.[78]

Of course, memories, or *imagines*, of the sort needed for autobiographical narration are created by experiencing *res* when they were present. They "capture" or represent those *res* to the best of memory's ability, though memory is influenced by perspective, the passage of time, the emotional state of the person both when experiencing the *res* and when recalling their *imagines*, and so forth. Thus, to narrate by using these *imagines* is to narrate an incomplete or distorted picture of the past, for what is narrated is determined by the appearance of *imagines* in the author's present.

The issue, however, is not as simple as narrating all that one "sees" when entering his or her memory.[79] If that were the case, my own "confession" right now might include, for example, a dream that I had last night in which I was forced by a colleague to participate in a multi-million dollar diamond heist. On Augustine's account, I now have *imagines* of that dream that are, ontologically speaking, equally real as those of, say, the talk I went to the other day.[80] Although the former *imagines* exist in the same way as the latter, they differ in that I do not believe that what they describe actually happened.[81]

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[78] The phrase *nescio quomodo*, if read literally ("*I do not know* in what way/how"), could be an admission of memory's imperfection or deficiency: he knows that there was some particular detail, but he has forgotten or cannot recall it. Thus, he cannot "see" it in his memory. However, the phrase may also indicate the intentional exclusion of material deemed irrelevant to the story. For both interpretations, see Chapter 3. There, I argue that the Falsity Condition is, in fact, crucial, but in respect to the perception of *imagines*, not the existence of *res*. Here, our concern is with the *res ipsae* of the external world.

[79] See *Conf*. 10.8.12 for the metaphor of "entering" memory and "seeing" memories.

[80] On the conception of dream-images in antiquity, see Carruthers 2008: 73-76. On dream-images in Augustine's conception of memory, see *Conf*. 10.30.41. Augustine hesitantly believes that it is possible to sin in dreams precisely because dream-images are intentional objects like *imagines* (cf. Mann 1999: 140-165; Haji 1999: 166-82; Matthews 2005: 65-75 and 2010: 59;

The question, then, comes down to the speaker's belief and his or her intent. As we will see, belief must be discussed in the context of memory. For instance, I may have a memory of something I believe to be false (my dream), I may have no memory of something I believe to be true (my infancy), or I may have a memory about whose truth-value I have no belief (for instance, a particularly complicated mathematical proof).[82] Furthermore, because we are dealing with a text in which an author communicates to a reader, we must also talk simultaneously about authorial intent. For obvious reasons, this is problematic. But I suggest that there is a way to make reasonable guesses at what Augustine intended his readers to believe. Moreover, we must also consider what he expected they would believe.

According to Augustine, memory contains *imagines* (sensory representations of things experienced) and *notiones* (ideas, propositions, etc.).[83] His simplification, even if it belongs to a mistaken account of memory, is useful in that it distinguishes sensory from conceptual memories, the two types of memories with which we are concerned. In order to describe *x* (an *imago*) or say that *p* (a *notio*), one must already have a preexisting *imago* or *notio*.[84] Thus, for me to state meaningfully, "Socrates the Alligator ate lunch

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Couenhoven 2010: 107). Therefore, they are essentially indistinguishable from memories of external objects that one has in fact experienced.

[81] For a discussion of true and false memories, see *Conf*. 3.6.10.

[82] On memories that one believes to be false, see n.86 below on the representational reality of substantively false *notiones*. On beliefs for which one has no mnemic evidence, see Augustine's discussion of his infancy, also discussed below. For memories about which one has no belief, cf. *Conf*. 8.12.29: *et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis, quasi pueri an puellae, nescio*.

[83] For *imagines*, see *Conf*. 10.8.12-13; for *notiones*, see *Conf*. 10.17.26.

[84] I argue this point in Chapter 3.

with Alexander's horse," I must necessarily have a preconceived *imago* (or series of *imagines*, depending on how much thought I have put in to the story) of Socrates the Alligator eating lunch with Alexander's horse. Or, I have individual *imagines* (of an alligator and of a horse) that I have combined in order to produce the underlying *imago* of my statement above.[85]

When I say that Socrates the Alligator ate lunch with Alexander's horse, what I say is true according to Augustine's theory only insofar as it accurately describes what the *imago* "looks like" at the moment of recollection. Implicit within this statement are also *notiones*, such as the *notio* that Socrates is an Alligator. These *notiones* are also "true" in that they correctly express what is contained in my memory, even if what they express is not true *in re* (doubtless there is not and has never been a *res* of Socrates that is an Alligator).[86]

If I am simply narrating the content of my memory when I say that Socrates the Alligator had lunch with Alexander's horse with no intent or expectation that my reader

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[85] On the combination of ideas in Stoic philosophy, see Diogenes Laertius 7.53. Cf. *Conf*. 10.11.18 on the intentional assembling of one's memories.

[86] On the representational reality of substantively false *notiones*, see *Conf*. 10.13.20: *haec omnia memoria teneo et quomodo ea didicerim memoria teneo. multa etiam quae adversus haec falsissime disputantur audivi et memoria teneo. quae tametsi falsa sunt, tamen ea meminisse me non est falsum. et discrevisse me inter illa vera et haec falsa quae contra dicuntur, et hoc memini aliterque nunc video discernere me ista, aliter autem memini saepe me discrevisse, cum ea saepe cogitarem. ergo et intellexisse me saepius ista memini, et quod nunc discerno et intellego, recondo in memoria, ut postea me nunc intellexisse meminerim. ergo et meminisse me memini, sicut postea, quod haec reminisci nunc potui, si recordabor, utique per vim memoriae recordabor.* For instance, I once heard the erroneous statement that Arabic is an Indo-European language. The predication, or *notio*, is true in that it exists and this is what it expresses, though I know (or, rather, strongly believe) that what it expresses is false. In other words, the object of my memory (in this case, a *notio* that expresses the predication "Arabic is an Indo-European language") is one thing, whereas my belief about it is another.

will believe what I say, then I have done nothing wrong. Simply saying this does not entail that I also believe that the *imago* depicts a *res* in the external world instead of merely something I imagine, nor that the *notio* (in this case, the predication "Socrates is an Alligator") is true. The statement "Socrates the Alligator ate lunch with Alexander's horse" is a case of what Augustine calls jocose lying, where there is no intent to deceive my reader by making this statement. It is intended simply to be funny, not to be believed as true.[87]

That the statement above is a mere jocose lie rather than a full-blown lie (or some sort of lie in between the two) is determined entirely by my perception of my audience's response to what I say.[88] Say I am at a mall with a friend in mid-December. I see a man dressed up as Santa Claus, and I say, "Look, it's Santa Claus." It is likely that I am either being facetious or that I am merely stating elliptically that there is a man dressed up as Santa Claus. I certainly do not expect or intend my friend to believe that I, in fact, believe that it is Santa Claus. However, say I am at the mall with my four-year-old nephew and say to him, "Look, it's Santa Claus." If, as will presumably be the case, I intend my nephew to believe me, I lie. However, even if I do not intend that he believe me (perhaps I am cynical and still speaking facetiously), I should still expect, whether correctly or not, that he will. As we will see, this, too, is morally problematic for Augustine. But the point

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[87] *De mendacio* 2.2: *exceptis igitur iocis, quae numquam sunt putata mendacia* because *habent enim evidentissimam ex pronuntiatione atque ipso iocantis affectu significationem animi nequaquam fallentis, etsi non vera enuntiatis.*

[88] On degrees of lying, see Mann 2003: 487, noted above. On expectations of the audience, see p. 490.

is that my expectations and intentions must be considered in light of how I perceive my auditor to understand what I say.

In the first historical episode of the *Confessions*, Augustine discusses his birth and behavior as an infant, from his carnal desire for breast milk to learning how by gesture to get things he wants.[89] But, throughout the narrative, Augustine is careful to remind the reader several times that he does not remember these events:

> What is it that I want to say, Lord, except that I do not know whence I came to this, as I call it, dying life or living death. *I do not know*. And the consolations of your mercy upheld me, as I heard from the parents of my flesh, out of which and in which you formed me in time. *For I do not remember*.[90]

Augustine emphatically reminds us of this fact:

> And after that I began to laugh, first while sleeping and then while awake. This was pointed out to me about me, and I believe it, since I see the same [behavior] in other infants. *For I do not remember these [behaviors] of mine*.[91]

He adds further, "I confess to you, Lord of heaven and earth, speaking praise to you about (*de*) my beginnings and my infancy, *which I do not remember*."[92] And, "Who reminds me [of my infant sins]? Some small child now, in whom I see what *I do not remember*

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[89] *Conf*. 1.6.7-7.12.

[90] *Conf*. 1.6.7: *quid enim est quod volo dicere, domine, nisi quia nescio unde venerim huc, in istam dico vitam mortalem an mortem vitalem? nescio. et susceperunt me consolationes miserationum tuarum, sicut audivi a parentibus carnis meae, ex quo et in qua me formasti in tempore: non enim ego memini* (emphases mine).

[91] *Conf*. 1.6.8: *post et ridere coepi, dormiens primo, deinde vigilans. hoc enim de me mihi indicatum est et credidi, quoniam sic videmus alios infantes: nam ista mea non memini* (emphasis mine).

[92] *Conf*. 1.6.10: *confiteor tibi, domine caeli et terrae, laudem dicens tibi de primordiis et infantia mea, quae non memini* (emphasis mine).

about myself (*de me*)."[93] And, "*I do not remember* this time, Lord, which I lived."[94] And, at the end of the narrative, "I am reluctant to include this life of mine, which I lived at that time, for *it is held in the darkness of my forgetfulness*."[95] It is only when Augustine turns from his infancy to his *pueritia* at *Confessions* 1.8.13 that he tells us that he at last remembers something: *et memini hoc . . .*

Although he has no memory of these events, Augustine feels comfortable believing that this was his behavior for two reasons. First, he believes what people have told him about himself as an infant. Thus, he relies on *notiones*.[96] Secondly—and this he

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[93] *Conf*. 1.7.11: *quis me commemorat? an quilibet tantillus nunc parvulus, in quo video quod non memini de me?* (emphasis mine).

[94] *Conf*. 1.7.12: *hanc ergo aetatem, domine, quam me vixisse non memini . . .* (emphasis mine).

[95] *Conf*. 1.7.12. *. . piget me adnumerare huic vitae meae quam vivo in hoc saeculo. quantum enim attinet ad oblivionis meae tenebras . . .* (emphasis mine). For the inadequacies of memory, which I discuss in Chapter 3, see *Conf*. 10.16.24 and Courcelle 1950: 32-5. This is a concern of Augustine's even beyond the *Confessions* (cf. *De civ*. 16.43 and *de Genesi contra manichaeos* 1.23.35).

[96] *Conf*. 1.6.8: *tales esse infantes didici quos discere potui, et me talem fuisse magis mihi ipsi indicaverunt nescientes quam scientes nutritores mei*; *Conf*. 1.7.12: *de qua aliis credidi . . .*

Take the following anecdote, as it is relevant to the issue of autobiographical narration. Let us assume that my reader believes me when I say that my neighbor was a personal friend of the 1985-86 Boston Celtics, and that I remember having dinner next door with Bill Walton as a child. I am told that I also had dinner with Larry Bird, and I trust that this is true. But, while I have *imagines* of Bill Walton, I do not of Larry Bird. I feel uncomfortable telling someone simply, "I had dinner with Larry Bird," without any qualification. I would prefer to begin my statement with, "I am told that . . . " or, "Apparently . . . " I assume that my discomfort is due to the fact that, by saying without qualification, "I had dinner with Larry Bird," I am making a statement about what I remember. That is, by saying "I had dinner with Larry Bird," I in fact mean "I remember having dinner with Larry Bird." Although I believe that this is true (that is, I believe that what I am told is true because I do not think those who said this to me would deceive me), I do not have evidence of my own to support it: I cannot independently verify the statement I am making when I say, "I had dinner with Larry Bird." I should instead say, "I am told that I had dinner with Larry Bird, and I believe what I was told." In this way, I make a statement about my belief that *p* rather than my memory of *x*. This, I suggest, is precisely the concern to which Augustine responds in the first historical episode of the *Confessions*, for it seems that any first-person report of something will tend to be taken as a report of an experiential memory.

believes is the stronger argument—he has himself seen this behavior in infants, so he can justifiably infer the same behavior of himself. Thus, he relies on *imagines*.[97] But these *imagines* are not of himself as an infant. Instead, he again relies on a *notio*, namely that all infants act this way.

That he acted this way as an infant should go without saying, for one would not expect Augustine to remember his infancy or think that he wants us to believe that he does.[98] And doubtless we all believe that we ourselves were the same way when we were infants precisely from our own observations of other infants. In other words, we all have *imagines* of infants who are not us, and we all infer the same behavior of ourselves from them. Of course, Augustine does use simple past indicatives when mentioning his behavior (e.g. *Conf.* 1.6.8: *post et ridere coepi* . . .) where he might have included qualifying adverbs like *profecto* or *certe*. But, the question remains: why go to such trouble to make sure the reader knows that he has no memory of these events? Augustine's insecurity about his memory threatens to distract from the content of the passage, unless, as I argue, it is part of that content.

Memory is central to Augustine's conception of selfhood. He appears to believe that only what one remembers is to be counted as part of one's self. Thus, if he does not

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[97] *Conf.* 1.7.11: *quis me commemorat? an quilibet tantillus nunc parvulus, in quo video quod non memini de me? Conf.* 1.7.12: *. . . et quam me egisse ex aliis infantibus conieci*. That Augustine believes there to be high probability of what he assumes, cf. *Conf.* 1.7.12: *ista multum fida coniectura sit*.

[98] At *De civ.* 16.43, Augustine asks rhetorically: *quam profecto aetatem primam demergit oblivio, sicut aetas prima generis humani est deleta diluvio. quotus enim quisque est, qui suam recordetur infantiam?*

remember his infancy, then his infancy is not part of his self now.[99] However, there is another reason why Augustine is careful to notify his reader of this: he is conscious of what he expects and intends his audience to believe from reading or hearing what he says. Although the *Confessions* is a one-sided conversation between Augustine and God, who already knows what is in his mind and heart, past and present, the author is still guilty of teaching falsehoods if he misleads his supposedly incidental human audience.[100]

When Augustine tells us that he is narrating the behavior of infants that he himself has seen (say, for instance, his son Adeodatus when he was an infant), he is clarifying

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[99] Cf. 1.7.12: *piget me adnumerare huic vitae meae quam vivo in hoc saeculo. quantum enim attinet ad oblivionis meae tenebras. . . sed ecce omitto illud tempus: et quid mihi iam cum eo est, cuius nulla vestigia recolo?* (See also *De trinitate* 14.5.8: *sed hanc aetatem omittamus quae nec interrogari potest quid in se agatur et nos ipsi eius valde obliti sumus*, and note that this is exactly Locke's view in *Essay* 2.27.) There is a crucial interpretive question here, however, regarding the rhetorical force of his concluding statement. Chadwick 1991: 10 understands this to mean, as I do, that Augustine does not recognize forgotten events as being part of his self. Thus, he translates the Latin quoted above: "I do not wish to reckon this as part of the life that I live in this world; for it is lost in the darkness of my forgetfulness . . . *I feel no sense of responsibility now for a time of which I recall not a single trace*" (emphasis mine). Alternatively, perhaps Augustine simply is ashamed that he must consider even events that he does not remember as part of his present self. However, if an individual is the result of his past actions, then even forgotten actions should count as part of his self.

[100] For the audience of the *Confessions*, see O'Donnell 1992: 2.8-9: "The opening [of the *Confessions*] can give rise to the disconcerting feeling of coming into a room and chancing upon a man speaking to someone who isn't there. He gestures in our direction and mentions us from time to time, but he *never addresses his readers*. As literary text, *conf.* resembles a one-sided, non-fiction epistolary novel, enacted in the presence of the silence (and darkness) of God" ("emphasis his). And, at *Conf.* 10.3.3, when for the first time he does mention his human auditors (*quid mihi ergo est cum hominibus, ut audiant confessiones meas, quasi ipsi sanaturi sint omnes languores meos?*), he does so in a question to God.

There is a question about whether one can lie indirectly to a person who is other than the intended auditor of a statement. This is relevant here only if we truly believe that Augustine's written, published, and circulated *Confessions* is not meant for a supposed third-party audience (namely, human readers). But, even in that case, his intended auditor, God, knows whether what Augustine says is or is not true (as Augustine says at *Conf.* 10.2.2 *et tibi quidem, domine, cuius oculis nuda est abyssus humanae conscientiae, quid occultum esset in me, etiamsi nollem confiteri tibi?*). So, if Augustine says something intentionally false, then he says it to God. Without question, God is the worst auditor for Augustine to lie to.

that he believes the *imagines* are true but that the *res* that they depict are not the same as himself in infancy and the *res* that he himself experienced at that time. This, I believe, is what he means when he says repeatedly that he does not remember these events: he does not have *imagines* of the events he describes. If he does, he cannot recall them.[101] In this way, he makes clear precisely what the content of his memory consists of or depicts. Thus, when Augustine describes an *imago* of Adeodatus crying as an infant, he infers that he (Augustine) also cried as an infant and therefore simply replaces Adeodatus with himself. When he says that he (Augustine) cried as an infant, he expects us to believe him. Thus, Augustine indicates that he believes that both the *imago* of Adeodatus crying and his inference from it that he, too, cried are true, though on different grounds: Adeodatus from an *imago*; himself from a *notio*.

In the case of his conversion story, Augustine tells us that there was a fig tree in the garden at Cassiciacum. He does so without qualification, as he does in the case of his infancy (for instance, he does not say, "it was *as if* there *were* a fig tree," "*I am told* that there was a fig tree," vel sim.). Therefore, we may reasonably conclude that he has an *imago* of a fig tree and believes that that *imago* depicts a *res* (the fig tree) that he himself once experienced at the time and place he says he did, for he has given no reason for us to suspect otherwise.

It is now the *communis opinio* that Augustine mentions the fig tree to indicate some *notio* about the event. The fig tree will have had many potential meanings to

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[101] On the suggestion that Augustine does have *imagines* of his infancy, but that they are too "hidden" to be retrieved, cf. *Conf*. 1.7.12: *quantum enim attinet ad oblivionis meae tenebras . . .*

Augustine and his audience, from representing original sin to alluding to the conversion of Nathanael.[102] The *communis opinio* favors the latter as the predominant intertextual referent, though it does not explain precisely what detail or details we are supposed to recall from the story of Nathanael. Of course, one can never be sure what each reader would have (or would not have) thought when hearing Augustine's mention of the fig tree, which further complicates the notion that the fig tree is intended only to be figurative.[103] But the claim is that Augustine intended his reader to believe something other than, or in addition to, that which he literally said. For the sake of simplicity, let us say that, like Nathanael, he recognized Jesus at that particular moment. If the *communis opinio* is correct, then this is an implicature, for it means that Augustine meant, implied, or suggested one thing by saying something else.[104] In other words, Augustine says that *p* (there was a fig tree) intending his auditor to believe that *q* (presumably, that he recognized Jesus at that moment).

Ferrari believes that Augustine's claim that *p* (there was a fig tree) is fictitious but is meant figuratively to indicate that *q* (say, that he recognized Jesus at that moment).[105]

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[102] For some possible significances of fig trees for Augustine and his audience, see O'Donnell 1992: 3.57-58. For the story of Nathanael's conversion, see John 1:43-51. For other possible meanings, see n.66 above.

[103] Hinds 1998: 17-21, 46-51 on an author's inability to control what his reader does or does not understand.

[104] For the definition of implicature upon which I rely and an extensive bibliography, see Davis 2014. The seminal work on implicatures is Grice 1975, though there has been much (though, for my purpose here, irrelevant) discussion since.

[105] Ferrari 1992.

O'Donnell says that the details of the events do not matter so long as "this is the way it was lived."[106] However, it seems that Augustine would have to disagree.

In *De mendacio*, Augustine presents two cases of implicature that may turn out to be lies. In the first, a man believes that there are bandits on the road and does not want his acquaintance to fall into their hands. However, he believes that his acquaintance does not believe what he says, so he tells him that there are not bandits on the road.[107] Here, the man directly states that there are not bandits on the road, which he does not believe to be true, in order to deceive his acquaintance about some other thing, namely his belief about there being bandits. In the second case, a man believes that there are bandits on the road. This man wants his acquaintance to fall into their hands, and he believes that this acquaintance will not believe what he says. So, he tells his acquaintance that there are bandits on the road, hoping that the acquaintance will not believe him, thereby doubting the existence or location of the bandits, and consequently falling into their hands.[108] Thus, by saying that there are bandits, which he believes to be true, he intends to deceive his acquaintance about the content of his belief.

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[106] O'Donnell 2013. The full quote is: "Whether it happened that way or not (to an outside observer's judgment), it is perfectly clear that this is the way it was lived, and that is all that matters." I provide the full sentence because the last clause, "and that is all that matters," is in my view extremely problematic for reasons I will discuss momentarily.

[107] *De mendacio* 4.4: *velut si aliquam viam noverit obsideri a latronibus et timens, ne per illam pergat homo, cuius saluti prosipicit et eum scit sibi non credere, dicat eam viam non habere latrones ad hoc, ut illac non eat, dum ideo credit latrones ibi esse, quia ille dixit non ibi esse, cui non credere statuit mendacem putans . . .*

[108] *De mendacio* 4.4: *alterum autem, qui sciens aut putans verum esse quod dicit, ad hoc tamen dicit, ut fallat; tamquam si homini non sibi credenti dicat latrones in illa via esse, ubi revera eos esse cognovit, ut ille, cui dicit, per illam viam magis pergat atque ita in latrones incidat, dum putat falsum esse quod ille dixerit.*

In the first case, Augustine wonders whether the man lies if there is no intent to deceive; in such a case, only the Believes-False Condition obtains. However, as I have argued, there is an intent to deceive about something other than what he literally says, namely his belief. In the second case, Augustine wonders whether the man lies if only the Deception Condition obtains. Again, as I have argued, the Believes-False Condition does obtain when it is understood to apply to the speaker's belief and not what he literally says. This is important for two reasons. First, Augustine himself has proposed cases in which one may indicate one thing (*q*) by directly conveying something else (*p*). Furthermore, it may be possible for one to lie by saying something that is both factually true *and* that one believes to be true (in this case, that there are bandits on the road), as in the second case. It comes down to what he expects his auditor to believe about what he says.

To return to the issue of memory and belief, these two cases provide a probable explanation for why Augustine is careful to note that he does not remember the events he describes about his infancy (that is, that he has *notiones* but not *imagines*). Presumably, he wants us to know that, while he has *imagines*, he does not believe them to depict the things he discusses: his *notio* (that he acted a certain way) is different than the *imago* (of Adeodatus and other infants acting this way). I suggest that, to adopt Ferrari's term, Augustine's scrupulous qualification of his statements about his infancy discloses his desire to avoid not only obvious lies but also possible ones.

The only condition that is met in every case Augustine proposes in *De mendacio* is what Matthews calls the Intention Condition, namely that a person intends to deceive

another person about whether p.[109] Augustine introduces the condition partway through

De mendacio 3.3:

> He lies who holds one opinion in his mind and who gives expression to another through words or any other outward manifestation. For this reason the heart of a liar is said to be double, that is, twofold in its thinking: one part consisting of that knowledge which he knows or thinks to be true, yet does not so express it; the other part consisting of that knowledge which he knows or thinks to be false, yet expresses as true.[110]

That is, one lies if, in indicating that p, he believes that p is false but intends his auditor to believe that p is true (where p can be either a positive or negative claim). Thus, with regard to implicature, one also lies if, in indicating that p, he intends his auditor to believe that some other q is true, though he believes that q is false. So, in order for Augustine not to lie in the case of his infancy or his conversion, he must believe (and intend us to believe) that q (that he behaved in a certain way as an infant, or that he recognized Jesus at that moment) is true. But, does this mean that, when he indicates that p in order to imply that q, he must also believe that p is true? As I have argued above, the answer appears to be yes. In the case of his conversion, Augustine does not qualify his statement that there was a fig tree as he does in his account of his infancy. In the latter case, he implies that his belief about himself as an infant derives from a *notio*, not an *imago*. In the former, he makes no such claim. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that, when he says

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[109] Matthews 2005: 127.

[110] *quapropter ille mentitur, qui aliud habet in animo et aliud verbis vel quibuslibet significationibus enuntiat. unde etiam duplex cor dicitur esse metientis, id est duplex cogitatio: una rei eius, quam veram esse vel scit vel putat et non profert; altera eius rei, quam pro ista profert sciens falsam esse vel putans.*

there was a fig tree, he in fact remembers there being a fig tree at that time and place, and

that he believes his memory of it to be true.

At *De mendacio* 3.3, Augustine explains that those who believe (*credere*) or think

(*opinari*) things that are not true are not liars if they claim that those things are true, but

that they are, nonetheless, at fault (*nec ideo tamen sine vitio est*):

> Whoever indicates (*enuntiat*) that which he holds in his soul either as a belief or
> an assumption, even if it is false, does not lie. For this expression is due to his
> faith, with the result that he offers [his expression] through [his faith], because
> [the expression] is held in his soul. And he holds it in this way, with the result that
> he offers it [in this way]. But he is not entirely without fault, although he does not
> lie, if he believes what must not be believed or if he thinks that he knows what he
> does not know, even if it is true, for he considers the unknown to be the
> known.[111]

In Augustine's view, people who mistakenly believe and express something that is

factually incorrect are at fault because, although unintentionally, they convey information

that is false (*non credenda*). If, when Augustine says that there was a fig tree, he does not

believe that there was a fig tree, no matter what he may intend to indicate by this

statement, he lies. But if, when saying that there was a fig tree, he also believes that what

he said is true, then he does not lie. If, in this instance, his belief is correct (that is, that

there was, in fact, a fig tree), then Augustine is not at fault in any way. However, if there

was not a fig tree (or if, say, there was a tree but it was not fig), then Augustine is at fault

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[111] *De mendacio* 3.3: *quisquis autem hoc enuntiat quod vel creditum animo vel opinatum tenet,
etiamsi falsum sit, non mentitur. hoc enim debet enuntiationis suae fidei, ut illud per eam
proferat, quod animo tenet, et sic habet, ut profert. nec ideo tamen sine vitio est, quamvis non
mentiatur, si aut non credenda credit aut quod ignorat nosse se putat, etiamsi verum sit;
incognitum enim habet pro cognito.*

for conveying factually incorrect information and leading his auditor to believe something untrue.

There is evidence of historical discrepancies in the autobiographical episodes of the *Confessions*. Thus, Augustine is, at least occasionally, at fault for conveying inaccurate information. However, as I have argued, this cannot be intentional, for, if it were, then Augustine would have considered himself to sin. These inaccuracies must instead be accidental. How this occurs is the topic of the next chapter. My argument is that, although the fallibility of memory results in inevitable historiographical imperfections, Augustine's story must still be considered true, but true with respect to his memory, not with respect to the events themselves.

Chapter 3: An Ascent into Memory

itane est, ut recolo?
—Augustine, *Conf.* 5.6.11

Every nonfictional narrative is told from a particular perspective, which in turn is determined by the cognitive orientation of the author at the moment of recollection and subsequent narration. The content of that narration is limited to what can be recalled and how it is recalled. These principles must be taken into account when assessing the story of the *Confessions*.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the story of the *Confessions* must be understood as being from the first-person perspective of the narrator, not the younger Augustine who lived the events described. In Chapter 2, I provided an argument against the claim that Augustine intentionally distorted his past in his narration of it and suggested that the story be understood as true with respect to what he remembered and believed to have happened. I concluded by reasserting the problem underlying the question of historicity: how can it be that Augustine tells a *true* story if that story presents a *distorted* picture of his past? This chapter responds to that question. It is also crucial in the larger scheme of my dissertation as it provides a bridge between Augustine's historical narrative, discussed in Chapter 2, and his account of time in Book 11 of the *Confessions*, discussed in Chapter 4.

This chapter has four sections. In the first, "The Landscape of Augustine's Memory," I discuss how Augustine develops the traditional metaphor of memory as a place into a conception of it as a space. Naturally, the question this raises is what sort of

space he imagines memory to be. His depiction of memory as an outdoor landscape with buildings in which memories (specifically *imagines*) are stored suggests two possible intertexts. The first is the so-called House of Memory, which appears in the form of the mnemotechnic known as the Method of Loci. But, in my second section, "Augustine and his Predecessors," I show that his conception of space and of objects in space differs so fundamentally from the Method's that no shared conceptual connection can be made, unless (and this is the very best we can say) Augustine were undermining it. Then, in section three, "The Fallibility of Memory," I turn to the inevitable flaws in recollection that result from memory's imperfection—precisely what the Method attempts to overcome but to which Augustine is resigned. This brings me to the second intertext, which is the topic of my fourth section, "Augustine in the Underworld." Here, I argue that memory and recollection function for Augustine in the same way ghosts (*imagines*, *umbrae*, etc.) do in the sixth book of Vergil's *Aeneid*. In a model distinctly unlike the House of Memory, both Augustine and his memories have agency in recollection: both are responsible for what Augustine is able to recall. This is what results in the deeply first-personalized account of Augustine's past in the *Confessions*, which is both historically inaccurate (at least at times) and true with respect to what he recalls.

This chapter is largely devoted to the explication of one particular passage in Book 10 of the *Confessions*, which I translate in full below. This passage is arguably the centerpiece of Augustine's conception of memory and recollection, and it also provides the contextual grounds for interpreting Augustine's narrative: As Augustine says in the concluding line of the passage, "all of this happens when I narrate something from

memory" (*quod totum fit cum aliquid narro memoriter*).[1] Therefore, it is not only interesting for studies of memory but also directly relevant to my discussion of narration in the *Confessions*.

The passage in question is *Conf*. 10.8.12:

I will transcend even this [part] of my nature, ascending step by step toward [God], who made me. I come into the fields and wide *praetoria* of memory, where there are *thesauri* of innumerable *imagines* that have been brought in[to memory] from the perception of *res*. Stored there is whatever we think about, whether we exaggerate it, diminish it, or make whatever other changes to it— namely, those things that sense touches, even if something has been preserved and stored [in memory] that has not yet been absorbed and [instead] has been buried in oblivion. When I am there, I ask that whatever I want be produced, and certain things come forth immediately. Some take a longer time and wander from hidden receptacles. Others rush forth in companies (*catervatim*) and, when something else is asked for and sought, jump in the middle as if saying, "perhaps we are the ones you are looking for?" And I drive them away from the face of my memory with the hand of my heart until what I want [to find] is removed from the cloud and produced in my view from its hiding place. Others arise easily and in an undisturbed series, just as they are asked. And those preceding yield to those following and, yielding, return to where they were so that they can proceed again when I want them to. All of this happens when I narrate something from memory.[2]

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[1] *Conf*. 10.8.12. On the centrality of this passage, see Doucet 1978: 53.

[2] *Conf*. 10.8.12: *transibo ergo et istam naturae meae, gradibus ascendens ad eum qui fecit me, et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae, ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscemodi rebus sensis invectarum. ibi reconditum est quidquid etiam cogitamus, vel augendo vel minuendo vel utcumque variando ea quae sensus attigerit, et si quid aliud commendatum et repositum est quod nondum absorbuit et sepelivit oblivio. ibi quando sum, posco ut proferatur quidquid volo, et quaedam statim prodeunt, quaedam requiruntur diutius et tamquam de abstrusioribus quibusdam receptaculis eruuntur, quaedam catervatim se proruunt et, dum aliud petitur et quaeritur, prosiliunt in medium quasi dicentia, 'ne forte nos sumus?' et abigo ea manu cordis a facie recordationis meae, donec enubiletur quod volo atque in conspectum prodeat ex abditis. alia faciliter atque imperturbata serie sicut poscuntur suggeruntur, et cedunt praecedentia consequentibus et cedendo conduntur, iterum cum voluero processura. quod totum fit cum aliquid narro memoriter.*

I retain the Latin terms, *imagines* and *res*, as I have already explained what these words mean in the context of the *Confessions* and will further clarify the term *imago* as I proceed in this chapter. I have intentionally left the words *praetoria* and *thesauri* untranslated, as I will define them in the subsequent discussion. But, to foreshadow my conclusion, I understand a *thesaurus* to be a singular place in which objects are stored and *praetoria* the building, or space, in which *thesauri* are found.

The Landscape of Augustine's Memory

The context of our target passage and Augustine's larger interest in memory in Book 10 is the question of God's location—a question introduced at the very beginning of the *Confessions*.[3] In Book 10, Augustine's concern is with finding God, and he describes two types of journeys toward him: one successful that transcends memory, and one mistaken that proceeds through memory.[4] Along the successful journey, Augustine says that he "will go beyond (*transibo*) memory (*istam naturae meae*), ascending step by step (*gradibus ascendens*) to God." As he explains later in Book 10, repetitively,

> I will transcend (*transibo*) even this power of mine, which is called memory. I will transcend (*transibo*) it so that I can stretch through (*pertendam*) to you, sweet light. What are you saying to me? Ascending (*ascendens*) through my mind

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[3] *Conf*. 1.1.1-5.6.

[4] For Augustine's successful ascent in Book 9 of the *Confessions* and his previous failures, see Sorabji 1983: 167-72; O'Donnell 1992: 3.122, 127-29. Nightingale 2011: 68 believes that what I call the "mistaken" journey is simply a failure at accomplishing the "successful" ascent beyond memory. But, here in Book 10, until 25.36, Augustine still appears unaware that transcendence requires ascent beyond memory: he still actively searches for God within memory. Thus, the paths taken are different. As Augustine comes to realize (*Conf*. 10.25.36-26.37), God is in memory insofar as Augustine is able to recall him (cf. *Conf*. 1.1.1-5.6); but he is not there in any place. God is transcendent, so Augustine must transcend himself in order to find God.

toward you, who remains above me, I will transcend (*transibo*) even this power, which is called memory, desiring to touch you through the way (*unde*) you can be touched, and to cling to you from where it is possible to cling to you.[5]

Memory is the first step of a successful ascent to God, and this ascent is the central topic of my fourth chapter. But, in Book 10, Augustine is not there yet. In the passages quoted above he states repeatedly that he *will* transcend memory, not that he is currently doing so. For now, he is still searching mistakenly for God within his memory.[6] Thus, in the sentence preceding the passage quoted above, he says, "I run scatteredly (*discurro*) through all of these [objects of my memory], and I fly here and there. I penetrate [memory] as far as I can, and there is no end [to it]."[7] He is doing this in search of God:

> Where in my memory do you abide, Lord? What sort of bed have you made for yourself? What sanctuary have you built for yourself? You gave this honor to my memory so that you remain in it. But, in what part of it do you remain—this [is the question] I am considering. I transcended the parts of it which even animals have when I recalled you, because I did not find you there among the images of corporeal things. And I came to the parts of it where I stored the emotions of my mind, but I did not find you there. And I entered the seat of my mind itself, which is located in my memory, since the mind also remembers itself. But, you were not

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[5] *Conf.* 10.17.26: *transibo et hanc vim meam quae memoria vocatur, transibo eam ut pertendam ad te, dulce lumen. quid dicis mihi? ecce ego ascendens per animum meum ad te, qui desuper mihi manes, transibo et istam vim meam quae memoria vocatur, volens te attingere unde attingi potes, et inhaerere tibi unde inhaereri tibi potest.*

[6] As Augustine later comes to understand at *Conf.* 10.26.37: *ubi ergo te inveni, ut discerem te? neque enim iam eras in memoria mea, priusquam te discerem. ubi ergo te inveni ut discerem te, nisi in te supra me? et nusquam locus, et recedimus et accedimus, et nusquam locus.*

[7] *Conf.* 10.17.26: *per haec omnia discurro et volito hac illac, penetro etiam quantum possum, et finis nusquam.*

there, since you are not a corporeal image nor the emotion of a living person . . . thus, you are not the mind itself, because you are the Lord of the mind.[8]

Note that Augustine does mention transcendence in this passage, as when he transcends (*transcendi*) the realm of *imagines* and arrives at (*veni ad*) the region occupied by *affectiones*. From there, he enters (*intravi*) the seat of his soul itself (*ad ipsius animi mei sedem*) that, too, exists in memory (*quae illi est in memoria mea*). But this is a movement through areas (note his use of *partes*) of his memory couched in terms of increasing degrees of interiority. It is not an ascent.[9] Thus, this transcendence, which is the concern of the present chapter, is not beyond memory but into memory; it is not a metaphysical ascent because it is still grounded in the physical world.

The first step of Augustine's inward journey is the part of his memory that contains *imagines*, as he says in the second sentence of the target passage: "I come into the fields and wide *praetoria* of memory, where there are *thesauri* of innumerable *imagines* that have been brought in[to memory] through the perception of *res*."[10] This is the section of his memory most relevant to his narration of his past in the *Confessions*. For instance, as Augustine says of narrating his childhood—which is the first period of

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[8] *Conf.* 10.25.36: *sed ubi manes in memoria mea, domine, ubi illic manes? quale cubile fabricasti tibi? quale sanctuarium aedificasti tibi? tu dedisti hanc dignationem memoriae meae, ut maneas in ea, sed in qua eius parte maneas, hoc considero. transcendi enim partes eius quas habent et bestiae cum te recordarer, quia non ibi te inveniebam inter imagines rerum corporalium, et veni ad partes eius ubi commendavi affectiones animi mei, nec illic inveni te. et intravi ad ipsius animi mei sedem, quae illi est in memoria mea, quoniam sui quoque meminit animus, nec ibi tu eras, quia sicut non es imago corporalis nec affectio viventis . . . ita nec ipse animus es, quia dominus deus animi tu es.*

[9] Again, this journey fails at finding God precisely because Augustine is searching for him in places.

[10] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *et venio in campos et lata praetoria memoriae, ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum de cuiuscemodi rebus sensis invectarum.*

his life that he *does* remember (*et memini hoc*, 1.8.13)—"when I recall and narrate [my childhood], I look at (*intueor*) the image of it (*imaginem eius*) in the present time, because [the image] still exists in my memory."[11] Here, the intentional object of his recollection—that is, the object of his story—is his childhood itself. But, to create this story he must rely on *imagines* (here used in the singular) that he retains and that are relevant to it. In this way, his story may be said to be determined by the *imagines*, for he cannot narrate that of which he has no memory.[12] For this reason, it is necessary to understand what Augustine considers *imagines* to be and how they function. But, in order to do so, we must first understand what sort of mental space they occupy.[13]

It is commonplace in antiquity to conceive of memory as a singular place, such as a *thesaurus*.[14] Augustine uses similar language, as well. For instance, in Book 10 he calls

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[11] *Conf.* 11.18.23: *imaginem vero eius, cum eam recolo et narro, in praesenti tempore intueor, quia est adhuc in memoria mea.*

[12] Recall that, in the case of his infancy, he does not have *imagines* of the particular events, yet he still narrates it. As I have explained, this is because he has other *imagines* that fill the gap in his memory, which he believes to be representative of himself as an infant, and these are what he describes. Thus, even here, he is still using his memories to reconstruct the past.

[13] I use "space" in its modern conception as an area or volume that is meaningfully divisible and whose parts are mutually compatible (Riggsby 2006: 24). By "place," I refer to areas or volumes whose dimensionality is irrelevant. Thus, a "place" may be considered merely a coordinate, even if it has volume, as when Quintilian (11.2.20, discussed below) considers *loci* like the *vestibulum* and *atrium* to be *imagines* in the same way that he considers a single statue an *imago*. Mine is an admittedly simplified account of space and place. For a more sophisticated account, see Riggsby 2009: 152-53

[14] The provision of two examples illustrates the commonality of the metaphor across time and genres. These are Plautus, *Poen.* 3.3.12: *quid dicam de thesauro rerum omnium, memoria?* and [Cicero], *Rhet.* 3.16: *nunc ad thesaurum inventorum atque ad omnium partium rhetoricae custodem, memoriam, transeamus.*

memory a huge recess (*grandis memoriae recessus*, 10.8.13),[15] an enormous hall (*aula ingenti*, 10.8.14), a *thesaurus* (10.8.14), and a vast and infinite inner room (*penetrale amplum et infinitum*, 10.8.15). At 10.14.21, Augustine jokingly (*ridiculum est*) calls memory a stomach (*venter est animi*), though he says it is not an entirely inappropriate metaphor (*nec tamen sunt omni modo dissimilia*).[16] On their own, these terms certainly refer to places (whose volume is not meaningful), not necessarily spaces (whose volume is meaningful). And, if memory is akin to one of these things, then memory, too, is a singular place.

However, earlier, in Book 1, Augustine calls memory a house (*domus*, 1.5.6).[17] And, in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, he says, ". . . what you commit to memory is stored away (*reconditum*) in a hiding place (*in abdito*) like a granary (*horreo*), a *thesaurus*, a secret chamber (*secretario*), and an inner room (*penetrali interiore*)"—terms that he presumably uses of memory itself as distinct from areas within it.[18] But, several

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[15] A term often used poetically of caves: Vergil, *Aen*. 8.193 (*hic spelunca fuit, vasto summota recessu*); Ovid, *Met*. 3.157 (*cuius in extremo est antrum nemorale recessu*) and 10.691-2 (*luminis exigui fuerat prope templa recessus, | speluncae similis*).

[16] *Conf*. 10.14.21: *nimirum ergo memoria quasi venter est animi, laetitia vero atque tristitia quasi cibus dulcis et amarus: cum memoriae commendantur, quasi traiecta in ventrem recondi illic possunt, sapere non possunt. ridiculum est haec illis similia putare, nec tamen sunt omni modo dissimilia.*

[17] See also *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 100.4: *domus enim nostra interior, cor nostrum est.* Cf. Knauer 1955: 115 on the contrast between Augustine's metaphor of memory as a *domus* and his presentation of memory here, at *Conf*. 10.8.12.

[18] *Tractatus in evangelium Iohannis* 23.11: *vides aliquid, et per oculos percipis, et commendas memoriae; ibi est intus quod memoriae commendasti, in abdito reconditum quasi in horreo, quasi in thesauro, quasi in secretario quodam et penetrali interiore.* Alternatively, these may be metaphors for areas within memory, which only further supports my argument that Augustine conceives of memory as a space that contains places.

of these terms suggest if not entail space, not simply place, particularly the *recessus*, the *domus*, and the *horreum*.

At 10.8.13, Augustine does not simply say that memory is a *recessus*. Instead, he explains that *imagines* are held in "memory's huge recess (*recessus*) *and* its unknowable secret and ineffable folds (*sinus*)."[19] This suggests that there are distinct parts of the *recessus*, thus rendering it a space, unlike a *thesaurus*, which appears simply to be a place. Alternatively, the *recessus* may be one of several areas in memory in which memories are stored, in which case, again, memory contains places and is therefore itself a space.[20]

Likewise, a *domus* is a space in that it consists of places or sub-spaces that are functionally and qualitatively distinct yet mutually compatible.[21] But more on the *domus* momentarily. I turn my attention first to the Roman *horreum*, which is a space in that it consists of numerous places (*cellae*) used for the storage of grain. In turn, *cellae* are characterized by uniformity of shape and size. They are also functionally equivalent, though they may be used to store different types of things.

To return to the second sentence of 10.8.12, Augustine's memory has *campi* and "*praetoria* where there are *thesauri*." In contrast to the manmade structures mentioned

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[19] *Conf.* 10.8.13: *haec omnia recipit recolenda cum opus est et retractanda grandis memoriae recessus et nescio qui secreti atque ineffabiles sinus eius*.

[20] Note that, at 10.40.65, Augustine uses the term *recessus* again, but this time in the plural (*inde ingressus sum in recessus memoriae meae*): there are *recesses* of memory.

[21] On qualitative representations of space, see Riggsby 2003: 171-72; 2006: 24-28. The relevant mental model of Augustine's memory house is the one that consists of containers whose "successive layers (moving inward) are more and more charged with" certain values (Riggsby 2003: 178). The values Riggsby discusses here are domestic. In the context of Augustine's house of memory, the values are psychological.

here (*praetoria* and *thesauri*), it is likely that, by *campi*, he means for us to imagine grassy plains and open areas. Thus, Augustine's memory is a natural outdoor landscape. This is confirmed later when he says, "behold in the innumerable fields (*campis*) and caves (*antris*) and caverns (*cavernis*) of my memory . . ."[22] Augustine's memory is an outdoor landscape that contains not only manmade structures but also a diversity of natural features as well. This will become relevant later; for the moment, we are interested in the manmade structures: *thesauri* and in particular the *praetoria*—structures that exist within memory as distinct from being the place of memory itself.

In the context of an outdoor landscape, one may be tempted to understand by *thesauri* self-standing treasuries like those found at Olympia and Delphi. But, if that is what Augustine meant, he would have said *venio in campos <u>ubi sunt</u> lata praetoria <u>et</u> thesauri*.[23] Augustine does not say this. Instead, he says *venio in campos <u>et</u> lata praetoria <u>ubi sunt</u> thesauri*: there are fields in his memory; and there are also "*praetoria* where (read: in which) there are *thesauri*." Thus, I suggest we imagine the *thesauri* as belonging to and being within the *praetoria*.[24]

In our target passage, Augustine says that *imagines* are stored within *thesauri*. A few sections later, he says that *imagines* are stored in *cellae*.[25] Thus, I take the two terms to be interchangeable. The term *thesauri*—Augustine's only Greek borrowing in Book

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[22] *Conf.* 10.17.26: *ecce in memoriae meae campis et antris et cavernis innumerabilibus . . .*

[23] Moreover, he should prefer the Latin *aerarium* if he meant a self-standing treasury.

[24] See Bloch 2007: 168.

[25] *Conf.* 10.9.16: *earum solae <u>imagines</u> mira celeritate capiuntur et miris tamquam <u>cellis</u> reponuntur*.

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10—is commonly used in discussions of memory, so his use of it here is understandable. But, by *thesaurus* he appears to mean *cella*, a Latin term later borrowed into Greek. Thus, we have *praetoria* in which there are *thesauri* and, synonymously, *cellae*. The question now is what *thesauri/cellae* have to do with *praetoria*.

To answer this question, I turn first to the famous bee episode of *Georgics* 4.[26] Here, Vergil describes bee-soldiers gathering around their "king" (*regem*) and, to use Fairclough's translation of the preposition *ad*, "*by* the *praetoria* itself."[27] Fairclough translates *praetoria* as "royal tent," which, from an apicultural point of view, suggests the specific cells that belong to the queen-bee within the hive.[28] But the imagery in this passage of bees preparing for battle works best if we imagine the soldiers to be outside the hive. This interpretation is reinforced by Vergil's comment that the bees, who are preparing for battle, can be observed from afar—that is, by someone outside of the hive,

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[26] For connections between this passage in Vergil and our target passage, *Conf.* 10.8.12, see Hübner 1981: 247-55 and O'Donnell 1992: 3.173.

[27] *Georgics* 4.75-76: *et circa regem atque ipsa ad praetoria densae | miscentur . . .* (emphasis mine). Here, the plural *praetoria* must surely indicate a singular hive. Augustine never quotes this particular passage—the closest he comes is *Georgics* 4.198-201, to which he alludes at *De trinitate* 3.8.13 (Hagendahl 1967: 1.375)—a passage that is also about bees. Of the 19 references to the *Georgics* that Hagendahl records (1967: 2.388), five are to Book 4. Therefore, there is no doubt that Augustine knew this passage. But this is not necessarily to claim that Augustine was thinking specifically of this passage in Vergil when he said at *Conf.* 10.8.12 that his memory contains *praetoria* and (or with) *thesauri*. Rather, my suggestion is simply that the two buildings—Augustine's *praetoria* and Vergil's beehive—are structurally equivalent: the latter is useful for understanding the former.

[28] Pliny the Elder, at least, was aware of the distinction between queen-bee cells and other cells in a hive: *regias imperatoribus futuris in ima parte alvi exstruunt amplas, magnificas, separatas, tuberculo eminentes, quod si exprimatur, non gignuntur* (11.12.49). Of course, the existence of queen-bee cells (and queen-bees) may be drawn by inference: if bees are soldiers, then they must have a general (or a king or queen); and, if they have a general (or king or queen), then there must be *praetoria* within the beehive.

not within it.[29] Because both the literal hive and figurative *praetoria* contain *cellae*, what we imagine is a more spatially complex structure than a simple tent.[30]

This passage provides one possible intertext for the interpretation of *praetoria* in our target passage. Vergil understood *cellae* to be places of storage within the hive.[31] Elsewhere, he calls the hive both an *alvus* and an *alvarium*.[32] Here, he calls it a *praetoria* (presumably using the poetic plural). He does so in the context of the military metaphor of soldiers gathering around the hive in preparation for battle, which is perhaps reminiscent of Augustine's *imagines* rushing forth from their *thesauri*. Furthermore, the adverb *catervatim* is frequently used of soldiers.[33] With this in mind, I return to Augustine's statement that memory is like a granary (*horreum*).

Horrea are large buildings designated for the storage of grain and consist structurally of individual *cellae* in which the grain is stored.[34] They are abundant in post-Severan Ostia and Rome, as well as in other thoroughly Romanized cities, such as late antique Carthage—three cities in which we know Augustine spent considerable time.

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[29] *Georgics* 4.69-70: *continuoque animos vulgi et trepidantia bello | corda licet longe praescidere*.

[30] My contention that Augustine's *praetoria* is a space within the metaphorical landscape of memory, rather than a singular place, is perhaps reinforced by his description of it as *lata*. Granted, places, too, have volume, but they are distinguishable from spaces in that the volume is insignificant. If I am right that the *thesauri* are places within the larger space of the *praetoria*, then Augustine's qualification of the *praetoria* as "wide" (*lata*), is understandable.

[31] Vergil, *Georgics* 4.163-64: *aliae purissima mella | stipant et liquido distendunt nectare cellas* (to foreshadow my discussion in Chapter 4, note the use of the verb *distendere*). Pliny uses *cellae* in the same way, as well: *Nat. hist.* 11.5.14; 11.10.26; 11.12.29; 11.14.34.

[32] Vergil, *Georgics* 4.34: *alvaria*; 94: *latamque . . . alvum*.

[33] E.g. Livy 23.27.5, 44.41.8. But see my discussion below for alternate uses of the adverb.

[34] For floorplans of *horrea*, see Rickman 1971.

Thus, when Augustine says that his memory contains *praetoria* (whether singular or plural) in which there are *thesauri* or, synonymously, *cellae*, we may also understand a structure akin to a *horreum*.

Horrea resemble *praetoria* in that they consist of a central courtyard surrounded by ranks of *cellae*. They are also found in *castra*.[35] Both structures resemble houses when we understand *cubicula* to be *cellae* surrounding a central *atrium*. Thus, *horrea*, *praetoria*, and *domus* are structurally equivalent. Qualitatively, they differ, but, even here, their quality is consistent with Augustine's conception of memory. Augustine's *imagines* appear like soldiers in *series* (single-file) and *catervatim* (in companies). As I discuss in Chapter 4, Augustine also conceives of memory as a stomach and confession as vomiting. This may remind the reader of a *horreum*, whose function is the storage of grain. And, as I discuss toward the end of this chapter, wax masks (*imagines*) that depict one's ancestors adorn the *atrium* of a house.[36] Thus, several metaphors are simultaneously at play. And this leads naturally to my next section on Augustine's predecessors.

Augustine and his Predecessors

As Cary explains, Augustine is unique in that he is the first to conceive of memory as a space.[37] This is one of several significant differences between Augustine's

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[35] Cf. Vercovicium, or the Housesteads Fort.

[36] Flower 1999: 185ff.

[37] Cary 2000: 128 believes that the conception of memory as an internal space is Augustine's own "invention": "So in the rhetorical tradition Augustine had materials for conceiving of

conception of memory in Book 10 and, for instance, the aforementioned mnemotechnic known as the Method of Loci, which proposes that an orator use actual or imagined space as an "artificial" (*artificiosa*) means of improving memorization.[38]

> The Loeb edition of [the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*] uses the phrase 'inner eye' to translate the word 'thought' (*cogitatio*) here. Evidently the translator, unlike the author, wants to picture our imagining or remembering as an inner act of looking at things in an inner space. And indeed, anyone who lives and thinks after Augustine is likely to find the suggestion of an inner vision in this text irresistible. Yet it is very significantly *not* irresistible for this anonymous ancient rhetorician, writing at about the same time as Cicero. If he had any inkling that memory was an inner space in which he saw things, he could have said so here, as his translator does. Instead, he draws a straightforward contrast between *aspectus* and *cogitatio*, that is, between literally seeing the places and thinking about them when they are no longer present. Neither of these is an act that he locates in a private inner space.[39]

memory as consisting of inner places, but the actual conception of the soul and its memory as an inner space was *his own invention*." (Emphasis mine.) For obvious reasons, this is too strong a claim to make. The most we can say is that the *Confessions* is the first extant text in which the author discusses memory as being an inner space.

[38] Cf. *Rhet.* 16: *sunt igitur duae memoriae: una naturalis, altera artificiosa. Naturalis est ea, quae nostris animis insita est et simul cum cogitatione nata; artificiosa est ea, quam confirmat inductio quaedam et ratio praeceptionis. . . . Constat igitur artificiosa memoria locis et imaginibus*. "Natural memory," he says, is "imbedded" (*insita*) in our minds, while "artificial memory" *is strengthened* (*quam confirmat*) by artificial means including the use of *loci* and *imagines*. Augustine's use of both makes the Method an attractive place to look for influence— though, as I argue, this is the wrong place to look. For scholarship on the Method, see Yates 1966, Spence 1985, Small 1997, Carruthers 1998 and 2008, and Rossi 2000.

[39] Cary 2000: 128 (emphasis his). The Latin passage (19) reads *intervalla locorum mediocria placet esse, fere paulo plus aut minus pedum tricenum: nam ut aspectus item cogitatio minus valet, sive nimis procul removeris sive vehementer prope admoveris id, quod oportet videri*. The translator is Caplan 1954. Cary 2000: 187 n.13 notes that Carruthers 2008: 47 applies the post-Augustinian conception of memory as an inner space anachronistically to these pre-Augustinian accounts using only Quintilian 10.3.30 as evidence (*quare in turba, itinere, conviviis etiam faciat sibi cogitatio ipsa secretum*). However, upon examination of the passage in question, there is nothing in Quintilian's remarks to suggest that he conceived of memory as an inner space: his point, instead, is that the one needs an actual private space for contemplation. As he says in conclusion of this passage: *propter quae idem ille tantus amator secreti Demosthenes in litore, in quo se maximo cum sono fluctus inlideret, meditans consuescebat contionum fremitus non expavescere.*

It is tempting to see a direct link between the Method and Augustine's conception of memory in Book 10, for both discuss memory in terms of *loci* and *imagines*, and both speak of sequences of recollection.[40] Blum, however, does not believe that Augustine was one of its practitioners and contends that his conception of memory was not influenced by the Method.[41] Of course, one can have knowledge of the Method without being a practitioner: it appears that the Method was not actually practiced until the late Middle Ages, although it was widely known at least as late as the 1st century AD. That is to say, many who knew the Method did not practice it.

O'Donnell, who also tentatively agrees with Blum, argues that Augustine was not familiar with the texts or passages in which the Method is discussed: of the *Rhetorica*, he says "[t]here is no indication that [Augustine] ever knew [the text]"; of *De oratore*, he observes that, while Augustine knew it, he "never alludes to the section on mnemotechnic."[42] Moreover, although O'Donnell says nothing of Augustine's knowledge of Quintilian, it appears that Augustine had only "some reminiscences" of the *Institutio Oratoria*.[43]

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[40] For attempts to find connections between the two, see Doucet 1987; Hübner 1981; Yates 1966: 46-49.

[41] Blum 1969: 141.

[42] O'Donnell 1992: 3.177. According to Marx 1894: 1-4, the *Rhetorica* was rediscovered in North Africa around 350 AD and brought back to Italy from there. References to the work appear in Jerome's writings in the years 395-402 AD (Caplan 1954: xxxiv). Others think that, if the text was lost, it was not lost for nearly this long (Teuffel 1916; Kroll 1940; Caplan 1954: xv). In either instance, it is possible that Augustine, too, knew the work before he wrote the *Confessions*.

[43] Hadengahl 1969: 2.676.

I agree that Augustine's conception is not influenced by the Method and that, in O'Donnell's words, "[t]he most that may be said is that he drew on a store of imagery congruent with the technique."[44] But I disagree with the way this conclusion is drawn. It is likely that Augustine knew the *Rhetorica*.[45] And Augustine knew Cicero's *De oratore* well.[46] To claim that he did not know the Method on the grounds that he never referenced the relevant passage that discusses the Method requires that he simply did not read that section of the text. Considering the amount of text Quintilian devotes to the Method, it is likely that it was something more substantial than a passing anecdote in the post-Quintilian West. And, although Augustine does not seem to be actively engaged with the text of Quintilian, by virtue of being a rhetorician at that time, it is possible that Augustine heard of the technique from sources other than the three extant texts.[47]

Yet, Augustine's conception of places, spaces, and *imagines* is so functionally different from the Method's approach that the two cannot be correlated. Both models of

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[44] O'Donnell 1992: 3.177. See Yates 1966: 46-49; 62: "Augustine is not discussing or recommending" the Method, but the Method is "almost unconsciously implied."

[45] See n.42 above.

[46] For Augustine's knowledge of *De oratore*, see Hagendahl 1967: 2.553ff.

[47] As Blum 1969: 136 says, "Natürlich ist es grundsätzlich als möglich zu betrachten, dass Augustin bei seinen rhetorischen Studien die Mnemotechnik kennenlernte." On Augustine's indebtedness to "Quintilian's program," see Murphy 1987: xii-xiii, xxxix. However, Murphy provides no evidence for this contention. On the popularity of the story of Simonides, which provides the foundation for the Method, Cicero says that it was already in circulation in his time (*De orat.* 351-2), and Quintilian calls it a *vulgata fabula* (11.11), recording numerous variations of the story at 11.14-6. Even Horace appears to allude to the story at *Sat.* 2.8.54-6 (Marchesi: 2005). This, of course, does not mean that the story remained a *vulgata fabula* in Augustine's time, or, even if it were, that the story was told in connection to the mnemotechnic. Thus, while it is possible that there is a connection between Augustine and Quintilian (see Keseling 1954) or non-extant sources of the story, the lack of evidence for a connection should reasonably eliminate this as a possibility.

memory share imagery, but this imagery is so common in antiquity that even an indirect connection is rendered meaningless. If Augustine is responding to the Method, he does so in a way that rejects its fundamental principle.[48] To explain how this is the case, I turn to the Method and the reason why it worked or was proposed to have worked.[49] From there, I show how Augustine's conception of memory is fundamentally different.

The Method purports to work as follows. As Quintilian explains, the first step is to select as large a *space* as possible that itself has many designated areas, such as a house with many rooms.[50] This supplies the space within which the Method functions. This space must be committed perfectly to memory so that, when the orator imagines (or remembers) himself moving through it, he does not accidentally move from one area to another that is not spatially contiguous.[51] This is a crucial point of the Method: it requires the orator to have control over a fixed cartography and the routes through it.

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[48] It would be very interesting if in Book 10 he were intentionally undermining the Method. But, again, due to lack of evidence, this would at best be simple speculation.

[49] For actual uses of the mnemotechnic, see the Russian mnemonist, Shereshevskii, who used Gorky Street in Moscow (Sorabji 1972: 23; discussed by Luria 1960 and 1969) and Season 3 Episode 1 of James May's *Man Lab*. On the effectiveness of the Method, see Ross & Lawrence 1968; Maguire *et al*.: 2003.

[50] Quintilian 11.2.18: *loca discunt quam maxime spatiosa, multa varietate signata, domum forte magnam et in multos diductam recessus*. Later in the discussion (11.2.21), Quintilian suggests other buildings and areas may also be used to supply the space, such as public buildings (*in operibus publicis*), roads (*in itinere longo*), city walls (*urbium ambitu*), and even pictures (*picturis*). Further, he says that these may be real or imaginary. However, precisely because the orator needs to be intimately familiar with a space in which its places and the objects therein are fixed, were the Method to be used in practice, I suspect that real spaces would be far preferable to imagined ones.

[51] Quintilian 11.2.18: *in ea quidquid notabile est animo diligenter adfigunt, ut sine cunctatione ac mora partis eius omnis cogitatio possit percurrere. Et primus hic labor est, non haerere in occursu: plus enim quam firma debet esse memoria quae aliam memoriam adiuvet.*

Secondly, the orator is to associate each part of his speech with an image (*imago*).[52] These images are then imposed upon places and objects in the space in a sequential order.[53] In this way—and precisely because the space used is real—the entire speech is laid out, piece by piece, along a fixed route through it. Thus, via *imagines* the Method creates a purely linear itinerary through three-dimensional space. This makes Quintilian's suggestion of a long road (*iter longum*) or city ramparts (*urbium ambitus*) particularly convenient for a practitioner of the Method, as by nature they supply the linear route already. Because the Method functions in terms of spatial mapping, I refer to the images affixed to the itinerary as "coordinates."

Thirdly, the orator is to practice his speech by moving physically from one coordinate to another, reciting each part of his speech at the correct associated coordinate along the way. Thus, when reciting the speech in court, he may imagine—in fact, remember—himself moving through the space by which he memorized the speech in its entirety. He will not make the mistake, say, of accidentally skipping a section because fixed itineraries prevent one from moving through space in any other way. Thus, if the orator is interrupted and forgets his place, he may remember where he is in the imagined space and resume his speech without pause. He may even recite his speech in reverse. For instance, if he needs to repeat what he just said, he can simply imagine himself moving

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[52] For the length of passages to be associated with individual *imagines*, see Quintilian 11.2.27-28.

[53] Quintilian 11.2.19-21. Cf. Cicero, *De oratore* 2.87.354: *itaque iis, qui hanc partem ingenii exercerent, locos esse capiendos et ea, quae memoria tenere vellent, effingenda animo atque in iis locis collocanda; sic fore ut ordinem rerum locorum ordo conservaret, res autem ipsas rerum effigies notaret atque ut locis pro cera simulacris pro litteris uteremur.*

backwards along his itinerary to the last proximate coordinate.[54] In these ways, the Method is purported to help the orator during the public performance of his speech. If it works as a mnemotechnic, it does so—as I suggest—because the imagined space is cartographically fixed and, therefore, hodologically fixed, as well.

There are already several significant differences to note between the Method and Augustine's conception of memory in Book 10 of the *Confessions*. The Method requires the orator to move along a pre-established route through space. As we have seen, Augustine, too, moves through the space of his memory. Recall his statement quoted above that he "run[s] scatteredly through all of these [objects, or places, of memory] and fl[ies] here and there."[55] Note the randomness of this journey (*hac illac*) in contrast to the orderly progression created by the Method. Augustine's discussion of memory is part of a larger journey from memory's exterior toward its inmost *sedes*, which suggests a route through space. However, Augustine only mentions degrees of interiority and progression from one to the other, not actual routes. As I discuss in Chapter 4, for Augustine, the progression is one of psychological intent, not spatial movement. Finally, although Augustine appears constantly on the move in his memory, when he recalls *imagines*, he is simply "there" (*ibi quando sum*), and his memories come to him.

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54 Quintilian 11.2.39.
55 *Conf.* 10.17.26: *per haec omnia discuro et volito hac illac*.

In our target passage, Augustine says, "when I am there, I ask that whatever I want [to recall] is brought forth, and immediately certain [*imagines*] come forth."[56] Thus, it is not Augustine who, as in the Method, moves from one *imago* to another; rather the *imagines* come to him. There is certainly an order or sequence, as when *some* (*quaedam*) of his *imagines* "arise in a neat sequence, just as they were asked to, and those preceding yield to those following and, yielding, are put [back where they were] so that they may proceed again when I want them to."[57] But others do not:

> Others rush forth in companies and, when something else is asked for and sought, jump in the middle as if saying, "perhaps we are the ones you are looking for?" And I drive them away from the face of my memory with the hand of my heart until what I want [to find] is removed from the cloud and produced in my view from its hiding place.[58]

In this instance, he actively has to pick the *imagines* he deems relevant to the story he wishes to tell and dismiss those that he does not. Inevitably, this process occurs in time and, therefore, results in the construction of a sequence. But these memories are recalled—or, rather, they recall themselves—concurrently in groups (*catervatim*) and as a cloud (cf. *donec* _enubiletur_ *quod volo*). Augustine's *imagines* sometimes preserve order, an *imperturbata series*, but sometimes they do not.

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[56] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *ibi quando sum, posco ut proferatur quidquid volo, et quaedam statim prodeunt.*

[57] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *alia faciliter atque imperturbata serie sicut poscuntur suggeruntur, et cedunt praecedentia consequentibus et cedendo conduntur, iterum cum voluero processura.*

[58] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *quaedam catervatim se proruunt et, dum aliud petitur et quaeritur, prosiliunt in medium quasi dicentia, `ne forte nos sumus?' et abigo ea manu cordis a facie recordationis meae, donec enubiletur quod volo atque in conspectum prodeat ex abditis.*

Perhaps the crucial point of distinction between the Method and Augustine's account of memory has to do with the agents of recollection. In the case of the Method, *imagines* are static objects placed in locations by the orator.[59] However, in the case of Augustine's memory, the *imagines* determine whether or not they will be recalled and, if so, in what form. They are passively brought in by the senses and stored, and Augustine himself claims responsibility for the storage, at least at times. But, more frequently, he says of them that they hide, they come forth, invited or not. And, when there is a pre-established sequence, they preserve it. This now leads me to the most significant difference between Augustine's conception of memory and that of the Method: namely, *imagines*.

The Method works if a section of one's speech is somehow connected to a physical object or area. To do so, the Method employs *imagines* as proxies that are associated both with the actual objects to which they are attached and the items one wants to remember. For instance, one may associate the image of an anchor with the section of one's speech concerning navigation.[60] As Quintilian says, these images must be entirely fabricated: the orator must come up with them, their referents, and their associations.[61]

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[59] Quintilian 11.2.21, 23.

[60] Quintilian 11.2.19: *tum quae scripserunt vel cogitatione complectuntur [et] aliquo signo quo moneantur notant, quod esse vel ex re tota potest, ut de navigatione, militia, vel ex verbo aliquo: nam etiam excidentes unius admonitione verbi in memoriam reponuntur. sit autem signum navigationis ut ancora, militiae ut aliquid ex armis.*

[61] Quintilian 11.2.21: *et imaginibus vel simulacris, quae utique fingenda sunt.*

Next, these images are placed around the house or upon objects therein.[62] In this way, one may see a particular statue and recall the image of an anchor one has associated with it and, from there, remember the section of the speech that concerns navigation. This is distinctly not how Augustine uses the term *imago*.

In the *Confessions*, *imagines* are depictions of *res*, or objects perceptible by the senses, that exist within memory. Thus, his conception of them is akin to physical objects such as paintings, statues, and wax masks. The result is that, for Augustine, the recollection of *imagines* is *direct* in that a given *imago* is innately of a particular *res* and not anything else. This is distinct from the use of *imagines* in the Method in that associations are artificial and *imagines* function to create an *indirect* connection between the object seen and the memory recalled.

Augustine follows more closely the foundation story of the Method than the Method itself does. Cicero and Quintilian claim that the Method was discovered by Simonides of Ceos.[63] As with any legend, there are variations in the details of the story, but the basic outline is as follows.[64] Simonides was asked to compose and recite a victory ode in honor of a famous boxer at a dinner party. In this ode, however, Simonides also

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[62] Quintilian 11.2.20: *haec ita digerunt: primum sensum [bello cum] vestibulo quasi adsignant, secundum (puta) atrio, tum inpluvia circumeunt, nec cubiculis modo aut exhedris, sed statuis etiam similibusque per ordinem committunt.*

[63] Cicero, *De oratore* 2.86.352-54; Quintilian 11.2.11-17.

[64] Quintilian records alternate versions at 11.2.14-16. If we trust Cicero's words at *De orat.* 351-2, the story was circulating before Cicero recorded it. Thus, the story was not a Ciceronian invention: *gratiamque habeo Simonidi illi Cio quem primum <u>ferunt</u> artem memoriae protulisse. <u>dicunt</u> enim* . . . And, if we trust Quintilian, the story was widely circulating also in the 1st c. A.D.: *artem autem memoriae primus ostendisse dicitur Simonides. <u>cuius vulgata fabula est</u>* . . . (11.2.11). Thus, the story must have been popular in both Late Republican and at least Early Imperial rhetorical schools.

included a passage in praise of Castor and Pollux. Thus, after delivering the ode, Simonides was told that he would be paid only half of the fee agreed upon for his composition: the other half would have to be paid by the twin gods themselves. Later in the night, Simonides was summoned outside by two young men—as the story goes, by Castor and Pollux themselves. While he was outside, the roof of the banquet hall collapsed killing all the guests and so severely disfiguring their corpses that none could be recognized.[65]

Yet, Simonides was able to identify all of the bodies because he remembered the order in which the attendants were reclining.[66] Thus, as Cicero explains, "the order of *loci* preserves the order of *res*."[67] This, as we have seen, is why the Method is said to work: the sequence of one's speech is fixed because the coordinates in the space in which the *imagines* are located are hodologically secure. But, critically, Simonides retained mental pictures, *imagines*, of each individual: the *imagines* represent the guests without artificial proxies, just like *imagines* in Book 10 of the *Confessions* and unlike those used in the Method.

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[65] Quintilian 11.2.16 is skeptical of the story's veracity (at least the part about the appearance of Castor and Pollux). However, I find it surprising that no one seems to question how the bodies could be so disfigured that they could not be recognized. Perhaps Simonides merely stated the order in which guests were reclining rather than actually identifying the bodies.

[66] Quintilian 11.2.13: *tum Simonides dicitur memor ordine quo quisque discubuerat corpora suis reddidisse*.

[67] Cicero 2.86.354: *. . . ordinem rerum locorum ordo conservaret*.

"The order of *loci* preserves the order of *res*."[68] Specifically, Simonides (inadvertently) collapsed multi-dimensional space into a unilinear route: "he is said to have discovered that sequence (*ordinem*) is the greatest thing for giving light to memory."[69] Thus, it is clear that order—a unilinear one-dimensional sequence—is the central feature of Simonides' discovery, and it is functional because it is an order through actual space. If the Method were considered effective, it would be because through it one establishes a single route through three-dimensional space. And, if that space is fixed, then the established route through it will not change. Thus, one may proceed forward or backward along the route *and in no other way*.[70] Augustine's memory works differently.

Augustine imagines memory to be a space. But, unlike the space imagined in the Method, it has neither explicit cartography nor any determinate routes. Sequence is an

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[68] See n.67 above. If the symposium to which Simonides was invited is envisioned to be a simple event involving nine guests, such as that seen in Horace *Sat*. 2.8 and Trimalchio's dinner in Petronius' *Satyricon* (see Lawall's 1995: 53 depiction of the dining room), then we already have an established itinerary through two-dimensional cartographical space. A larger symposium (cf. Murray 1998: 697 on the Greek *andrōn*), with up to 30 guests and 15 tiered couches, would perhaps be more impressive, as it would require the collapse of slightly more complex three-dimensional space into a single itinerary.

[69] Cicero *De orat*. 353: . . . *invenisse fertur ordinem esse maxime qui memoriae lumen afferret*.

[70] This technique is not exclusive to the Method. For instance, Herodotus explains that, in response to Hecataeus' claim that he descended from a god sixteen generations earlier, the Egyptian priests referred to wooden statues (κολοσσοὺς ξυλίνους) of earlier priests organized chronologically, generation by generation, in a hallway (Herodotus 2.143-44). I thank Marquis Berrey for directing me to this passage. See also Vitruvius 1.1.5: *ideo qui tunc architecti fuerunt aedificiis publicis designaverunt earum imagines oneri ferundo conlocatas, ut etiam posteris nota poena peccati Cariatium memoriae traderetur*. Note that, like the *imagines* of Simonides and Augustine, these statues directly refer to that which they represent. Herodotus says that, in this way, the priests were able to explain why Hecataeus' account of his genealogy was false. The statues were arranged, fixed, in a line successively from earliest priest to latest with the result that they could count the number of generations between any two priests. Because the past is represented in a fixed *ordo*, narratives of it are historically secure. But this is where Augustine differs.

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important aspect of accurate recollection, as when some memories come forward easily in an undisturbed series (*imperturbata series*). But, many memories are not so organized—let alone organized at all. The crucial difference (though not the only one) between Augustine's conception of memory and that of his predecessors is that he, Augustine, does not create and follow a sequence; rather, his memories are responsible for their own organization. There is, therefore, a dual interplay of agencies: on the one hand, Augustine must request and at times select the *imagines* he wishes to remember; on the other, the *imagines* decide whether to come forth or not and, if they do, in what order they appear.

Before I continue this thought, I turn first to Augustine's recognition that both memory and recollection are fallible. As I explained in Chapter 2, Augustine gets many things wrong about his own past. In the next section, I discuss his acknowledgement of this fact so that, in the last section, I may show how the existence of errors is not inconsistent with his story being true, at least in the sense he needs it to be.

The Fallibility of Memory

The question at hand is how Augustine's autobiography can diverge from the historical record of what in fact happened during these early years of his life while simultaneously being a true story. In part, the problem has to do with misrepresentations of past events in Augustine's account.[71] For instance, some things are left unsaid and others appear to be inaccurately reported. I propose two reasons for this: the first has to

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[71] For examples, see Chapter 2.

do with the fallible nature of memory itself; the second has to do with the co-activity of memories and the one remembering.

Augustine admits that his memory is imperfect. For instance, there are things he simply does not—or, rather, cannot—remember. However, this does not necessarily mean that Augustine never acquired memories of these events or that the memories no longer exist in his memory. When Augustine discusses forgetfulness in Book 10, he speaks of memories being lost—not, as Chadwick suggests, destroyed. As Augustine says, forgotten memories "are *buried* (*obruitur*) by forgetfulness."[72] In other words, they still exist but are inaccessible. Some may take longer to recall: "some [*imagines*] that are sought take a longer time [to come forth] and dig themselves out (*eruuntur*) as if from hidden receptacles."[73] But others are irrevocably lost. For instance, when Augustine speaks of his infancy and the life he lived in his mother's womb before that, he says that his memories of this time "belong to the darkness of forgetfulness," *not* that he never acquired them.[74] Therefore, it is not that the infant Augustine did not acquire memories during this period; rather, the memories acquired are forever lost. They simply cannot be

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[72] *Conf.* 10.16.25: *et tamen quocumque modo, licet sit modus iste incomprehensibilis et inexplicabilis, etiam ipsam oblivionem meminisse me certus sum, qua id quod meminerimus obruitur.* Emphasis mine. Chadwick 1991: 194 translates the last clause as "and yet forgetfulness *destroys* what we remember" (emphasis mine). But the verb *obruo* does not entail actual deletion; and, when considered in light of other passages quoted here, it seems likely that Augustine does not use the verb with this force. See also our target passage, which says of forgotten memories that they are "buried in oblivion" (*sepelivit oblivio*; trans. Chadwick 1991: 185) as distinct from, say, "utterly destroyed." These memories, therefore, still seem to exist in Augustine's view.

[73] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *quaedam requiruntur diutius et tamquam de abstrusioribus quibusdam receptaculis eruuntur.*

[74] *Conf.* 1.7.12: *quantum enim attinet ad oblivionis meae tenebras, par illi est quam vixi in matris utero.*

found, or they will never produce themselves when asked to do so. But, they are still there, somewhere.

Because Augustine is able to remember forgetfulness, which, as a result, itself becomes an object of memory, he is aware that there are gaps in the available *imagines* of his past. Consequently, forgetfulness as an object stands in for the gap. However, in the case of his infancy, Augustine is able to draw on—in other words, "borrow"—*imagines* that he can still recall (e.g. of Adeodatus as an infant) and, as it were, insert them into the gap.[75] But again, he is careful to remind his reader that these are not the *imagines* that refer to the exact *res* he is describing. Rather, he concludes that they are sufficiently similar to be used in his story—they fill the gap that the image of forgetfulness otherwise occupies.[76]

Some gaps in memory cannot be filled, and some details remain uncertain. *Imagines*, which are depictions of *res* in the world that one has experienced first-hand, are by nature partial precisely because they are dependent upon one's perception.[77] When Augustine ran off into the garden at Cassiciacum, he experienced certain things there.[78] For instance, we know that he saw a fig tree (or so he says), and that he heard the voice of

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[75] See also *Conf.* 2.3.8, where he conjectures the character of his parents: *ita enim conicio, recolens ut possum mores parentum meorum*. In this instance, he retains *imagines* of his parents and, when remembering them, infers something from them.

[76] Contrast this with other episodes—other *imagines*—that he cannot recall and cannot reconstruct. For instance, when at *Conf.* 8.6.14 he says that he does not recall why Nebridius was absent when he and Alypius received a surprise visit from Ponticianus (*non recolo causam qua erat absens Nebridius*), he says nothing more about it.

[77] On the creation of *imagines*, see *Conf.* 10.8.13.

[78] *Conf.* 8.12.28-29. Moreover, he was in a state of distress (*flebam amarissima contritione cordis mei*), which will have further limited his attention to objects around him.

a child. His *imagines* of the *res* that he perceived are limited first by what he was able to perceive. If he did not touch the fig tree, his *imago* of it will not record tactile information. He may reasonably infer that the tree he recalls felt a certain way (e.g. rough, hard), but this is only if he refers to another *imago* (one that records the feel of a tree) to do so. When he mentions the voice singing "*tolle lege, tolle lege*," he is unsure whether it was of a boy or a girl (*quasi pueri an puellae, nescio*). If he saw the speaker of these words, he would surely have been able to determine the gender. But, because he does not know (*nescio*), as distinct from being simply unable to remember, this is a sensory aspect of the moment he never perceived and of which, therefore, he has no memory. He may attempt to reconstruct the missing gaps in his memory by generating new *imagines*. But, in that case, he tells us that this is what he is doing.[79] Or, being unable either to locate the real *imagines* or to generate replicas, he may admit defeat. But in this case, he acknowledges that those memories are momentarily unavailable or forever lost, and that the gaps they leave cannot be filled by other means. In these ways, Augustine acknowledges that his recollection of the past cannot be perfect. But, there is yet another way in which memory is insufficient for the production of an accurate account of the past. This has to do with sequences, or pathways.

To return to our target passage, *Conf*. 10.8.12, Augustine explains that some *imagines* come forth in a neat sequence (*imperturbata serie*), while others rush forth "in companies" (*catervatim*) and must be "declouded" (*enubiletur*). As for the former, from Augustine's description it is impossible to tell what he means by *imperturbata series*.

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[79] Cf. *Conf*. 9.10.26: *dicebam talia, etsi non isto modo et his verbis*.

That is, does he mean that the *imagines* preserve the actual unfolding of events in time? If so, then the narrative produced in reference to these *imagines* should be factually accurate in their chronology. Or, have they preserved their own sequence and now present themselves accordingly?[80] In this instance, Augustine's narrative reflects the internal sequence that these *imagines* preserve of their own accord. Whether this sequence is in fact accurate or not, and whether the sequence is organized temporally or in some other way, a faithful narrative of it is correct in that it represents accurately the internal organization of *imagines* as it exists now, in Augustine's present. For the moment, all we can say of the *imperturbata series* is that it presents Augustine with an easy sequence to follow when he recalls and narrates his past *memoriter*.

But recollection is not so simple when we turn to the *imagines* that "pour out to crowd the mind" (*catervatim se proruunt*).[81] Although the adverb *catervatim* is used of military companies, which we would reasonably suspect also to be organized *seriatim*, that is not necessarily what we find. When considered in light of the fact that what Augustine wants to recall must be "declouded" (*enubiletur*), we perhaps imagine not an organized company but an unruly mob of concurrently present memories.[82] He has asked

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[80] For instance, my mother can recite with confidence the first ten or so letters of the Greek alphabet, and she will recite these letters in the same sequence in subsequent trials. Although the sequence is the same, the order is incorrect. But, they are fixed in this particular sequence, and she can recite them accordingly without hesitation.

[81] Trans. Chadwick 1991: 185.

[82] For this interpretation of the adverb *catervatim*, see Vergil, *Georgics* 3.55-57: *iamque catervatim dat stragem atque aggerat ipsis | in stabulis turpi dilapsa cadavera tabo*. Surely the flocks do not die in a sequence. Likewise, when Lucretius says that the Pandionides were given over to disease and death (*inde catervatim morbo mortique dabantur*, 6.1144), he cannot mean that they were diseased and died in sequence but rather as entire groups.

for certain memories to come forth (*posco ut proferatur quidquid volo*), and he must drive away (*abigo*) those that he deems irrelevant or unnecessary to the story he wishes to tell. Especially in the case of memories that do not preserve a sequence, it must be up to Augustine to determine how, with the *imagines* presently available, he wishes to proceed through them when constructing a narrative.[83] Thus, recollection is in part Augustine's activity. But, in part, the *imagines* themselves are responsible for it, as well.

There is yet another influence on the pathway Augustine follows through his memories, and this is perhaps the most important difference between his account of memory and the conception that underlies the Method: Augustine conceives of *imagines* as having agency. At *Conf.* 10.8.12, they come forth (*prodeunt*, *se proruunt*, *prodeat*), and go away (*cedunt*). At *Conf.* 10.8.13, *imagines* enter memory (*intrant*). While Augustine actively searches for *imagines*, they, too, come to him—not only those that he wants to recall (which come on demand) but also those that he does not (which come of their own accord). Thus, again, what is distinct about Augustine's account of memory is that his memories, too, have agency.

In the context of Augustine's metaphor of memory as containing manmade structures (*horrea*, *praetoria*, and especially *domus*), the term *imago* perhaps suggests

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83 Augustine acknowledges his need to select material for his story at *Conf.* 3.12.21 (*et dedisti alterum responsum interim quod recolo. nam et multa praetereo, propter quod propero ad ea quae me magis urguent confiteri tibi, et multa non memini*) and again at *Conf.* 12.6.6 (*et si totum tibi confiteatur vox et stilus meus, quidquid de ista quaestione enodasti mihi, quis legentium capere durabit?*). But, at *Conf.* 9.7.16, Augustine asks God: *unde et quo duxisti recordationem meam, ut haec etiam confiterer tibi, quae magna oblitus praeterieram?* Here, he appears to understand that the path his narration takes is not entirely up to him to decide: God directs him as he proceeds through memory in a way that Augustine himself does not seem to know.

objects like statues or wax masks, both of which are called *imagines*. In theurgy, statues were believed to be animate.[84] Augustine knew of this belief and strongly opposed it.[85] According to this belief, objects were animated by spirits, but they did not move. Thus, animate statues are surely not what we find in Book 10.

However, wax masks present a more contextually appropriate metaphor. And they differ from statues in three significant ways. First, they depict actual people in one's own past, whereas statues are not so exclusive (let alone so common). Secondly, they appear to be exclusive to one's personal space—specifically, one's house. Thus, we should not be surprised to find wax masks in the interior *domus* of Augustine's memory. Thirdly, they in fact *were* mobile, at least when worn by actors in funereal parades. In a way, they are literal ghosts of one's past, which is precisely what Augustine's memories are to him— shadows of things that once were real but that no longer exist except residually in one's memory. With this in mind, I turn to the second potential model for Augustine's conception of memory in Book 10: Vergil's sixth *Aeneid*.

Augustine in the Underworld

There are numerous parallels between the *Confessions* and Vergil's *Aeneid*.[86] These exist at multiple levels of comparison and often compete, though not necessarily in

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[84] Johnston 2008.

[85] Johnston 2008: 451 and n.4.

[86] Augustine's indebtedness to the *Aeneid* is the topic of numerous studies including, though not limited to, O'Meara 1963; Ramage 1970; Courcelle 1979-80; Hübner 1981; O'Meara 1988; Bennett 1988; Ziolkowski 1995; MacCormack 1998; Wentzel 2008; McCarthy 2009.

a mutually exclusive manner. Rather, because they are co-operative, they render Augustine's text all the more dynamic in terms of reception, unlike the *Aeneid* and Vergil's relatively direct adoption of his Homeric predecessors, at least as presented by Knauer.[87] Thus, we should not expect to find either a single or a simple one-to-one comparison between the two texts. To illustrate this point, consider the figure of Augustine's mother, Monnica.

At *Conf.* 5.8.15, Monnica is to Augustine as Dido is to Aeneas, as each is left crying on the shore of Carthage as the man departs for Italy. But Monnica is also Augustine's Sibyl, as she leads him in his ascent to heaven in Book 9 of the *Confessions*, just as the Sibyl leads Aeneas into the underworld in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*. And, like the Sibyl, who ceases to be a useful guide for Aeneas once they arrive at Elysium, Monnica no longer serves a purpose for Augustine after he attains a glimpse of heaven in Book 9.[88] But in this way, she is also akin to Anchises, who in life and death guides Aeneas along his journey until Aeneas can stand on his own after experiencing Elysium.[89]

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[87] Knauer 1964. Despite Bennett's 1988 overly committed bifurcation of Christian and earlier "pagan" literature in late antiquity, he is right that (though to take the quotation out of its original context) "Augustine was too shrewd a rhetorician to have included the kinds of references to Vergil which would make us suspect modelling without a specific intent . . . " (48).

[88] Note that the Sibyl asks for directions (*Aen.* 6.669-70: *dicite, felices animae, tuque, optime vates | quae regio Anchisen, quis habet locus?*) and no longer acts as guide, as if she is unfamiliar with Elysium. Previously, she clearly knew her way around the underworld.

[89] For comparisons between Monnica and Anchises, see Bennett 1988: 65. For the psychological reorientation of Aeneas in (and after) Elysium, see Otis 1959.

Thereafter, like Monnica, he disappears from the text entirely. Thus, Monnica plays a multiplicity of intertextual roles simultaneously.[90]

There are two reasons why I discuss the multiplicity of intertextual relations between Monnica and her Vergilian models. First, the example of Monnica is intended to show the multifaceted nature of Augustine's (possible) use of intertexts. Thus, when in a moment I propose three ways in which Augustine responds to *Aeneid* 6, they should be understood to be at play simultaneously. Secondly, I have selected Monnica because of my interest in the pivotal episode of the *Confessions* in which she is directly involved, namely the mystical vision at Ostia in Book 9.

To begin, I present a rudimentary summary of the journeys of Aeneas and Augustine. Aeneas escapes Troy during the Greek sack in search of what he is told will be a happy life.[91] Augustine, too, leaves his home in North Africa—Carthage, in particular, which he describes as morally destitute[92]— in search of what he has been told will be a more lucrative career.[93] In Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas turns up in Carthage, while, in Book 5 of the *Confessions*, Augustine moves on from Carthage to Italy. There,

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[90] There are other intertexts at play, as well. For her likeness to Venus, Aeneas' mother, see Ziolkowski 1995. Beyond the *Aeneid*, see Ferrari 1979, who compares Monnica to Paul.

[91] Cf. *Aen*. 2.781-84: *et terram Hesperiam venies . . . illic res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx | parta tibi*.

[92] For his complaints about the city, see *Conf*. 3.1.1 (*veni Carthaginem, et circumstrepebat me undique sartago flagitiosorum amorum*); for complains about students, see *Conf*. 5.8.14 (*contra apud Carthaginem foeda est et intemperans licentia scholasticorum*).

[93] *Conf*. 5.8.14: *non ideo Romam pergere volui, quod maiores quaestus maiorque mihi dignitas ab amicis qui hoc suadebant promittebatur (quamquam et ista ducebant animum tunc meum), sed illa erat causa maxima et paene sola, quod audiebam quietius ibi studere adulescentes et ordinatiore disciplinae cohercitione sedari, ne in eius scholam quo magistro non utuntur passim et proterve inruant, nec eos admitti omnino nisi ille permiserit*.

for both—Aeneas in his temporary home in North Africa on his way to his eventual home in Italy, and Augustine in his temporary home in Italy on his way back to his eventual home in North Africa—a choice of sorts must be made. For Aeneas, it is to stay on as king of an already founded city, Carthage, or move on and create his own home in a completely foreign land, Italy. For Augustine, it is to stay in Italy or pursue his *peregrinatio* further, to a Christian life back in North Africa where he will (metaphorically) build a new Christian city rather than participate in the building of a Christian city in Italy that is already in progress. At the end of the Odyssean half of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas has left Carthage and has just arrived at Italy; and, in Book 9 of the *Confessions*—the last historical narrative of the work—we find Augustine about to depart Italy for Carthage.[94] So, in terms at least of spatial *errores*, *Aeneid* 1 to the beginning of 6 and *Confessions* 1-9 are parallel, albeit geographically reversed. With this in mind, the question, then, is: what in the *Confessions* is analogous to Aeneas' *katabasis* in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*? I suggest three responses to the question.

The first two parallels between the *Confessions* and *Aeneid* 6 center around Augustine's mystical vision at Ostia in Book 9.[95] I discuss this passage in full in Chapter 4. The resemblance concerns both its content and its significance within the story.

In *Aeneid* 6, Aeneas descends into the underworld in search of his father. Along the way to Elysium, with the Sibyl as his guide, he confronts his past in the form of ghosts (*umbrae*, *imagines*). Upon Aeneas' entry to Elysium, Musaeus guides him and the

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[94] For the division of the *Confessions* into Odyssean and Iliadic halves, see Hübner 1981.

[95] Specifically *Conf*. 9.10.23-25. See Bennett 1988: 65 for a detailed comparison of the two episodes.

Sibyl to Anchises, who then reveals to his son the (temporal) future that is to come. Anchises has, both in life and in death, guided Aeneas this far. But, following Anchises' revelation of Aeneas' future, Aeneas is prepared to stand on his own. Anchises is absent in Books 7-12, while Aeneas confronts the present by way of preparing for the (temporal) future.[96]

In the books leading up to his vision at Ostia, Augustine, too, wanders through memories of his past. Like the memories Aeneas encounters along his way to Elysium, these memories cause distress. But, they must be confronted in order for Augustine to arrive in heaven and Aeneas in Elysium. Augustine, accompanied by his mother, *ascends* to heaven. And upon glimpsing that which lies metaphysically before (*ante*), Augustine is able to stand on his own, without the guidance of his mother—who like Anchises disappears from the text following this vision—while attending to that which is present at hand in Books 10-13 (namely, intellectual contemplation of that which is metaphysically present). In this way, Vergil's Elysium and Augustine's vision of heaven at Ostia are parallel in that the future is revealed to each son via the guidance of his parent. In terms of story, both events mark a pivotal role in the psychological transformation of the protagonist. Having seen what he saw in Elysium, Aeneas is no longer preoccupied with his past and can move forward on his own. Having seen what he saw in heaven, Augustine (the author/narrator), too, is able to overcome his own past. To get there, Aeneas had to confront his past in the first part of Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, while Augustine

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[96] Otis 1959: 168-70; Williams 2004: 459; Bennett 1988: 65.

had to confront his past in Books 1-9 of the *Confessions*. Thus, I propose that the *entirety* of the *Confessions* is a sort of Vergilian *katabasis*, though Augustine's is an ascent.[97]

To reiterate: the first identifiable reminiscence of *Aeneid* 6 in the *Confessions* is Augustine's vision of heaven in Book 9. This vision is parallel to Anchises' revelation to Aeneas of the temporal future of his *gens*.[98] The second parallel is psychological in that Aeneas and Augustine achieve the same thing—namely, a psychological reorientation from past to present—through their experiences. Thus, the entirety of the *Confessions* may be seen as modeled on *Aeneid* 6. But the specific influence of *Aeneid* 6 on the *Confessions* is found elsewhere, as well: namely, when Augustine describes his ascent into memory in Book 10. The reminiscences are found both in the space and in the contents of that space.

As we have seen, the Method functions if itineraries through space are secure. This is the case in what Fairclough calls "the neutral region" of Vergil's underworld— what Otis calls the "mythological Hades"—that leads to Elysium.[99] Whatever we call it, this region is distinctly hodological: one gets the sense that this portion of the underworld has dimensionality, but that is not what the text offers. Every region Aeneas enters is fixed along a single route.[100] Places are qualitatively distinct, but that is it—they have

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[97] *Conf.* 9.10.24: *ascendebamus interius*; Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.126: *facilis descensus Averno*.
[98] Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.756-886.
[99] Fairclough 1999: 565 n.22; Otis 1959: 165.
[100] An exception appears at *Aen*. 6.541-43, where the road splits in two: to the right is Tartarus; to the left is Elysium.

volume, but this volume is not quantitatively meaningful. Thus, they exist solely as coordinates along a fixed hodology.

This is distinctly not the case in Elysium, which has neither qualitatively distinct places nor fixed itineraries. It contains nominally distinct regions, but none is qualitatively distinct—they cannot be, since no shade has a fixed home (*nulli certa domus*, 673). (That said, there are qualitatively distinct shades.) Nor, however, are there fixed itineraries through Elysium. Musaeus leads Aeneas and the Sibyl to Anchises and mentions a path (*et facili iam tramite sistam*, 676), but this is the closest we come to a sense of hodological space in Elysium. Instead, like Augustine's *imagines*, hodologies are created by the co-activity of the *imagines* themselves and Anchises, who narrates them. But more on that momentarily. What we can say about the space of the underworld is that, like Augustine's memory, there are increasing degrees of interiority. The path that leads to both Elysium and Tartarus is marked by a series of qualitatively distinct places, and both Elysium and Tartarus are equally the most interior: one to the right; the other to the left. In some ways, then, the space of Vergil's underworld is parallel to the space of Augustine's memory: both Aeneas and Augustine must travel first through the realm of past memories before they enter a sort of "present of the future."

But, it is the activity of *imagines* in both Vergil's underworld and Augustine's memory that deserve attention. Aeneas has come in search of one *imago* in particular: that of Anchises. Meanwhile, Augustine searches for God, as if he, too, were a single object in his memory. Along the way, both encounter *imagines* of the past. Some are in a

neat sequence.[101] Others appear in mobs.[102] Those that belong to Aeneas' own past—

specifically, those who have been part of his journey in the first five books of the

Aeneid—interact with him as he passes. Aeneas encounters not just any ghosts but

specifically these, with the notable exception of his wife, Creusa. Aeneas interacts with

them, and then he moves on. Likewise, Augustine encounters *imagines* of things he is not

intending to recall, and these ask him, "aren't we the ones you are looking for?" (*ne forte*

nos sumus).

But, there is one mob in particular that is most relevant to the co-activity of

Augustine's recollection: the Parade of Heroes. The connections between the Parade of

Heroes and a Roman funereal parade have been long noted.[103] Actors wore wax masks

(*imagines*) of the deceased's ancestors and followed the bier through the city. This parade

relates directly to the topic of co-activity in the construction of historical narrative as,

here, we have an account of animate and mobile *imagines* that Anchises uses to construct

a history of his son's future.

While conversing about the future of the soul, Anchises drags Aeneas and the

Sibyl into the midst of a buzzing mob (*turbamque sonantem*).[104] But, it is a mob (*turba*)

from their perspective only when they are within it. A moment later, they ascend a hill to

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[101] Vergil, *Aen*. 6.482-85.

[102] Vergil, *Aen*. 6.305, 325, 611, 667.

[103] Skard 1965; Burke 1979; Flower 1999: 109-114; Feeney 2000: 111. For ancient accounts of Roman funereal parades and the use of wax masks in them, see Polybius 6.53-54 and Pliny *Nat. Hist*. 35.4-14.

[104] Vergil, *Aen*. 6.752-53: *dixerat Anchises natumque unaque Sibyllam| conventus trahit in medios turbamque sonantem*.

observe the parade as it passes, at which point what was moments ago a mob (*turba*, 753) now appears as an orderly sequence (*longo ordine*, 754). However, this *ordo* is not representative of the objective chronology of Aeneas' genealogical history. Rather,

> we receive the impression that representatives of the *gens* from many, many generations are rubbing shoulders together on the same spot, as would the actors wearing the masks at an actual funeral. At various places in the speech there is a rough chronological schema in the groupings, but behind it all is the notion that the members of each *gens* stand together.[105]

Thus, *imagines* organize themselves—and *that* is the key point—according to some principle other than mere chronology. For instance, the two Marcelli (one of the 3rd c. BC and the other of the 1st) stand side-by-side, obscuring the chronological distinction between the two (864); and Anchises sees all the Fabii standing together such that he cannot distinguish between them (865). As Williams adds, the chronological sequence from Rome's early history to Augustus is broken, "so that the second founder of Rome may follow the first."[106]

When Anchises narrates Aeneas' future as the parade passes by, he is limited to what *imagines* he is able to see and in the particular order they have decided to group themselves at the moment in which they pass Anchises' sight. The *ordo* of the parade is not a single line but rather a series of *turbae*. And Anchises must make his way through it in a way that makes narrative sense. If Anchises were on some other hill, he would have seen the parade from a different perspective and would perhaps have narrated a different sequence through it. Moreover, since the actors in this parade have organized themselves

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[105] Feeney 2000: 111.
[106] Williams 2004: 505.

according to certain principles, there is no reason to insist that they would not organize themselves according to another principle at another time, or indeed move from one *turba* to another during the parade. Thus, Anchises' narrative is focalized in that it depicts a particular perspective at a particular moment in time. The narrative is determined by Anchises' narrative movement through the crowd of *imagines* that he sees, which, in turn, is limited to the particular organization of *imagines* at the moment of narration.

Augustine's conception of recollection as well as the activity of his *imagines* function the same way. Like Anchises, he has a particular story he wishes to tell. But, as in Anchises' narrative of the parade of heroes, his narrative is limited both by the *imagines* that are presently available and by the order in which *they choose* to appear. In this way, Augustine may pass over items that would otherwise be relevant to his story through no fault of his own, and he may narrate his past in a way that is not strictly chronological. Augustine has some control over the sequence he creates, but his control is restricted to the *imagines* that are accessible at any given present moment of recollection.

My argument does not require that Augustine used *Aeneid* 6 to formulate his conception, or his presentation, of memory in Book 10 of the *Confessions*. *Aeneid* 6 rather helps illuminate Augustine's account of memory. At the same time, it is hard to deny that parallels certainly exist between the two texts. Aeneas' ghosts and Augustine's memories have independent lives. They may change positions, form clouds, hide, speak, and so forth. This is distinctly unlike the conception of *imagines* in Aristotle and the Method. Furthermore, note that the presentation of Rome's future history is highly selective, as is Augustine's presentation of his past. In *Aeneid* 6, this is due to the co-

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activity of Anchises and the ghosts of Aeneas' future in the construction of the narrative. While the Parade of Heroes is a conscious literary construction on Vergil's part, I suggest that the same co-activity with all of its inevitable limitations is how Augustine believed recollection in fact to occur. At the very least, we may say that, for Augustine, memory is like the underworld of *Aeneid* 6: his memories behave like the ghosts Aeneas encounters along his *katabasis*, and Augustine's inward journey throughout the *Confessions* is reminiscent of Aeneas' equally inward descent. But, perhaps we can make a stronger claim and add *Aeneid* 6 to the long list of direct influences on Augustine both as a philosopher and as a literary author.

Chapter 4: More Time and Less Time

> "I give it to you not that you may remember time,
> but that you might forget it now and then for a moment
> and not spend all of your breath trying to conquer it."
> —William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*

This chapter examines Augustine's famous contention in Book 11 of the *Confessions* that time is a "distention of the mind" (*distentio animi*) in light of his conception of memory in Book 10. Augustine believed distention largely to be a result of memory. Thus, his account of time must be understood accordingly. I conclude that time qua distention, when understood as a byproduct of memory, can be alleviated by the reverse activity of psychological "intention" (*intentio*): whereas *distentio* is a swelling of the mind, *intentio*, or inward concentration, is its respite. Through this inward concentration, one may decrease temporal participation by shedding temporal distractions and, with the grace of God, possibly attain the heavenly life on earth while the body still participates in time.

Distentio

In Book 11 of the *Confessions*, Augustine concludes that time has something to do with measurable intervals and proposes that it is some sort of *distentio* ("distention").[1] And, after rejecting the notion that these intervals belong to the external world, he reiterates his claim that "time is nothing other than distention," but now with the

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[1] *Conf.*11.23.30: *video igitur tempus quandam esse distentionem.*

additional claim that temporal distention must be of the (individual) mind itself.[2] In this way, Augustine proposes a definition of time in the *Confessions*. What *distentio* means and how he arrives at this conclusion is the topic of the present section.[3]

Prior to arriving at the conclusion that time is a distention of the mind (*distentio animi*), Augustine provides material with which we may interpret this claim. Famously, in Book 11 he approaches the topic of time from a first-person perspective.[4] Accordingly, he uses what are now known as A-Series terms: past, present, and future.[5] But, as

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[2] *Conf.* 11.26.33: *inde mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem; sed cuius rei, nescio, et mirum, si non ipsius animi*. Cf. *Conf.* 11.27.36: *in te, anime meus, tempora metior*. For Augustine's rejection of time as the movement of heavenly bodies, see *Conf.* 11.13.30.

[3] There is a great deal of debate over whether Augustine intended *distentio* to be a definition or an explanation of time. As O'Daly 1977: 265 says: "When Augustine, in the eleventh Book of the *Confessions*, describes time, somewhat hesitantly, as a *distentio animi*, he cannot be offering a *definition* of time. He is using the metaphor *distentio* to evoke whatever accompanies or follows upon the cognitive act of measuring time" (emphasis his). Cf. Lacey 1968. Part of the problem has to do with the apparent inconsistency between his "subjective" account of time in *Conf.* 11 and his "objective" account of time elsewhere (cf. Nightingale 2011: 56). It is this that leads Nightingale to suggest two different types of time that are simultaneously at play—one "psychic time" and the other "earthly time" (*passim*, but see 8-9 for her definition of these terms). But, Matthews 2005: 84 is surely correct when he concludes that these are complementary rather than competing or contradictory accounts of time. "Psychic time" is time from a first-person perspective, while "earthly time" is time from a third-person perspective. Alternatively, "psychic time" refers to what time does to the mind while "earthly time" refers to what it does to the body. But time—whatever it is—surely must be the same in both instances. Perhaps *distentio* is not from Augustine's perspective *the* conclusive definition of time, but it is certainly an attempt to provide one.

[4] On Augustine's first-person perspective, see Matthews 2005: 1-6; 2010.

[5] Cf. *Conf.* 11.17.22: *quisnam est qui dicat mihi non esse tria tempora, sicut pueri didicimus puerosque docuimus, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum* . . . This approach to the topic underlies the entirety of his discussion, and his use of A-Series terms are found without exception *passim*. For the term A-Series, see McTaggart 1908. He contrasts the A-Series (past, present, and future) with the B-Series (before, simultaneous with, and after), which involves change, and the C-Series, which is merely an order (like the alphabet) and therefore does not involve change.

Augustine believes, only that which "is" (*est*) exists.[6] Therefore, past and future times,

insofar as they "are not" (*non sunt*), do not exist and consequently may not be measured.

Moreover, any present "time," insofar as it is a duration, can from Augustine's presentist

perspective be reduced to such a degree that it, the present, too, cannot properly be said to

be a time.[7] Instead, the present—the only "time" that exists—is a durationless *punctum*.[8]

Because past and future times do not exist, it is incorrect to say of them that they

were or will be, say, long or short, for they per se cannot be measured. And, because the

present has no duration, it, too, cannot have measure.[9] But, Augustine is convinced that

we do say true things when we speak of the past and future.[10] Thus, he concludes that

past, present, and future times somehow *must* exist at this durationless present *punctum*.

This, he proposes, is possible due to what he calls *praesens de praeteritis* ("the presence

of or about past things"), which he equates with memory (*memoria*), *praesens de*

praesentibus ("the presence of or about present things"), which he equates with

"concurrent observation" (*contuitus*), and *praesens de futuris* ("the presence of or about

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6 Cf. *Conf.* 11.17.22 (the continuation of the sentence quoted above): . . . *sed tantum praesens,*
quoniam illa duo non sunt? This claim is assumed throughout the book.

7 In other words, Augustine rejects the reality of time from an A-Series perspective. But he does
not reject that time involves change (see *Conf.* 11.16.21).

8 *Conf.* 11.28.37: *et quis negat praesens tempus carere spatio, quia in puncto praeterit?*

9 *Conf.* 11.21.27. This is reminiscent of Aristotle's moving "now" in Book 4 of the *Physics*, on
which see Coope 2005: 132-39. For the influence of the Stoics' idea that only the present exists
on Christian conceptions of time, see Tzamalikos 1991.

10 *Conf.* 5.3.4; 11.18.23.

future things"), which he equates with expectation (*expectatio*).[11] Time qua *distentio* is the co-activity of these three mental functions and temporal orientations.[12]

Augustine calls *praesens de praeteritis* memory, for memory retains among other things present images (*imagines*), or depictions of objects that one once experienced when those objects were present.[13] Because Augustine equates *distentio* with time, I contend that the *praeterita* (as well as the *praesentia* and the *futura*) are themselves not "times" per se but rather "things in time." For instance, when Augustine suggests that we measure times as they pass through the present, he means that we measure not *distentiones* but rather perceptible objects that exist in time. In the case of memory, the *praeterita* are the various images of objects retained in it, most notably the *imagines* qua present objects of internal perception. I present additional support for this claim in my explanation of *praesens de praesentibus* below.

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[11] *Conf.* 11.20.26: *quod autem nunc liquet et claret, nec futura sunt nec praeterita, nec proprie dicitur, 'tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum,' sed fortasse proprie diceretur, 'tempora sunt tria, praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris.' sunt enim haec in anima tria quaedam et alibi ea non video, praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio. si haec permittimur dicere, tria tempora video fateorque, tria sunt. dicatur etiam, 'tempora sunt tria, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum,' sicut abutitur consuetudo; dicatur. ecce non curo nec resisto nec reprehendo, dum tamen intellegatur quod dicitur, neque id quod futurum est esse iam, neque id quod praeteritum est. pauca sunt enim quae proprie loquimur, plura non proprie, sed agnoscitur quid velimus.* Pranger 2001: 379, too, sees this passage as a gloss on *distentio*.

[12] Cf. Sorabji 1983: 30.

[13] For instance, *Conf.* 11.18.23: *quamquam praeterita cum vera narrantur, ex memoria proferuntur non res ipsae quae praeterierunt, sed verba concepta ex imaginibus earum quae in animo velut vestigia per sensus praetereundo fixerunt. pueritia quippe mea, quae iam non est, in tempore praeterito est, quod iam non est; imaginem vero eius, cum eam recolo et narro, in praesenti tempore intueor, quia est adhuc in memoria mea.* See my discussion of *imagines* in Chapter 3.

Augustine calls *praesens de praesentibus* "concurrent observation" (*contuitus*).[14]

Elsewhere, Augustine uses the verb *intueri* ("to contemplate") of metaphorically looking

at *imagines* in the present—an activity that occurs internally, within memory, and is

directed at objects therein.[15] But, when objects are present in the world external to the

mind, they may be observed directly.[16] Thus, I conjecture that *contueri* refers to the same

activity as *intueri* but is of present objects that are external (*res*, *corpora*) in the world,

rather than internal (*imagines*).[17]

When encountering the external world, one observes many objects

simultaneously. For instance, at this moment I see a computer, a table, and a coffee mug

simultaneously. I also hear the sound of my fan and feel its breeze. For this reason, the

plural *de praesentibus* perhaps does not refer to a multiplicity of present times—after all,

the present qua *punctum* has no duration and, therefore, cannot be (or have) a time at all.

Rather, I take it to mean "present objects" that co-exist at the present moment, for at any

given moment one observes a multiplicity of *res* in the world. Thus, the prepositional

prefix *con-* suggests the observation of all perceptible present objects simultaneously. If

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[14] This is my translation of the term. Chadwick 1991: 236 translates *contuitus* as "immediate awareness." O'Donnell 1992: 3.284 says that it "roughly" equals "attention."

[15] This claim is true by virtue of memories being internal objects of recollection. See *Conf.* 11.18.23 quoted in n.13 above.

[16] See *Conf.* 12.15.18: *item quod mihi dicit in aurem interiorem, expectatio rerum venturarum fit contuitus, cum venerint, idemque contuitus fit memoria, cum praeterierint*.

[17] Cf. *De magistro* 12.40: *ea quidem loquimur quae praesentia contuemur* . . . Thus, I disagree with Landsberg 1936, followed by LeBlond 1950 and Knauer 1955: 160 n.1 and 215, who assigns to Book 10 the temporal category of *contuitus*. If anything, it is *intuitus*. As I explain in my conclusion, the entirety of the *Confessions* is a practice in *intentio*.

this is true of *praesentia*, it must also be true of *praeterita*: at times, Augustine recalls a cluster of *imagines* that appear to him concurrently, *catervatim*.[18]

Finally, he calls *praesens de futuris* "expectation" (*expectatio*). As he explains, this expectation also occurs at the present. By assessing *praesentia* with the aid of one's knowledge of past experiences (*praeterita*), one can predict things that are likely to come.[19] In fact, Augustine wonders whether *imagines* of the future, too, exist in memory.[20] If so, then memory is solely responsible for distention away from the present; if not, it is at least partly responsible as, in terms of the future, it encourages additional distention in that direction.

Memoria, *contuitus*, and *expectatio* exist or occur at the present. The mind's co-engagement in all three simultaneously is distention. Time qua *distentio*, then, is a tripartite mental activity.[21] And memory is a significant, if not the primary, cause of it.

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[18] *Conf.* 10.8.12: *quaedam catervatim se proruunt et, dum aliud petitur et quaeritur, prosiliunt in medium quasi dicentia, 'ne forte nos sumus?' et abigo ea manu cordis a facie recordationis meae, donec enubiletur quod volo atque in conspectum prodeat ex abditis*. See my discussion of the adverb *catervatim* in Chapter 3.

[19] *Conf.* 10.8.14: *ex eadem copia etiam similitudines rerum vel expertarum vel ex eis quas expertus sum creditarum alias atque alias, et ipse contexo praeteritis atque ex his etiam futuras actiones et eventa et spes, et haec omnia rursus quasi praesentia meditor*.

[20] *Conf.* 11.18.23: *utrum similis sit causa etiam praedicendorum futurorum, ut rerum, quae nondum sunt, iam existentes praesentiantur imagines, confiteor, deus meus, nescio*. That the future (at least qua *praesens de futuris*) exists in memory, cf. Nightingale 2011: 64: "Memory, then, not only contains images and ideas from the past, but also governs expectation: the mind uses memory to "meditate on future actions, events, and hopes." By delving into the memory, then, one also finds future possibilities." For the future in memory (via *phantasiai*) according to Plato and Aristotle, see Johansen 2012: 210ff.

[21] Sorabji 1983: 30. See also *Conf.* 11.28.38: *dicturus sum canticum quod novi. antequam incipiam, in totum expectatio mea tenditur, cum autem coepero, quantum ex illa in praeteritum decerpsero, tenditur et memoria mea, atque distenditur vita huius actionis meae in memoriam propter quod dixi et in expectationem propter quod dicturus sum. praesens tamen adest attentio*

Augustine's *distentio* has often been explained as a borrowing of Plotinus' διάστασις—a term that is freely adapted by Greek Church fathers.[22] But, there is reason to look elsewhere for terminological parallels and borrowings. As O'Daly believes, "there is no evidence or indication that Augustine is translating or adapting a Greek discussion of time."[23] Plotinus uses the term διάστασις of the World Soul, whereas Augustine uses *distentio* to refer to individual souls. As Nightingale explains:

> As some scholars have suggested, Augustine borrowed this idea [sc. that time is a distention] from Plotinus's conception of the World Soul's *diastasis* (*Enneads* 3.7.11). But . . . Plotinus argues that the World Soul created time as it descended from Intellect (*nous*) and splintered eternity into the succession of time. *Diastasis* is not internal to the human mind. Rather, the World Soul—which is ontologically prior to human individuation—fragments the unity of the Intellect as it descends into multiplicity. Augustine's theory of the distention of the human mind is radically different.[24]

Admittedly, the context of Augustine's *distentio* and Plotinus' διάστασις is similar, as they are both discussing the relationship between time and soul (or souls, in Augustine's

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mea, per quam traicitur quod erat futurum ut fiat praeteritum. quod quanto magis agitur et agitur, tanto breviata expectatione prolongatur memoria, donec tota expectatio consumatur, cum tota illa actio finita transierit in memoriam.

[22] For the term in Plotinus, see *Ennead* 3.7.11. The bibliography here is immense, but O'Daly 1977: 265 and Ricoeur 1984: 1.16 n.20 provide especially valuable discussion. For the influence of the Stoic notion of time as a διάστημα in Patristic circles including Augustine, see Patterson 1966.

[23] O'Daly 1977: 265.

[24] Nightingale 2011: 79. See also Sorabji 1983: 165-72; Ricoeur 1985: 1.16. In contrast, Teske 1996 believes that Augustine's conception of time was based directly on Plotinus. Augustine may very well have chosen the term *distentio* because of its philosophical and scriptural use, but his conception of *distentio* appears to be most consistent with the non-technical use of the term in Latin. This is not to deny any influence of Plotinus on Augustine; but I suggest that Plotinus need not be the only place we look when we examine Augustine's thought.

case).[25] But we need not look to Plotinus to interpret Augustine in every instance, although it may be tempting to do so.

The term *distentio* has a diversity of usages in Latin, many of which fit neatly not only with Augustine's discussion of time in Book 11 but also (as I will show later in this chapter) with his discussion of memory in Book 10. Memory is largely responsible for time qua distention as it provides the metaphorical space into which the mind distends not only into the past but, possibly, also the future. So the applicability of the term in its Latin context to both topics is particularly significant. In fact, in this way it helps show that the two books (10 and 11) do belong to a single larger discussion.

The deverbal abstract noun *distentio* (as well as the participle *distentus*, which Augustine occasionally uses) is the same for two different verbs, *distendere* ("to stretch apart" or "swell") and *distinere* ("to divide" or "distract").[26] Augustine clearly interprets the forms in question as deriving from *distendere*. For instance, he uses the nominal *distentio* when he says, "behold, my life (*vita*) is a distention (*distentio*)."[27] And, in the section immediately preceding, he uses a finite form of the verb *distendere* when he says, again, "the life (*vita*) of this action of mine [referring to temporal measurement] is

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[25] For more direct similarities, see Sorabji 1983: 164-65, though these are not without significant caveats (for which, see 165-72).

[26] For *distendo*, see *OLD* s.v. 1 "stretch" and 3b "swell." For *distineo*, see *OLD* s.v. 1 "divide" and 4 "distract."

[27] *Conf.* 11.29.39: *ecce distentio est vita mea.*

distended (*distenditur*) in memory."[28] Thus, the life in question is a distention (*distentio*) and is distended (*distenditur*): for Augustine, *distentio* therefore derives from *distendere*.

But, as O'Daly notes, in classical Latin the meanings of *distendere* and *distinere* were frequently confused.[29] For instance, when Livy says that the Roman strategy at Claudium *confused* the minds of the Samnites, he says *distendit*.[30] Later, he says "two factions *divided* (*distendebant*) the senate."[31] Elsewhere, according to O'Daly's reading, Seneca believes that we are "*distracted* (*distendimus*) by desire."[32] And, to show that the confusion is bilateral, note that Cicero once uses *distinere* as if he means *distendere* when he equates the verbs *distinere* with *divellere* ("to tear off") in his *Pro Plancio*.[33] This same semantic conflation also appears in Augustine. Put simply, in Augustine's view the mind "swells" via the co-activity of *memoria*, *contuitus*, and *expectatio* in such a way that it causes "division," "confusion," and "distraction." For the moment, I focus on the semantics of *distentio* as derived from *distinere* and postpone my discussion of *distendere* proper until later in this chapter. I do so because Augustine's primary emphasis when he uses the term *distentio* is on its sense as "distraction." From there, it will be easier to see what *distentio* in the sense of "swelling" actually means.

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[28] *Conf.* 11.28.38: *distenditur vita huius actionis meae in memoriam*.

[29] O'Daly 1977: 267.

[30] Livy 9.12.10: *distendit ea res Samnitium animos*.

[31] Livy 9.16.6: *duae factiones senatum distinebant*.

[32] Seneca, *Nat.* 4.2: *infelicem animum nunc superbia inflamus, nunc cupiditate distendimus*. (Emphasis mine.) Cf. *Conf.* 8.10.24 discussed below.

[33] Cicero, *Planc.* 33: *distineor et divellor dolore*. Note that *E* reads *distendor*, which provides additinoal evidence for a semantic confusion between the two terms.

The semantic expansion of *distentio* via the confusion of its derivation renders it a particularly convenient term for Augustine. The attention of Augustine's mind is divided concurrently between (to speak *nec proprie*) past, present, and future, and this causes distraction, as when he cries for Dido rather than for himself.[34] More than that, it causes a sense of fragmentation, as when he says, "I have burst apart (*dissilui*) into times whose order I do not know, and my thoughts are *torn to pieces* (*dilaniantur*) by disorderly changes."[35] This passage is clearly an explanation of *distentio*, as it is introduced with the claim quoted above that life is a distention: *ecce distentio est vita mea*.

Distentio is for Augustine a painful experience, as is clear from the passage quoted above.[36] Even in its simple sense of confusion, or indecision, *distentio* is psychologically problematic. Consider an instance in which all options available are good. As Augustine explains,

> What if all things are equally pleasing at one and the same time? Do [these] diverse wills not pull apart (*distendunt*) the heart of man while there is deliberation about what we can most likely procure? All of these things are good, but they contend with themselves, and the will was divided into many [wills] (*in*

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34 *Conf.* 1.13.20: *nam utique meliores, quia certiores, erant primae illae litterae quibus fiebat in me et factum est et habeo illud ut et legam, si quid scriptum invenio, et scribam ipse, si quid volo, quam illae quibus tenere cogebar Aeneae nescio cuius errores, oblitus errorum meorum, et plorare Didonem mortuam, quia se occidit ab amore, cum interea me ipsum in his a te morientem, deus, vita mea, siccis oculis ferrem miserrimus*.

35 *Conf.* 11.29.39: *at ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae*. (Emphasis mine.) On fragmentation, see Nightingale 2011: 84 and 110 in particular, though the concepts of scatteredness and fragmentation are found *passim*.

36 For Augustine's association of *distentio* with various terms referring to dispersal and agony, see O'Daly 1977: 268 and Boros 1958 before him.

plures dividebatur) until one thing can be chosen which unites the whole will as one.[37]

The divided will is important even in such a benign case as this, in which all options available are good: the will cannot decide, and action is delayed. But take an instance in which there are two options, one that the will wants (namely, to follow God), the other that it simultaneously does not want (namely, to follow God). In this instance, Augustine explains, "I was in conflict with myself and I was scattered from myself."[38] The result, here, is the fragmentation of the self. This is significant. The selves of the saints in heaven are complete and unfragmented because, as we will see, they are undistended. But our selves are incomplete and fragmented precisely because they are distended in time.[39] Thus, any internal contention, which is the result of *distentio*, whether between good and bad or simultaneous goods, distances one from the saintly life. I will return in the conclusion of this chapter to the topic of how the self can be reconciled. Ahead of that discussion, there is still more to say about the distraction that arises from *distentio* as derived from *distinere*.

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[37] *Conf.* 8.10.24: *quid si ergo pariter delectent omnia simulque uno tempore, nonne diversae voluntates distendunt cor hominis, dum deliberatur quid potissimum arripiamus? et omnes bonae sunt et certant secum, donec eligatur unum quo feratur tota voluntas una, quae in plures dividebatur*. The sentiment is reiterated later at *Conf.* 11.29.39 when Augustine says *et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum apprehendam in quo et apprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus conligar sequens unum*. The divided will is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but Nightingale provides a useful discussion of it and its role in self-fragmentation at 2011: 108-11. Cf. *Conf.* 8.10.22: *ego cum deliberabam ut iam servirem domino deo meo, sicut diu disposueram, ego eram qui volebam, ego qui nolebam: ego eram. nec plene volebam nec plene nolebam. ideo mecum contendebam et dissipabar a me ipso, et ipsa dissipatio me invito quidem fiebat, nec tamen ostendebat naturam mentis alienae sed poenam meae*.

[38] *Conf.* 8.10.22: *ideo mecum contendebam et dissipabar a me ipso*.

[39] Nightingale 2011: 105ff.

In Book 1 of the *Confessions*, Augustine complains about classical literature and its use in education—a complaint that centers on the fact that it teaches fiction.[40] For instance, he complains of having had to render Juno's speech at the beginning of the *Aeneid* into prose: the words were never uttered in the first place thus rendering the exercise mere "smoke and wind" (*fumus et ventus*).[41] But Augustine finds the attention toward things that do not exist (and that never existed in the first place) much more problematic than being merely a waste of time: the distraction of nonexistent objects turns our attention away from God, truth, and wisdom—all of which exist at the present.[42] This alone is a problem. But it is additionally problematic because it also risks leading us into a life of sin.

In a famous passage in Book 1, mentioned above, Augustine laments over having cried for Dido as a student of Vergil's *Aeneid*:

> What is more pitiable than a pitiable man who does not pity himself and [instead] cries about the death of Dido, which occurred because of her love for Aeneas, but [who] does not cry about his own death, which occurred because he did not love you, God? . . . I did not love you, and I fornicated in your absence (*abs te*).[43]

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[40] Cf. *Conf.* 1.17.27: *figmentorum poeticorum*. See n.44 below on the generality of this complaint beyond poetry.

[41] *Conf.* 1.17.27. Augustine finds this exercise useless because Juno never said these words. Therefore, they not only are not real but never were in the first place. See his complaint about the *[falsa] phantasmata/[falsae] phantasiae corporum* of Manichean philosophy at *Conf.* 3.6.10.

[42] This should need no citations, but for good measure: of God's eternal present, see 11.13.16; of *sapientia*, see *Conf.* 9.10.24; of *veritas* see *Conf.* 9.10.24 and 11.30.40.

[43] *Conf.* 1.13.21: *quid enim miserius misero non miserante se ipsum et flente Didonis mortem, quae fiebat amando Aenean, non flente autem mortem suam, quae fiebat non amando te, deus . . . non te amabam, et fornicabar abs te.* I take *abs te* here and elsewhere as "in your absence" rather than "against you," as Chadwick does.

At *Conf.* 4.2.3, reiterating the comparison of fiction with wind, Augustine suggests that fiction is responsible for fornication when he says, again of poetry, "longing for (*suspirans*) such fictions my soul fornicates in your absence (*abs te*) and trusts in false things and feeds on winds."[44] Augustine's first problem expressed at *Conf.* 1.13.21 is that attention toward nonexistent objects (here, Dido) leads one to stray from God (*non amando te, deus*) and, consequently, to fornicate (*fornicabar abs te*).[45] Thus, turning one's attention to unreal objects may, on Augustine's view, lead one toward a life of sin. Surely this is because attending to that which is unreal directs one's attention away from that which is real. And this is ultimately caused by *distentio*.

Presumably, a necessary condition for something to be real is that it exists at the present. However, simply that a thing exists at the present is not sufficient for it to be

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[44] *Conf.* 4.2.3: *talibus enim figmentis suspirans anima nonne fornicatur abs te et fidit in falsis et pascit ventos*. Later, Augustine complains about a character in Terence's *Eunuchus* who cites Jupiter's fornication as support for his own (*Conf.* 1.16.26: *nequam adulescentem proponentem sibi Iovem ad exemplum stupri*). See also *Conf.* 3.6.10 on false philosophy. Thus, I take it that Augustine's problem is not limited to form or genre. The content of prose, too, may be equally fictitious (cf. the ancient novel); and Christian psalms, which express truths, are in verse (cf. *Conf.* 11.27.35: *deus creator omnium*). So, Augustine's concern must be with content and not form or genre.

[45] *Conf.* 1.13.21: *quid enim miserius misero non miserante se ipsum et flente Didonis mortem, quae fiebat amando Aenean, non flente autem mortem suam, quae fiebat non amando te, deus, lumen cordis mei et panis oris intus animae meae et virtus maritans mentem meam et sinum cogitationis meae? non te amabam, et fornicabar abs te, et fornicanti sonabat undique: 'euge! euge!' amicitia enim mundi huius fornicatio est abs te et 'euge! euge!' dicitur ut pudeat, si non ita homo sit. et haec non flebam, et flebam Didonem extinctam ferroque extrema secutam, sequens ipse extrema condita tua relicto te et terra iens in terram. et si prohiberer ea legere, dolerem, quia non legerem quod dolerem. tali dementia honestiores et uberiores litterae putantur quam illae quibus legere et scribere didici*. Cf. *Conf.* 2.6.14: *ita fornicatur anima, cum avertitur abs te*; and *Conf.* 5.12.22: *certe tamen turpes sunt tales et fornicantur abs te amando volatica ludibria temporum et lucrum luteum*. This is also his complaint of the use of Terence in schools to learn certain vocabulary: *non omnino per hanc turpitudinem verba ista commodius discuntur, sed per haec verba turpitudo ista confidentius perpetratur* (*Conf.* 1.16.26).

good. Rather, the thing must be used correctly. There are physically present objects (*corpora*, *res*, and in some ways also *imagines*), and there are metaphysically present objects (God, wisdom, and truth). The former are observable by the senses and the latter by a particular sort of intellectual concentration, as I will explain later. Undue attention toward physical objects, though present and real, causes problems as it can encourage corporeal desires and distract one's attention away from metaphysical realities. That said, it is not the case that physical objects are *innately* bad; rather, judgment is contextual and determined by how we use these objects.[46] For instance, Augustine believes that the saints in heaven retain their bodies, albeit perfect versions thereof.[47] The retention of these bodies in heaven allows the saints to praise God by means of marveling at the perfection of his creation.[48] In this way, physical objects serve a positive role by acting as intermediaries between the individual and God: we cannot see God, but we can praise God through his creation, which, in the case of physical objects, we can see.[49] To illustrate this point, take the following example.

Say your colleague is an expert pâtissier and has made a particularly well-crafted torte. On the one hand, you might see this torte and be hit with an immediate desire to eat it. In this instance, your perception of the physical object has activated a carnal desire,

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[46] On the neutrality of the body (*corpus*), see Nightingale 2011: 211-17; cf. Brown 1988: 48. For Augustine, flesh (*caro*) is a moral category associated with sin, whereas body (*corpus*) has a positive value qua creation of God.

[47] Nightingale 2011: 42-52.

[48] *De civ*. 22.30; cf. Nightingale 2011: 48.

[49] Of course, in heaven God "speaks" to us directly, without any mediation (*Conf.* 8.10.25). So, presumably, we can praise God directly. But the point of having bodies in heaven is to augment our appreciation and increase our praise.

which is bad (unfortunately, desserts are not necessary for the survival of the body). But, on the other hand, say you see the torte and, in seeing it, marvel at the greatness of its creator and exclaim, "he is an amazing cook!" In this instance, you use the creation as a means of praising the creator. In the case where the creator is God, the physical object is a means of praising the metaphysical reality responsible for and metaphorically visible in the object you see. And this is good, for it mimics the activity of the saints in heaven.

Augustine believed that physical objects in the world, as well as objects of memory, may be used to "springboard," or ascend, to the metaphysical realm of the saints in heaven via meditation.[50] To explain how this is the case, a discussion of the heavenly life of the saints in contrast to the earthly life of a participant in time will clarify how Augustine's formulation of *distentio* allows for time on earth to be overcome and eternity in heaven to be attained while the body still lives. This, I argue, is possible by means of *intentio*, an act of inward contemplation directed toward metaphysical truth in the present.

Intentio

Toward the end of Book 11, Augustine looks forward to the saintly life that is (possibly) his in heaven:

> But because your mercy is better than lives, see that my life is a distention (*distentio*). And your right hand upheld me in my Lord, who, as Son of man, is the mediator of man between you, the One, and us, the many, [who live] among many things and through many things, so that through him I may grasp him in whom I

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[50] This is reminiscent of the ascent of love in Plato's *Symposium*.

am also grasped. And so that I may be gathered together from the old days as I follow the One, having forgotten past [times], not distended (*distentus*) but extended (*extentus*) not in those things which will come and are passing away, but in those things which are metaphysically prior (*ante sunt*). I pursue the prize of the eternal vocation not following distention (*distenionem*) but following intention (*intentionem*). There [when *extentus* in *intentio*], I will hear the voice of praise and contemplate your delights that do not come or go. But now [when *distentus* in *distentio*] my years [pass by] in groans. You are my solace, Lord, my eternal Father. But I have been torn apart (*dissilui*) in times whose order I do not know. And my thoughts, the inmost guts of my soul, are shattered by disorderly changes (*tumultuosis varietatibus*) until I flow together in you, purged and liquefied by the fire of your love. And I will stand (*stabo*) and be solidified (*solidabor*) in you, my form, and your truth.[51]

Augustine's discussion here and throughout Book 11 is certainly meant *to contrast* the earthly life of participants in time (distended minds) with the eternal life of the saints in heaven (undistended minds).[52] But the language used provides a means of comparison between time and eternity, as well. Take, for instance, the notion of "standing." This activity is related to *unification* in God and truth—thus, being "gathered together" (*conligar*) and "solidified" (*solidabor*). This occurs in heaven, where Augustine says that

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[51] *Conf.* 11.29.39-30.40: *sed quoniam melior est misericordia tua super vitas, ecce distentio est vita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum apprehendam in quo et apprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus conligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt non distentus sed extentus, non secundum distentionem sed secundum intentionem sequor ad palmam supernae vocationis, ubi audiam vocem laudis et contempler delectationem tuam nec venientem nec praetereuntem. nunc vero anni mei in gemitibus, et tu solacium meum, domine, pater meus aeternus es. at ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui. et stabo atque solidabor in te, in forma mea, veritate tua.*

[52] Sorabji 1983: 30.

he, too, will "stand [still]" (*stabo*)—or so he hopes.[53] But on earth, times do not "stand"—they are not constant.[54] Presumably, if they suddenly "stood [still]," time would then become eternity, for, as Augustine says, "eternity always stands (*stantis*)."[55] And he wonders of time, "who will hold it and fasten it so that, for a small moment, it stands (*stet*)?"[56] He says this as if it were possible for something that is not standing suddenly to do so.

The contrast here is between "standing [still]" in heaven and "not standing" on earth. Thus, the obvious though not so simple solution to temporal participation is to stop not standing. This suggests that, while time and eternity are contrasted in Augustine's description of them, the contrast takes the form (so far) of *x* or not *x*. Thus, presumably one who engages at one moment in *x* may at another moment cease to engage in *x*, and vice versa. But, this raises the question: is it possible to *partially* engage or not engage in *x*? In the instance of "not standing," is it possible to stand more or less? Here, I turn to Augustine's use of *distentio* as derived from *distendere* ("to swell" vel sim.).

Recall from Chapter 3 the similarities between Augustine's *praetoria*, in which innumerable *imagines* are stored in *thesauri* or *cellae*, and the beehive/*castra* (*praetoria*) of Vergil's *Georgics* 4. In this passage, Vergil explains that bees "pack the cells (*cellas*)

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[53] See O'Donnell 1992: 3.297 for discussion.

[54] *Conf*. 11.11.13: *cum temporibus numquam stantibus*.

[55] *Conf*. 11.11.13: *semper stantis aeternitatis*.

[56] *Conf*. 11.11.13: *quis tenebit illud et figet illud, ut paululum stet?* Note that Augustine uses temporally suggestive language when he says *paululum* in the context of eternity. See n.82 below.

with pure honey and bloat (*distendunt*) them with liquid nectar."[57] And, as Tibullus says of *horrea*, which I have suggested is one of the things Augustine imagines his *praetoria* to be or be like, "Ceres will swell (*distendet*) your storehouses (*horrea*) full with ears."[58] In these contexts, the cells (*cellae*, *thesauri*) of Augustine's storehouses, too, must swell with *imagines*. After all, the quantity of *imagines* in one's memory increases with each new experience. I should note, however, that my argument does not depend on Augustine's use of these particular passages as intertexts. Rather, they are meant as evidence of a more general claim that the verb *distendere* is certainly not unheard of even in the context of architectural structures. The architectural application of the verb may be confined to poetry, but the *Confessions* abounds with poetic language. The connection is significant: if time is distention and memory is responsible at least in part for distention, we should expect to find the concept of distention consistent with Augustine's conception of memory, as well. And, as I have suggested here, we do. But there is yet another connection.

In Book 10, Augustine once calls memory a stomach (*venter*) and explains that emotions are stored therein like sweet and bitter food.[59] In Plautus' *Casina*, Pardalisca

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[57] Vergil, *Georgics* 4.163-64: *aliae purissima mella | stipant et liquido distendunt nectare cellas*.

[58] Tibullus 2.5.84: *distendet spicis horrea plena Ceres*.

[59] *Conf.* 10.14.21: *nimirum ergo memoria quasi venter est animi, laetitia vero atque tristitia quasi cibus dulcis et amarus: cum memoriae commendantur, quasi traiecta in ventrem recondi illic possunt, sapere non possunt*. Cf. also *Conf.* 9.4.10: *devorans tempora et devoratus temporibus*.

says of gluttons that "they bloat (*distendant*) their stomachs."[60] Thus, due to the innumerable objects in Augustine's memory, one may imagine that memory qua stomach causes significant discomfort as it further expands with each new experience. All the worse, as Augustine says, "my thoughts, *the innermost guts of my soul* (*intima viscera animae meae*) *are torn to pieces* (*dilaniantur*) by disorderly changes."[61] If memory qua stomach can swell, presumably the swelling can be alleviated, as well—say, by vomiting.

In his *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (written between 392 and 417), Augustine in fact does say of confession—which, of course, is precisely the activity in which he engages in the *Confessions*—that it is akin to regurgitation: "they confess their sins [and] vomit the fruit (*mala*) that they have gluttonously devoured."[62] Thus, to pursue the metaphor further, Augustine's project in the *Confessions* should result in the alleviation of the distention of his mind when it is understood to be analogous to a stomach. If this is the case, then confession decreases one's participation in time. Admittedly, that may sound

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[60] Plautus *Casina* 4.1.19: *ventres distendant*. Augustine appears not to have known Plautus' work: his only references to the playwright appear in citations of other authors (Cicero's *De re publica* 4.10.11 at *De civ.* 2.9 and 12; Varro's *De gente populi Romani* I [frg. 5 Fraccaro, frg. 6 Peter] at *De civ.* 21.8). See Hagendahl 1967: 1.219. But my claim is not that Augustine borrows the language from Plautus or any one author in particular. Rather, it is that *distendere* is a common verb to use of the swelling or bloating of stomachs. For other instances of this usage, see Horace, *Epode* 2.46 and *Satire* 1.1.110; Vergil, *Eclogue* 4.21-22 and 9.31; Suetonius, *Claudius* 33. In a medical context, Celsus uses the verb *distendere* of *nervi* numerous times as a translation of the Greek τέτανος (*De medicina* 2.11.12). This is bizarre, as in cases of tetanus nerves contract, not stretch. Perhaps the translation arises from empirical observation of patients who, as a result of the disease, appear to stretch backwards. But this is a technical usage. My argument rests upon ordinary uses of the term.

[61] *Conf.* 11.29.39: *et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae.* (Emphasis mine.)

[62] Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 95.7: *confitentur enim peccata sua, vomunt mala quae avide voraverant.* Note the convenience of *mala* meaning both "evils" and "fruit."

like an absurd claim that results simply from an overly literal interpretation of Augustine's gastric analogy in Book 10. But it is one for which Augustine's philosophical account of time in fact allows.

To return to *Conf.* 11.29.39-30-40, which I have quoted in full above, Augustine contrasts life on earth with the life of the saints in heaven. But he does so by means of a juxtaposition of essentially similar concepts in such a way that earthly and heavenly life do not appear to be essentially distinct.[63] He says that, having left behind the old days and forgetting the past (that is, having overcome memory), he will not be *distentus* but *extentus*; and he will "pursue the prize of the heavenly calling" (*sequor ad palmam supernae vocationis*) following *intentio* rather than *distentio*. Thus, Augustine contrasts *distentus* ("stretched in a scattered way") with *extentus* ("stretched in a complete way") and *distentio* ("swelling asunder") with *intentio* ("contracting inwardly").[64]

The root of these words is *tend-*, "tension" or "stretching," and the distinction between time and eternity—both of which "stretch" in some sense—lies in the semantic quality given to the root concept by Augustine's use of prepositional prefixes: it is a matter of being *dis*tended versus *ex*tended and *in*tended. But the "tension" is the same both on earth and in heaven. My argument that time and eternity are, in Augustine's view, opposite but essentially compatible concepts does not rely on the linguistics of time and eternity. But the linguistics is certainly suggestive. In what follows, I show how this

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[63] For similar concerns associated with Augustine's account of time as a *distentio* in the context of eternity, see Sorabji 1983: 30 and Meijering 1979: 99. My project embraces and augments those concerns.

[64] For the frequent synonymy of *extendere* and *intendere*, see Casey 2005: 336.

suggestion is sound in the context of Augustine's discussion. I begin with *extentus* as it is contrasted with *distentus*.[65]

I understand the verbal uses of *distendere* and *extendere* (including the participles *distentus* and *extentus*) to refer to states of being, whereas the deverbal nouns are activities. To be *distentus* is to be fragmented and further divisible (cf. *distentus < distinere*); to be *extentus* is to be stretched as a singular unit.[66] For this reason, a day (for us) cannot extend precisely because (for us) any duration can be *divided* into a past, present, and future.[67] This divisibility prevents a duration from being said correctly to extend from our temporal perspective. In contrast, God's eternity is a day that is not every day but today.[68] "Every day" implies divisibility, for it consists of a multiplicity of individual days. But, if his day is today as a singular unit, then his is a singular unit of extension.

Language is innately temporal: a psalm may be divided into successive syllables, which, when sung, proceed in a temporal succession.[69] But, God's scriptures—God's word—extend (*extenditur*) across all times (*usque in finem saeculi*) in a metaphysical sense (*super populos*); and his sermons do not pass by (*non transibunt*) in the way that

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[65] In what follows, I discuss isolated cases of compounds derived from the verb *tendere* (esp. *extendere* and *intendere*, though there are others, e.g. *attendere*). I should note that I have analyzed every instance of the verb *tendere* and its compounds in the *Confessions*, but the occurrences are too numerous to discuss each individual case here—and there would be no good reason to do so. What I present here is a summary of my findings. Any outliers that problematize my interpretation will be noted.

[66] Drever 2013: 93. On the superiority of indivisibility, see Mann 1999: 143.

[67] See Augustine's discussion at *Conf.* 11.15.20.

[68] *Conf.* 11.13.16: *anni tui dies unus, et dies tuus non cotidie sed hodie*.

[69] *Conf.* 11.27.35.

ordinary words do.[70] Like a skin (*pellis*), God's word stretches above the earth which does pass away (*faenum super quod* [*pellis*] *extendebatur cum claritate sua praeteriet*), and his word remains eternally (*manet in aeternum*). It extends but is indivisible because it is eternal. In this way, it resembles a skin (*pellis*)—an object, like a place (*locus*) that cannot be meaningfully subdivided.

Quoting Phil 3:13, Augustine says that one who has forgotten that which is behind (*quae retro oblitus*) extends (*extenditur*) toward that which is before, or metaphysically prior (*ante*).[71] Earlier, in Book 9, when he and his mother transcend time in their vision at Ostia (an episode discussed below), he says that they forget the past and, in so doing, extend toward that which is *ante*:

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[70] *Conf.* 13.15.18: *vident enim faciem tuam semper, et ibi legunt sine syllabis temporum quid velit aeterna voluntas tua. legunt eligunt et diligunt; semper legunt et numquam praeterit quod legunt. eligendo enim et diligendo legunt ipsam incommutabilitatem consilii tui. non clauditur codex eorum nec plicatur liber eorum, quia tu ipse illis hoc es et es in aeternum, quia super hoc firmamentum ordinasti eos, quod firmasti super infirmitatem inferiorum populorum, ubi suspicerent et cognoscerent misericordiam tuam temporaliter enuntiantem te, qui fecisti tempora. in caelo enim, domine, misericordia tua et veritas tua usque ad nubes. transeunt nubes, caelum autem manet. transeunt praedicatores verbi tui ex hac vita in aliam vitam, scriptura vero tua usque in finem saeculi super populos extenditur. sed et caelum et terra transibunt, sermones autem tui non transibunt, quoniam et pellis plicabitur et faenum super quod extendebatur cum claritate sua praeteriet, verbum autem tuum manet in aeternum. quod nunc in aenigmate nubium et per speculum caeli, non sicuti est, apparet nobis, quia et nos quamvis filio tuo dilecti sumus, nondum apparuit quod erimus. attendit per retia carnis et blanditus est et inflammavit, et currimus post odorem eius. sed cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est. sicuti est, domine, videre nostrum, quod nondum est nobis.*

[71] *Conf.* 13.13.14: *adhuc et ille qui dicit, `non potui vobis loqui quasi spiritalibus, sed quasi carnalibus,' etiam ipse nondum se arbitratur comprehendisse, et quae retro oblitus, in ea quae ante sunt extenditur et ingemescit gravatus.*

Forgetting the past (*praeterita obliviscentes*) [reaching] into those things which are extended (*extenti*) before (*ante*), we were asking together in the presence of truth, which you are, what sort of eternal life the saints will have.[72]

Upon their return from this vision, Augustine and his mother conclude the following.[73] If everything that participates in time is silent, and if the soul (*anima*) can transcend itself by thinking not about itself (*transeat se non se cogitando*) but about that which is *ante*, then God can be heard speaking not through his creation but through himself (*loquatur ipse solus non per ea sed per se ipsum*). Augustine says that they accomplished this very thing: "we extend ourselves" (*extendimus nos*) and subsequently "touch" (*attingimus*) eternal wisdom (*aeternam sapientiam super omnia manentem*). It is this eternal silence that allows them to achieve temporal transcendence and hear God.

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[72] *Conf*. 9.10.23: *praeterita obliviscentes in ea quae ante sunt extenti, quaerebamus inter nos apud praesentem veritatem, quod tu es, qualis futura esset vita aeterna sanctorum*. Note the parallel between this passage, which opens the famous episode in which the two have a vision of heaven (*Conf*. 8.10.23-24), and the conclusion of Book 11 quoted above (29.39-30-40). There, Augustine looks forward to the moment in heaven when he will have forgotten the past (*praeterita oblitus*) and stand still (*stabo*). Here, the two are standing (*staremus*) in the process of that forgetfulness (*obliviscentes*) on their mystical path to heaven—though they do not yet quite know that that is where they are headed.

[73] The full text of the passage I summarize is *Conf*. 9.10.25: *dicebamus ergo, 'si cui sileat tumultus carnis, sileant phantasiae terrae et aquarum et aeris, sileant et poli, et ipsa sibi anima sileat et transeat se non se cogitando, sileant somnia et imaginariae revelationes, omnis lingua et omne signum, et quidquid transeundo fit si cui sileat omnino (quoniam si quis audiat, dicunt haec omnia, "non ipsa nos fecimus, sed fecit nos qui manet in aeternum"), his dictis si iam taceant, quoniam erexerunt aurem in eum qui fecit ea, et loquatur ipse solus non per ea sed per se ipsum, ut audiamus verbum eius, non per linguam carnis neque per vocem angeli nec per sonitum nubis nec per aenigma similitudinis, sed ipsum quem in his amamus, ipsum sine his audiamus (sicut nunc extendimus nos et rapida cogitatione attingimus aeternam sapientiam super omnia manentem), si continuetur hoc et subtrahantur aliae visiones longe imparis generis et haec una rapiat et absorbeat et recondat in interiora gaudia spectatorem suum, ut talis sit sempiterna vita quale fuit hoc momentum intellegentiae cui suspiravimus, nonne hoc est: "intra in gaudium domini tui"? et istud quando? an cum omnes resurgimus, sed non omnes immutabimur?'*

Memory causes one to be *distentus*, or fragmented. Without it, one may extend as a complete whole, a single unit, toward God. As Augustine and Monnica conclude upon their return, when all things are silent—that is, when all things stand still—God can be heard directly, not through temporal language.[74] Temporal language is fragmented, but his word is unified in extension. Thus, when distention is shed, one may extend toward God as a complete whole and hear his word directly, without the mediation of temporal objects. The question is: how may *distentio* be shed?

Distentio is an activity of the mind through which it stretches or swells out in a fragmented way toward past and future things that do not exist. Contrast this with *intentio*, which, literally, is an inward stretching.[75] The internality of *intentio* is significant, for mystical ascension occurs via internal contemplation.

Let us examine the critical episode in Book 9, in which Augustine and his mother experience heaven. Augustine and his entourage have recently been baptized and are on their return back to North Africa from Milan. While waiting at Ostia, he and his mother "stand alone" (*soli staremus*) and engage in conversation. Upon conclusion that this earthly life, no matter how delightful, is of no comparison to life in heaven, they are lifted up (*erigentes*) by a burning affection (*ardentiore affectu*) into this heavenly life itself (*in idipsum*).[76] Along the way, they walk step by step (*gradatim*) through all corporeal objects and ascend *inwardly* (*ascendebamus interius*) "by thinking about and speaking

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[74] *Conf.* 9.10.25.
[75] Drever 2013: 92.
[76] *Conf.* 9.10.24.

about and marveling at your works" (*cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua*).[77] The acknowledgement of metaphysical presence behind physical objects in one's perception is what helps launch the two on their mystical ascent, and their enquiry is on the right track, for their questioning is "in the presence of present truth" (*apud praesentem veritatem*).

From the physical world, Augustine and Monnica enter into their minds (*venimus in mentes nostras*), as Augustine does at *Conf*. 10.8.12.[78] But, unlike in Book 10, from there, they transcend their minds (*transcendimus eas* [*mentes*]) so that they touch (*attingeremus*) heaven, which Augustine calls "the region of continual abundance where you feed Israel in eternity with truth as food."[79] There, Augustine explains, life is wisdom (*ibi vita sapientia est*) and eternal (*aeterna*).[80] Augustine and his mother experience heaven just slightly (*modice*), but with a full beat of the heart (*toto ictu cordis*).[81] And then they descend.

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[77] Recall my earlier anecdote about praising the pâtissier by marveling at his amazing torte instead of desiring the physical object itself.

[78] For Augustine's use of *mens* in contrast to *animus* and *anima*, see Obertello 2003: 1 n.1; O'Daly 1987: 7 (also on Augustine's use of *animus* and *anima*): the *mens* is the best part of the *animus*. Thus, it is the seat of Augustine's mind itself (*ipsius animi mei sedem*) that he encounters in his memory at *Conf*. 10.25.36.

[79] *Conf*. 9.10.24: *attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, ubi pascis Israhel in aeternum veritate pabulo*.

[80] Cf. Plotinus *Enneads* 5.8.4.36: ἡ δὲ ζωὴ σοφία. For a discussion of the history of this phrase's interpretation, see O'Donnell 1992: 3.130.

[81] Sorabji 1983: 167 is right to note the temporal language throughout this passage. Note also the abundance of spatial terms. This, I suggest, is a result of Augustine's attempt to understand heaven and eternity in ordinary physical and spatio-temporal terms. Unlike Plotinus, who attempts to understand time in light of eternity, Augustine tries to understand eternity in light of time by using temporal language.

Augustine sees mystical ascent to heaven as a series of steps.[82] In this episode, there are three essentially distinct steps: first, the external world of *res* and *corpora*; secondly, the internal world of memory and the mind; thirdly, heaven. If we return to Book 10, we find that the second step contains three sub-steps. There, Augustine proceeds in his search for God from the realm of *imagines*, the internal equivalent to objects in the world that help cause distention, to the realm of *affectiones* that we use to assess *imagines*,[83] and then on to the *sedes* of the mind itself. Thus, we have the following degrees of ascent:

    (1) "All the corporeal things (*corporalia*) and the heaven itself, where the sun and

    the moon and the stars shine above the earth."[84]

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[82] See *De quantitate animae* 33.70-76 for a lengthy explanation of what Augustine proposes to be seven steps of ascension, though this is not entirely consistent with the descriptions found in the *Confessions*. On ascent in the *Confessions*, as well as for bibliography, see O'Donnell 1992: 2.135-36 (on *Conf*. 2.6.12), 2.456 (on *Conf*. 7.17.23), and 3.127-29 (on *Conf*. 9.10.24). See also Mandouze 1968: 697 and Sorabji 1983: 167-72. O'Donnell 1992: 2.183 is correct that *gradus* are ordinary benchmarks in the ascent toward God. The metaphor of steps is significant for the conception of progression, as are the literary parallels. For instance, Perpetua (*Passio sanctarum* 4.7) says in her dream of heaven that she ascended (*ascendi*) up a ladder (*scala*) using the snake's head as the first step (*quasi primum gradum*). For Augustine, memory provides that first step. See also *Conf*. 3.6.11, where Augustine says that he was led (*deductus*) step by step (*gradibus*) into the depths of hell (*in profunda inferi*) by Manichaean thought.

[83] *Conf*. 11.27.36: *in te, anime meus, tempora metior. noli mihi obstrepere, quod est; noli tibi obstrepere turbis affectionum tuarum. in te, inquam, tempora metior. affectionem quam res praetereuntes in te faciunt et, cum illae praeterierint, manet, ipsam metior praesentem, non ea quae praeterierunt ut fieret; ipsam metior, cum tempora metior.* Specifically, we use *affectiones* to measure time. But, since memories must all be equally present, I suggest that they themselves do not have time. Rather, temporal measures must have to do with the quantity of concurrently present *imagines*: a long "time" is a numerically larger group of related *imagines* than that which makes up a "short" time. But this is the topic of a different project.

[84] *Conf*. 9.10.24: *cuncta corporalia et ipsum caelum, unde sol et luna et stellae lucent super terram.*

(2) "Our minds."[85]

> (2a) "The parts of [memory], which even beasts have . . . I did not find you there among the *images* of corporeal things (*imagines rerum corporalium*)."[86]

> (2b) "The parts of [memory] where I have deposited the emotions (*affectiones*) of my mind."[87]

> (2c) "The seat of my mind itself, which is in memory, since the mind also remembers itself."[88]

(3) "The region of unfailing abundance . . . where life is wisdom."[89]

In Book 10, Augustine fails to ascend from his mind to heaven because he mistakenly believes that God is found within memory and looks for him there. But, in Book 9, realizing that heaven is far preferable to earth, his intention is concentrated upon the former and, for that reason—with the grace of God—he ascends through memory and beyond the mind to it. This, I suggest, must be possible through the activity of *intentio*, which at *Conf*. 11.29.39 Augustine contrasts with the activity of *distentio*.

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[85] *Conf*. 9.10.24: *mentes nostrae*.

[86] *Conf*. 10.25.36: *partes eius quas habent et bestiae . . . non ibi te inveniebam inter imagines rerum corporalium*. (Emphasis mine.)

[87] *Conf*. 10.25.36: *ad partes eius ubi commendavi affectiones animi mei*.

[88] *Conf*. 10.25.36: *ad ipsius animi mei sedem, quae illi est in memoria mea, quoniam sui quoque meminit animus*.

[89] *Conf*. 9.10.24: *regionem ubertatis indeficientis . . . ibi vita sapientia est*.

Somewhere around 530 AD, St. Benedict composed his *Regula*, which provides

instructions for Benedictine monastic communities.[90] Chapter 52 reads:

> Let this oratory be whatever it is called, and let nothing else be done or kept there.
> When the work of God has been completed, let all leave in complete silence, and
> let reverence for God be held, so that a brother who wishes to pray to himself in
> private may not be impeded by the improbity of another. And at other times, if
> someone wants to pray to himself in private, let him go in and pray freely, not in a
> loud voice but in tears and *with an intention of the heart* (*intentione cordis*). He
> who does not do this is not permitted to remain in the oratory after the work of
> God has ended, as has been said, so that another person does not endure this
> impediment.[91]

Casey discusses Benedict's use of the term *intentio cordis* from a thoroughly

philological point of view.[92] The term *intentio*, he explains, is used by Gregory the Great

(540-604 AD) to refer to "an internal movement which is deeper than the superficial

fluctuations of thought and emotion because it stems from close to man's personal center

and appropriately has in view ultimate rather than immediate reality."[93] This is similar to

Augustine's interest in metaphysically rather than physically present objects. Generally

speaking, *intentio* "is the role of this internal disposition to orient a person in the direction

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[90] For the date of composition, see Alston 1907.

[91] Benedict, *Regula* 52: *oratorium hoc sit quod dicitur, nec ibi quicquam aliud geratur aut
condatur. expleto opere Dei, omnes cum summo silentio exeant, et habeatur reverentia Deo, ut
frater qui forte sibi peculiariter vult orare, non inpediatur alterius inprobitate. sed et si aliter vult
sibi forte secretius orare, simpliciter intret et oret, non in clamosa voce, sed in lacrimis et
intentione cordis. ergo qui simile opus non facit, non permittatur explicito opere Dei remorari in
oratorio, sicut dictum est, ne alius impedimentum patiatur.* (Emphasis mine.) Note the importance
of silence in prayer.

[92] Casey 2005: 339-60.

[93] Casey 2005: 343.

of God."[94] For Benedict, *intentio* "is predominantly the elimination of alternative activities" that results in an "intensification of [a brother's] relation to God."[95] In Augustinian terms, it is a means of shedding the distractions of distention.

It must be noted, as Casey does, that the term is not always used in a systematic or entirely technical sense in these authors, and certainly not in Augustine.[96] Moreover, although Benedict was heavily influenced by Augustine, Augustine's death comes more than a century before Benedict composed the *Regula*. So, it would be irresponsible to impose Benedictine beliefs upon Augustine. That said, throughout the *Confessions* Augustine is concerned with a practice similar to that which Casey describes, even if Augustine does not define it explicitly (though *Conf.* 11.29.39 suggests that he did consider *intentio* in a technical sense). For instance, at *Conf.* 9.10.25, he explains that God may be heard directly once the world falls silent. And, in Book 6, Augustine is fascinated by Ambrose, whom he observes reading silently: "we saw him reading silently and doing nothing otherwise, and we were sitting in silence for a while, for who would dare be a burden on him, so intent (*tam intento*)?"[97] Ambrose reads silently in a state that may be defined by the term *intentio*. As we have seen, silence is central to what allows our attention to extend directly to God. Thus, I suggest that *intentio*—whether or not yet considered a technical term to Augustine—is a salve for *distentio* and a necessary

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94 Casey 2005: 345.
95 Casey 2005: 352.
96 Casey 2005: 342.
97 *Conf.* 6.3.3: *eum legentem vidimus tacite et aliter numquam, sedentesque in diuturno silentio (quis enim tam intento esse oneri auderet?).*

(though not sufficient, for one also needs the grace of God) condition for ascent from the world of *corpora* through one's own mind to heaven.

I contend that *intentio* qua intellectual concentration, when that concentration is engaged correctly (and that is the important point), serves to decrease one's participation in time potentially to the extent that one experiences the nearly undistended life of the saints in heaven.[98] Augustine recounts his successful attempt to do so in Book 9 and his failures in books 7 and 10.[99] But, even in Book 10, he is on the right track: he came closer to his target, even if he did not come close enough.

Sorabji observes that Augustine's proposal of time as *distentio* "has the paradoxical effect of making time more like eternity."[100] This, he says, cannot have been Augustine's intention, for "he wishes to *contrast* God's eternity with our time" instead of equating the two.[101] But, as he concludes, "The one implication that would perhaps be welcome is that time, being a mental entity, might with sufficient mental progress be shed."[102] It is a particular act of *intentio* that does not necessarily "shed" *distentio* but at least diminishes it.

Heavenly life is not entirely equivalent to God's life. Sorabji explains the status of saints in heaven as follows:

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[98] For incorrect types of intention, see *Conf*. 6.8.13: *numquid et animum et oculos meos in illa spectacula potestis intendere*; 6.11.18: *intentione curarum*; and 7.9.15: *intendi in aurum*.

[99] See n.82 above for references to his failed attempt in book 7.

[100] Sorabji 1983: 30.

[101] Sorabji 1983: 30 (emphasis his).

[102] Sorabji 1983: 30.

what [Augustine] stresses is that the heaven of heaven does *not* change (XII.19). Nor does it have a past to remember or a future to expect (XII.11). He tries to give it a status intermediate between time and eternity. Thus, on the one hand, it is rapt in changeless contemplation, but, on the other, it is still *capable* of change (XI.11 and 19), and so is not coeternal with God (XII.11 and 12). None the less, since it does not change in fact, it does not suffer times (XII.19), is not stretched out into times (XII.11), but is beyond times (XII.9), and partakes in (XII.9), or enjoys (XII.12), God's eternity, without being coeternal with him.[103]

In other words, existence in heaven is an intermediate—though for us final—step between earthly existence and God: it is nearly there, but not quite. Like God's eternity, heaven does not change.[104] But, because it is capable of change, it shares properties with the earthly world, which does change. Moreover, as Nightingale suggests, the saints in heaven do minimally participate in time, insofar as they retain some memories of the past.[105] Thus, in heaven the saints enjoy an *almost* undistended life, though not sufficiently undistended in order to be God—whom, of course, one can never be. Consequently, there are *degrees* of participation in time: we, on earth, participate fully; the saints in heaven participate minimally; and God does not participate at all.[106]

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[103] Sorabji 1983: 32 (emphases his).

[104] Cf. Nightingale 2011: 52: "The resurrected saints . . . dwell completely beyond the realm of change. They are, in the fullest sense, out of nature."

[105] Nightingale 2011: 42-47. This is at least Augustine's view at *De civ*. 22.30: *erit ergo illius ciuitatis et una in omnibus et inseparabilis in singulis uoluntas libera, ab omni malo liberata et impleta omni bono, fruens indeficienter aeternorum iucunditate gaudiorum, oblita culparum, oblita poenarum; nec ideo tamen suae liberationis oblita, ut liberatori suo non sit ingrata: quantum ergo adtinet ad scientiam rationalem, memor praeteritorum etiam malorum suorum; quantum autem ad experientis sensum, prorsus immemor*.

[106] To put it another way: one may participate more or less in God's eternity (see Sorabji 1983: 167). But, the way I have put it here is more applicable to Augustine's approach to the issue. Cf. *Conf*. 12.12.15: *carentia temporibus*.

Intellectual concentration of the sort in which Augustine and Monnica engaged while in Ostia can help lift up (*erigere*) its participants so that they first transcend from *res* in the world to *memoria*. Within memory, there exist sub-degrees of transcendence as well, specifically from physical images of things in the world (*imagines rerum corporalium*) to emotions (*affectiones animi mei*) and finally the seat of the mind itself (*ipsius animi mei sedem*). Again, here Augustine's journey in Book 10 fails, not because he fails to progress to a sufficiently interior place within memory (after all, memory is forever vast) but because he fails to ascend beyond memory altogether.[107] That said, Augustine has still partially overcome distention inasmuch as he has overcome objects that exist in lower tiers of his mind.

At *Conf.* 11.20.26, Augustine proposes that past, present, and future exist at the present in the forms of *praesens de praeteritis*, *praesens de praesentibus*, and *praesens de futuris*. I identify this passage as a gloss on the term *distentio*. I have also identified the prepositional objects, *praeterita*, *praesentia*, and *futura* not as times per se but rather as objects in time. In the case of *memoria*, these objects are *imagines*. But, *memoria* does not only contain *imagines*.[108] At the seat of memory is the mind (*mens*) itself, and Augustine is able to ascend this far in Book 10. In so doing, he has overcome the objects of his *animus* (*imagines praeteritorum* and, presumably, also *futurorum*). It follows that, without these temporal distractions, Augustine's *animus* is less distended. Thus, he

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[107] Sorabji 1983: 168 and Nightingale 2011: 190-91 attribute this failure to the fact that, in Sorabji's words, "The flesh and the images associated with the material world keep dragging us down."

[108] See Introduction n.40.

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participates in time less when he is there. What remains is the *praesens de praesentibus*. It is only with the right sort of contemplation—namely, that directed at higher things, *intentio apud praesentem veritatem*—as well as the grace of God that he can succeed in transcending even this to attain heavenly presence. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I argue that Augustine used the literary act of confession as a way to recreate at least what he accomplished in Book 10.[109] This act of confession is not only an *exemplum* for us, his passive audience, to mimic. If through practice we learn how to do it correctly, perhaps even we may participate in the saintly life that Augustine claims to have experienced in Book 9, albeit *modice*.

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[109] Cf. O'Donnell 3.151: "What [Augustine] learned to do at Ostia he now *does*, in writing this text. This is no longer an account of something that happened somewhere else some time ago; the text itself becomes the ascent. The text no longer narrates mystical experience, it becomes itself a mystical experience . . . "

Conclusion: Time and Narrative

This project arose from a long-standing interest in both Augustine's conception of time in Book 11 of the *Confessions* and the apparent interpretive impasse concerning the work's unity. The scholarly consensus is that the work is not a unified whole but rather divided between an autobiographical part and a philosophical part. As far as I can tell, this conclusion derives from the simple fact that Augustine tells stories from his past in the first nine books and not in the last four. But, this is not grounds for the conclusion that there is an internal division within the work.[1] The *Confessions* certainly has sections, but to ascribe to it a generic divide inhibits our ability to interpret the work and its content.

Modern assumptions about genre and presuppositions about the *Confessions* have impeded our interpretations of it.[2] And commentaries and translations of the text with chapter headings and indices directing us to the historical content within the *Confessions*, although crucial resources for our study of the text, reinforce these views. The popular online study guide, SparkNotes, introduces Book 1 with the words: "The first book of the *Confessions* is devoted primarily to an analysis of Augustine's life as a child."[3] It is true that Augustine discusses selected events from his early life in this book, but the emphasis

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[1] As I will explain, Augustine's note at *Retractationes* 2.6.32 that the first *ten* books were written *de me* and the last three *de scripturis sanctis* does not mean that the *Confessions* is two works in one. Likewise, to say of the first six books of Vergil's *Aeneid* that they are "about a man," or Odyssean, and of the last six that they are "about arms," or Iliadic, does not mean that the work contains two unrelated parts.

[2] Kotzé 2006.

[3] http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/confessionsaug/section1.rhtml accessed October 24, 2014. Despite my complaints about these statements, overall the summary is actually quite thorough.

on historical autobiography obscures the complexity of Augustine's intent.[4] For instance, the SparkNotes summary calls the five sections that begin Book 1 prior to his discussion of his infancy "a prayer," observing that Augustine begins each of his books "with a prayer in praise of God." Thus, the assumption that arises from a summary of this sort is that the work's primary topic is the author's past, and that sections—so called "prayers"—that do not contain historical content are irrelevant digressions from the work's main point. But, in fact, these non-historical episodes belong equally to the narrative: if the *Confessions* is a one-sided conversation with God, then Augustine's attempts to talk directly to God cannot be ignored. In fact, the historical episodes—or historical digressions—should be what seems out of place.

I have begun with SparkNotes not because it is the scholarly consensus but because it is a representative of popular opinion. It does, however, reflect a perspective that underlies scholarly work on the *Confessions*. A number of valuable academic studies of the *Confessions* have appeared in recent decades that set out to understand the work's unity.[5] But, the notion that it is divided is so ingrained that these studies start with the presumption that the two disparate parts must be *reconciled*. To be sure, these studies add considerably to our understanding of the work and its contents. But my interest is in whether there is a true unity to the *Confessions*, particularly at the level of narrative. In

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[4] Fredriksen 2012: 132 says that "the work *opens* with speculations about who or what Augustine was even before birth" (emphasis mine). However, the work actually opens not with a discussion of Augustine's infancy but with a praise to God and a series of questions about how God can be found.

[5] Of particular value are Knauer 1955, Young 1999, MacDonald 2003, and Kotzé 2006.

order to respond to this question, I suggest that we begin again without assumptions about genre or content.[6]

From an understanding of "autobiography" as meaning a story *of the past* from an explicitly first-personal perspective, where the author believes that what he says happened *in re*, then the first nine books and not the last four are correctly understood as autobiographical in genre. But, I am not convinced that Augustine thought of autobiography or his *Confessions* in precisely this way. Part of my concern with the *communis opinio* has to do with the implicit contention that autobiography is of the past, and that it is identifiable as a genre by the inclusion of stories thereof. Surely it is possible that autobiography can also be of the present. Lejeune calls autobiography "the *retrospective* narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality."[7] Of course, "retrospection" is by definition an inspection *of the past*. But autobiography is primarily a sort of *introspection*, even if the intention is to produce a history. This introspection necessarily occurs at the present. For reasons I reiterate below, if Augustine's *Confessions* is autobiography, which is most certainly is, then it must necessarily be an autobiography of his present, even if that requires him to confront his

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[6] Knauer 1955 saw the *Confessions* as a complete work unified by temporal progression of the soul. As O'Donnell 1992: 3.153 explains, he saw the *Confessions* this way because he was not "working [with] subjective assumptions." See also Kotzé 2006: 65: "The whole issue surrounding the presence of these books is a problem created by the illegitimate assumptions later readers carried into their reading." Even still, both Knauer and Kotzé talk in terms of parts.

[7] Lejeune 1989: 4-5 (emphasis mine). More recently, see Smith & Watson 2001: 1-20 for a larger discussion of the definition of the term "autobiography," or "life narrative."

past along the way. But, there is nothing inconsistent with this: for Augustine, the past *is* present. And that is the key point.

Livy says of the value of writing ancient history that it distracts from the troubles that plague the modern world.[8] As Fischer says condescendingly of historiographical antiquarianism:

> An antiquarian is a collector of dead facts, which he stuffs full of sawdust and separately encloses in small glass cases. Often, he is a gentleman (or lady) of respectable origins who is utterly alienated from the present. The past serves him as a sanctuary from a sordid world which he neither accepts nor understands.[9]

But, this is not Augustine. Augustine understands that the past (as well as the future) is only accessible as it stands now, in the present: the past no longer exists, but memory (*memoria*) is a present state of mind that contains present images depicting things once experienced. Thus, the past is precisely the opposite of a sanctuary: these events are alive, and they are part of Augustine's self. Because his present is the result of his past, Augustine must confront his past at the present in order to move on from it, rather than forget it.[10] Augustine's *present* may be a sanctuary, but only once the ghosts—Fischer's "dead facts"—have been discarded from their glass cases. I propose that their removal is one of Augustine's goals in the *Confessions*—a task that occupies his attention through the first nine books.

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[8] Livy, *Praefatio* to the *AUC*: *ego contra hoc quoque laboris praemium petam, ut me a conspectu malorum quae nostra tot per annos vidit aetas, tantisper certe dum prisca [tota] illa mente repeto, avertam, omnis expers curae quae scribentis animum, etsi non flectere a vero, sollicitum tamen efficere posset.*

[9] Fischer 1970: 140.

[10] On forgetting past sins, see *De civ*. 22.30.

It may appear that I, too, have just argued for a distinction between Books 1-9 and those that follow. There is certainly a difference between the contents of these earlier books and those of the later (though there are plenty of similarities, as well). But my point is that Augustine's autobiography does not end at the end of Book 9; it continues throughout the rest of the work. There is no point in the work when Augustine does not engage in autobiographical introspection. To show how this is the case, I return to Augustine's account of time in Book 11.

This account results in a staunchly presentist perspective on historiography.[11] We use memories to reconstruct the past, and this is true even of non-autobiographical history, as well. For instance, by reading and thinking and seeing depictions of Augustine, I surely have acquired what Augustine calls *imagines* of him, and these *imagines* are mental objects that (I presume) are no different ontologically from those I have of objects I have personally experienced—but this is a topic for another project.[12] My point—in fact, Augustine's point, as well—is that these memories exist in our present, so any narrative of the past is, in this way, a story about one's *present* memory.[13]

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[11] Of course, even an objective history is necessarily first-personal and presentist. For instance, speaking of Thucydides' reliance on the events themselves, Parry 1972: 48 says in response to Thucydides' *auta ta erga* at 1.21.2: "when . . . you present everything as . . . the way it really happened, you are forcing the reader to look through your eyes, imposing your own assumptions and interpretations of events." Objectivity is an authorial stance (see Connor 1984: 6 in reference to objections to Thucydidean objectivism). All historiography is in some sense subjective: no matter how many citations are provided, the history is limited to what the author has been able to discover and how he assesses that information.

[12] On true and false memories, see *Conf*. 3.6.10.

[13] Smith & Watson 2010: 22: "The life narrator depends on access to memory to narrate the past in such a way as to situate that experiential history within the present. Memory is thus the source, authenticator, and destabilizer of autobiographical acts."

It is in part for this reason that I proposed in Chapter 1 that we understand Augustine qua author/narrator as the protagonist of the work: it is his voice we are meant to follow as we read the *Confessions*. This is apparent if we pick up and read the text from its beginning without rushing through it to the more attractive details of Augustine's past—details that we, the first-time readers, do not yet know are to come. But this, too, belongs to another project in which reader response theory is understood in light of the materiality of text and the publication of Augustine's *Confessions*.

A necessary condition for a work of literature to be autobiographical is that the story told is somehow about oneself. This requires that what one says about one's self is—or is at least believed by the author to be—true. I have not set out to defend Augustine's honor. Rather, I hope posthumously to hold him to his own standards and assess his work accordingly. The fact of the matter is that, if he did consciously misrepresent his recollection in order to produce a distorted picture of his past, then his *Confessions* fails both as autobiography and as confession: he intends to deceive not only us but also God, as well. If Augustine intended it as an instructional text, but if the story is unreal, then his project is a failure. If Augustine invented episodes or details of events in his past life, even if he did so with good intentions, then his story—or at least some unidentifiable part of it—is fiction. But what is worse is that, if fiction, it distracts its audience from that which is real in the same way that, say, the fictional Dido distracted the younger Augustine from himself. And, unlike the case of Dido, whom presumably we know to be a character of fiction, we expect Augustine's *Confessions* to be true. If it is or

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includes elements of fiction, then we are not only distracted but also deceived.[14] Thus, as I argued in Chapter 2, Augustine must believe that what he says is true, whether or not there is also an allegorical meaning behind his story.

This raises the question: how can Augustine's story be true if his account of the past is at least at times historically questionable if not demonstrably unreliable? The answer, as I suggested in Chapter 3, is found in his conception of memory in Book 10. For Augustine, recollection is a co-active process: assessments are made of past memories, both individually and collectively, with the help or hindrance of the memories themselves. Recollection and subsequent (or simultaneous) narration is not a straightforward process of retelling the events as they unfolded in time according to simple B- or even C-Series sequences.[15] Augustine's journey through memory is determined by the co-activity of Augustine's intention and the availability of memories (which ones are present? in what order do they appear this time? etc.) at the particular moment of recollection. Therefore, it is Augustine's responsibility to reconstruct his past from a perspective that is always present in a way that he believes to represent accurately the factual nature of the stories he tells. If inevitably he errs, it must be due to the fallibility of memory and complications of recollection, not to an intent to deceive.

The question that remains is what this has to do with the question of unity. I have rejected the contention that the *Confessions* is to be understood as a work divided into two generically distinct parts on the grounds that the author/narrator is present throughout

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[14] *Conf.* 10.3.3.

[15] For terms, see McTaggart 1908. The B-Series is used of temporally ordered sequences; the C-Series sequences that are not (e.g. the alphabet).

the work and that it is his voice that unifies the whole. But how do we account for the fact that Augustine's attention in the first nine books *is* directed toward his past, unlike the last four books, without proposing a generic divide? It is here that Augustine's conceptions of time and heaven fully enter the discussion.

In one of the most famous passages in the Augustinian corpus, Augustine proposes that time is a "distention of the mind" (*distentio animi*).[16] The term *distentio* is often seen as a borrowing of Plotinus' διάστασις (or perhaps the Stoic διάστημα). But, in Chapter 4, I examined the term in the context of its Latin usage as derivative of both *distinere* and *distendere*. Accordingly, *distentio* is a fragmentation and a swelling of the mind as it attempts erroneously and impossibly to actualize, via memory, past and future times that do not exist. This *distentio* distracts one from that which *does* exist, not physically but metaphysically, namely God, truth, and wisdom—all of which are otherwise present though obscured by distention.

Augustine contrasts his temporally distended state of psychological fragmentation with the lives of the saints in heaven, who experience God, truth, and wisdom directly, without mediation. This psychological orientation is available once *distentio* is shed, or decreased. The contemplative activity that St. Benedict later defines as *intentio* serves to create unified extension between an individual and God. Through this extension, one may hear God and his word directly, without the mediation of earthly objects or the temporal words of scripture. To accomplish this saintly *intentio*, one's attention must be directed

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[16] Matthews 2005: 80. The passage in question begins at *Conf*. 11.14.17 and continues through the rest of the book. For his proposal that time is a *distentio*, see *Conf*. 11.23.30 and 26.33 in particular.

fully toward the metaphysical present. With the grace of God, one may then transcend the earthly world of *res* and the internal world of *imagines* and glimpse heaven momentarily. When this occurs, the mind is able to be *extentus*, or connected directly to God, rather than *distentus*, or scattered in times that do not exist. But to shed memory and distention is not as simple as merely forgetting or ignoring the past: in order to overcome memory, one must confront it face-to-face.

How, then, are the last four books also autobiographical? Knauer proposed that the work is unified according to a temporal progression from past (Books 1-9), to present (Book 10) and future (Books 11-13). But this cannot be quite right. Although Augustine is narrating his past, he does so by means of present memories of it or by conjecture. It is for this reason that the first nine books cannot contain Augustine's past per se; rather, they contain present reflections on the state of the continual presence of those past events as they exist now, in memory. Thus, the past time is what Augustine calls *praesens de praeteritis*. And the past that exists in memory is a distraction from that which is real. Thus, it is an activity that must be shed in order to decrease one's distention and, thereby, achieve a state of correct metaphysical contemplation. This is what Augustine does in the first nine books.

The *Confessions* opens *in medias res*, as if we, the readers, have stumbled upon Augustine, the author/narrator, already in mid-conversation with an unresponsive God.[17] He wonders where God is and how he can be found (*Conf*. 1.1.1-5.6). He, the author, has already come to understand the answer, namely that God is everywhere and not located in

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[17] O'Donnell 1992: 2.8-9; Matthews 2010: 42.

a single particular place. In this way, no one is ever without God, for God's eternal presence is everywhere and in every thing. Instead, it is the orientation of our mind's attention that allows one to be directed toward God—or not.

In Books 1-8, Augustine describes his mental departure and eventual return to God. In the garden at Cassiciacum, he discovers that truth is in scripture. But this is only a step in his conversion. In Book 9, he in fact overcomes the intermediacy of scripture and directly experiences wisdom for a moment in heaven. This is the culmination of a long process in which he tries to find the right psychological orientation. Having done so, his mother, Monnica, is free to die and leave him competently on his own, much like Aeneas is left after his last encounter with Anchises in the underworld. However, while the literary figure, Aeneas, continues his quest in Italy, the younger Augustine—the ghost of Augustine's past—disappears from the text entirely. Augustine qua author/narrator is now on his own, free from his past, to pursue the same contemplative activity in the last four books that led his younger self along with his mother to heaven in Book 9.

It is noteworthy that the historical events in Augustine's narrative end roughly ten years before he began work on the *Confessions*, and that the last historical narrative described is not his conversion but instead the death of his mother. As I see it, the pivotal moment in the narrative of the work as a whole comes in Augustine's vision of heaven at Ostia, which occurred as his mother was dying and concludes with her death. In this vision, they experienced the timelessness of the life of the saints. Thus, although still a memory, in some sense Augustine relives the timeless experience by recalling it. At this moment, his narration begins to be set free from temporally located objects. Augustine

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moves on beyond the realm of *imagines* that distract him from the present and orients his attention toward matters at hand. In Book 10, he returns to his initial concern at the opening of Book 1 about God's location and delves deep into his memory in search of him there. In this way, it is the result of a residual concern with the material realm of his memory, but one that is more sophisticated. He does not discuss what his memories depict but rather what his memories are and what memory is. He is becoming free from memory, though he is still trapped in it. But, he has passed the first internal step of ascent. In Books 11-13, Augustine is finally able to turn to scripture. Failing mystical ascent or death, it is through the intermediacy of scripture that one may know truth. But the nature of temporal existence still prevents him from knowing truth directly, so he is stuck, with his mind oriented in the right direction but unable to make the complete ascent.[18]

These books cannot properly be said to be about the future. If in them Augustine were directing the intention of his mind there, then he would still engage in *distentio*, though now emphasizing *expectatio* over *memoria*. This is not what Ostia taught him to do. Rather, his intention must be toward that which is metaphysically *ante*, or eternally present. To return to Knauer, there is certainly a *peregrinatio* in the *Confessions*. But the *peregrinatio* is a narrative activity that takes Augustine through the physical realm of internal *imagines* toward an attempt to find truth in scripture with the hope of overcoming scripture and encountering truth directly. Thus, the journey is not a temporal one from

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[18] As Sorabji 1983: 168 says, "The flesh and the images associated with the material world keep dragging us down."

past to future; it is an ascent through various degrees of interiority, every step of which exists always and exclusively at the present. The *Confessions* is certainly an instructional guide to what Augustine believes to be proper intellectual activity. It is a performance of that activity and, as such, serves as a manual. As Augustine observed Ambrose quietly engaged in text, we, the readers, observe Augustine's attempt to transcend text through it.

Appendix A: Augustine's Conversion Story (*Conf.* 8.12.28-29)

When a deep reflection drew up my whole misery from a hidden depth and heaped it up in the view of my heart, there was a huge flowing storm that brought a huge shower of tears. So that I could pour the whole [storm of tears] out with my voice, I arose from [the side of] Alypius—for me, solitude was more appropriate for the business of crying—, and I went away from him so far that his presence could not be burdensome to me. That is how I was at that time, and he understood, for I think I said something, [and] the sound of my voice seemed already full of tears. So, I stood up, [and] he remained where we were sitting, completely confounded. I lay myself down somehow under a certain fig tree, and I released the reins of my tears, and rivers erupted from my eyes as an acceptable sacrifice to you. And not with these words but in this sense I said repeatedly to you: "and you, Lord: for how long? For how long, Lord, will you be angry in the end? Do not be mindful of our old sins." For I felt that I was held by these things.[1] I was throwing out terrible statements: "'Tomorrow and tomorrow?!' Why not now? Why not an end to my shamefulness at this [very] hour?"

I was saying these things and crying the most bitter things with the contrition of my heart. And I heard a voice from a nearby house with a song of someone speaking and repeating continuously, as if a boy or a girl—I do not know which: "pick up, read; pick up, read." And suddenly, with a changed expression, I began most intently to think about whether kids are accustomed in this sort of play to sing something of this sort. But it

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[1] E.g. past sins, such as those he enumerates in *Confessions* 1-9.

occurred to me that I had not heard [anything like this] anywhere at all. And, after I repressed the onslaught of tears, I stood up, interpreting it as nothing other than a divine command for me to open a book and read the first chapter that I found, for I heard that Anthony, who happened to be present at a reading of the Gospels, as if what he read were said to him, was warned: "go, sell everything you have, and from poverty you will have a treasury in heaven. Come, follow me." And [I hear that], with such an oracle, he was suddenly converted to you. So quickly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for there I had put down the book of the apostle when I had stood up. I snatched it, opened it, and read in silence the first chapter that my eyes encountered: "not in parties and drunkenness, nor in the bed and in immodesty, nor in speech and jealously, but dress in the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make provisions for the flesh in its concupiscence." I did not want to read further, nor did I need to. Indeed immediately, with the end of this sentence, it was as if, like a light of freedom, the entire darkness of doubt that had been infused within my heart had fled.

ubi vero a fundo arcano alta consideratio traxit et congessit totam miseriam meam in conspectu cordis mei, oborta est procella ingens ferens ingentem imbrem lacrimarum. et ut totum effunderem cum vocibus suis, surrexi ab Alypio (solitudo mihi ad negotium flendi aptior suggerebatur) et secessi remotius quam ut posset mihi onerosa esse etiam eius praesentia. sic tunc eram, et ille sensit: nescio quid enim, puto, dixeram in quo apparebat sonus vocis meae iam fletu gravidus, et sic surrexeram. mansit ergo ille ubi sedebamus nimie stupens. ego sub quadam fici arbore stravi me nescio quomodo, et

dimisi habenas lacrimis, et proruperunt flumina oculorum meorum, acceptabile sacrificium tuum, et non quidem his verbis, sed in hac sententia multa dixi tibi: 'et tu, domine, usquequo? usquequo, domine, irasceris in finem? ne memor fueris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum.' sentiebam enim eis me teneri. iactabam voces miserabiles: `quamdiu, quamdiu, "cras et cras"? quare non modo? quare non hac hora finis turpitudinis meae?'

dicebam haec et flebam amarissima contritione cordis mei. et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis, quasi pueri an puellae, nescio: 'tolle lege, tolle lege.' statimque mutato vultu intentissimus cogitare coepi utrumnam solerent pueri in aliquo genere ludendi cantitare tale aliquid. nec occurrebat omnino audisse me uspiam, repressoque impetu lacrimarum surrexi, nihil aliud interpretans divinitus mihi iuberi nisi ut aperirem codicem et legerem quod primum caput invenissem. audieram enim de Antonio quod ex evangelica lectione cui forte supervenerat admonitus fuerit, tamquam sibi diceretur quod legebatur: 'vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelis; et veni, sequere me,' et tali oraculo confestim ad te esse conversum. itaque concitus redii in eum locum ubi sedebat Alypius: ibi enim posueram codicem apostoli cum inde surrexeram. arripui, aperui, et legi in silentio capitulum quo primum coniecti sunt oculi mei: 'non in comessationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudicitiis, non in contentione et aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis.' nec ultra volui legere nec opus erat. statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt.

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