

Reducere ad Memoriam: A Brief Overview of Confession and Memory

Abstract A study of the tradition of medieval confession as well as of the classical and medieval discussions concerning the functions of the soul reveals the necessity of remembering in the act of confessing. From the more theological plane of Augustine to the more every-day practicality of confession tracts and manuals, particularly those in the Middle English period, recollection, including anxieties about forgetfulness, is ever-present in the discussions of and the actual act of confession.

Keywords Confession · Memory · Recollection · Forgetfulness · Augustine · Penitentials

At one point in his *Confessions*, Saint Augustine says to God:

ego tamen confitear tibi dedecora mea in laude tua. sine me, obsecro, et da mihi circuire praesenti memoria praeteritos circuitus erroris mei, et immolare tibi hostiam iubilationis¹

For more discussion and context of this topic and texts, see my article “Memory, Recollection, and Forgetting in the Middle Ages,” *Medieval Culture: A Compendium of Critical Topics*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages (New York/Berlin: de Gruyter, [2015a](#)): 1020–1038.

[Let me still confess my sins to you for your honour. Allow me, I beseech you, to trace in my memory in the present my past deviations and to offer you a sacrifice of joy] (IV.1).

Here, we find a succinct description of the relationship that exists between the concept of confession and the concept of memory in medieval texts that echoes across several centuries. It explains how it is essential to recollect sins in order to communicate them to God within confession. A study of the tradition of medieval confession as well as of the classical and medieval discussions concerning the functions of the soul reveals the necessity of remembering in the act of confessing.

While Augustine may be one of the most familiar figures to depict the juxtaposition of recollection and confession, the need to explore the personal past can be found in many texts throughout the Middle Ages. Indeed, especially from the thirteenth century onward, when confession manuals became popular and confessors were perceived as a vital part of confession, properly remembering sins and the problems associated with potential forgetfulness in the confessional are priority issues. Confessors were responsible for leading sinners through memories of their sins. As a result, confession manuals show an interest in memory and forgetfulness and how recollection affects the quality of confession. From the more theological plane of Augustine to the more everyday practicality of confession tracts and manuals, the issue of recollection is ever-present in the discussions of and the actual act of confession. By the Middle English period, confession had undergone a dramatic cultural and theological development as compared to its Augustinian incarnation. The evolution of debate on confession led to the famous *Omnis utriusque sexus* act at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the mandate that made annual confession mandatory and legislated the movement away from public penance to private confession that had been taking place in ecclesiastical thinking in the previous century.² Despite these changes in scholastic and clerical thought on confession, its relationship to memory remained an ever-present constant.

There is a long-held tradition that memory is one of the functions of the soul. For instance, while trinities of the soul in different time periods

include variations in properties, memory, sometimes referred to as “mynde” in the Middle English, is a common presence in these tripartite breakdowns:

In the [*De Trinitate*] Augustine also defines the created trinity of the soul with the terms *memoria*, *intelligentia* and *amor* [...] Both the author of the *Cloud* and Hilton render the Augustinian ternary of the soul as ‘minde, reson, & wille’ or mynde [...] witte [...] wille’, whilst the *Mirror of Simple Souls* prefers ‘memoire [...] vdirstondinge [...] wille’.³

In his late fourteenth-century mystical religious treatise *Scale of Perfection*, Walter Hilton describes the main purpose of “mynde” as not forgetting God:

The soule of a man is a liyf, made of thre myghtes—mynde, resoun, and wille—to the ymage and the likenes of the blissid holi Trinité, hooli perfight and rightwise. In as myche as the mynde was maad myghti and stidefast bi the Fadir almyghti, for to holde Hym withoughte forgetyng, distractyng, or lettyng of ony creature, and so it hath the likenes of the Fader. (43.1150–4)⁴

Ideally, the “mynde,” one of the three properties of the soul, was created by God to remember him without “forgetyng.” As confession is concerned with the soul’s spiritual condition, as in whether or not it is fit for forgiveness of sins, the processes of the soul are significant to the practice of the sacrament. By exploring the relationship between the soul and memory, we can understand more about how recollection is a necessary function within confession, as it is the soul’s past that is expressed in the confessional. Augustine and other thinkers, such as Isidore of Seville⁵ and Boethius,⁶ are concerned with the individual recalling the aspects of God that can be found in the soul’s storehouse of memories.⁷ The establishment of a relationship between the memory and the activities of *anima* leads to the discussion of confession, which was considered to be one of the most fundamental responsibilities of the medieval Christian soul, and how recollection functions within that process.

RECOLLECTION IN AUGUSTINIAN CONFESSION

For Augustine, the act of confession is a temporal exercise: he examines the past by means of reflecting on previous sins and attitudes. The Augustinian method of confession is grounded in examining and evaluating the images of the past retained in the sinner's memory. The majority of the *Confessions* is an exercise in confession through recollection and illustrates how personal history is bound to the performance of confession and the salvation of the soul. In the passage quoted earlier, Augustine remarks: "[E]go tamen confitear tibi dedecora mea in laude tua. [S]ine me, obsecro, et da mihi circuire praesenti memoria praeteritos circuitus erroris mei, et immolare tibi hostiam iubilationis" [Let me still confess my sins to you for your honour. Allow me, I beseech you, to trace in my memory in the present my past deviations and to offer you a sacrifice of joy] (IV.1). What we can learn from this passage is that, without remembering and analyzing the sins of the past and how they affect the relationship with God, confession, according to Augustine, cannot take place. Book X of the *Confessions* with all of its emphasis on memory begins with a discussion on the merits of confession, both public and private, and concludes that the discovery of self by reviewing past misdeeds culminates in an understanding of God. His analysis of confession intersects with an exploration of the ways to reach God, which, as Augustine clearly points out, is related to the role of memory within the soul. McGerr (1985) stresses that Augustine's purposes are explicitly served by this retrospective approach:

Augustine's hope of converting others by telling the story of his own life is made clear within the *Confessions*, not only by his explicit statement at the opening of Book XI, but also by the double perspective of the narrative, which sets the events of the past in the context of Augustine's later understanding of them: the individual events in Augustine's life before conversion take their true meaning from the conversion to which they led. Furthermore, because his insights are retrospective, achieved by reviewing the past in recollection, Augustine moves from the narration of his conversion in Books I-IX to a discussion of the powers of memory in Book X.⁸

Breyfogle (1999) more succinctly comments on this structure of the *Confessions*: "It is not surprising, then, that after nine books of confessional

remembrance of his life's events and their meanings that Augustine should turn to reflect on the faculty of memory itself."⁹ Augustine explains that his present state and how his spiritual life has changed or undergoes a change as a result of his confessions, and, ultimately, his purpose, to realize God, is set in the future after he has navigated the depths and past of his soul.

Augustine provides a useful model for thinking about the role of recollection within confession, for he discusses the relationship extensively. According to him, the present and the future are tied to his Christian salvation and his relationship with God. In her *Book of Memory*, Carruthers notes the cross-temporal aspects of *memoria* with special reference to the final books of the *Confessions*:

Memoria makes present that which is no longer so in actuality [...] memory remains, by its nature, of the past—a thing cannot be in memory until it is past. This insistence is basic in medieval Aristotelian (and Augustinian) psychology [...] Therefore, to say that memory is the matrix within which humans perceive present and future is also to say that both present and future, in human time, are mediated by the past.¹⁰

In Carruthers' analysis, memory is the "matrix" through which Augustine mediates the desire to cleanse his soul.

RECOLLECTION IN MIDDLE ENGLISH CONFESSION

The form that Augustine's *Confessions* takes differs from the texts that influenced or were written leading up to or during the Middle English period, the focus here, and confession certainly evolved over time between Augustine and that period. Nonetheless, what we can establish is that recollection retains the similar functions within confession as those found in Augustine's work. Confession manuals and religious treatises demonstrate that recollection has a role in every stage of confession, beginning with initiating the desire to participate in the sacrament.¹¹ Recollection is the means to recall the sacrifice of Christ or the disadvantages of sin, namely, the pains of hell, and as a catalyst causing contrition. Both of these types of memories can encourage a potential penitent to confess.

In Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, the recollection of the Passion is linked to the recollection of forgiveness of sins:

[T]hee thenketh as thu seighe in thi soule thi Lord Jhesu Crist in bodili liknesse as He was in erthe, how He was taken of the Jewes and bounden as a theef, beten and dispisid, scourgid and demed to the deeth; hou mekeli He baar the Cros upon his bak, and hou crueli He was nailed therupon; also of the crowne of thornes upon His heed, and upon the scharp spere that stonge Him to the herte. And thou in this goostli sight thou felist thyn herte stired into so greet compassioun and pité of thi Lord Jhesu that thou mornest, and wepist, and criest with alle thy myghtes of thi bodi and of thi soule, wondrynge the goodnesse and the love, the pacience and the mekenesse of oure Lord Jhesu, that He wolde for so synful a caitif [wretch] as thou art suffre so mykil payne. And also over this thou felist so mykil goodnesse and merci in oure Lord that thi herte riseth up into love and glaadnesse of Him with manye swete teeris, havynge greet trust of forgyvenesse of thi synnes and of savacioun of thi soule bi the vertu of this precious passioun. Thanne whanne the mynde of Cristis passioun or ony poynt of His manhede is thus maad in thi herte bi siche goostli sight, with devout affecioun answeyng therto, wite thou wel thanne that it is not thyn owen werkyng, ne feynynge of noo wikkid spirit, but bi grace of the Holi Goost, for it is an openynge of the goostli iye into Cristis manhede. (35.904-20)

Hilton describes how having “mynde” [recollection] of the Passion leads to “havynge greet trust of forgyvenesse of thi synnes and of savacioun of thi soule.” He states later that forgiveness of sins is only achieved through the act of confession. The recollection of the Passion prepares the individual for the process of confession. Conversely, the fear of the pains of hell can also prepare the sinner for confession. An anonymous, early-fifteenth-century English sermon remarks on this type of remembering:

For Ihesu Cristes loue, remembur invardly on þise peynes [of hell], and I trust to God þat þei shall sterve þe to a vomyte of all þi dronkenlew lyvyng. And ziff þou haue þis womyte of þe sacrament of confession, Godes Sonne with-owten question dwellip þan with þe and shall in thy dying rescyve þe to is blis. (241.15-20)¹²

Demonstrating a literal purging, “vomiting” of sins as a common metaphor for confession is found, for instance, in Langland's *Piers Plowman*.¹³ The sermon connects remembering the pains of hell with the motivation to confess in order to avoid them.

Whether or not recollection is the catalyst that stirs the penitent's desire to seek for forgiveness of his sins, it follows as a necessary element in the actual act of confessing. Several confession manuals and religious treatises resemble the Augustinian model in that they portray how a penitent, in order to complete his confession, must search his past for any instances of spiritual failing before his confession is deemed complete. The role of recollection in confession, including how a penitent should reflect on the memories of his sins in order then to be able to speak of them to his confessor, is described by Bishop Peter Quinel, in the Synod of Exeter statutes of 1287, which he modified for his *Summula*, a text that was modeled on preceding penitence manuals and was specifically designed for dissemination to the parishes of England:

“Recogitabo tibi omnes annos meos in amaritudine animae meae.” Debet (enim) in se reverti ad exordium vitae suae: quomodo se gesserit, cogitans (de) omnibus annis vitae suae, qui possunt (ei) occurrere (suae) memoriae; et solícite, quid quibuslibet annis fecerit et diebus, et in quibus locis, quia locus est principium memoriae. Per loca enim *reducimus (saepe) ad memoriam*, quae tradidimus oblivioni [...] Debet autem poenitens ad cogitationes recurrere, sc. si excogitaverit de malis praedictis prius faciendis [...] Deinde procedendum est ad sermonem, quia in lingua constituitur universitas peccati [...] (II.166)¹⁴

["I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul." For the penitent ought within himself to return to the beginning of his life: how he behaved himself, thinking on all the years of his life, those which he is able to remember; and earnestly, he ought to return in memory to what he did in a given year or day and in a given place, because place is the beginning of memory. For through a particular place *we (often) lead back to the memory* that which we had handed over to oblivion [...] And a penitent ought to return to his thoughts, especially if he had thought of a given ill-deed before committing it [...] Thence the sinner has to proceed to speech, because in the tongue the whole of sin originates and is consolidated [...]

Quinel outlines what Shoaf (1981) defines as a “psychological model of sinful behavior,” in which the circumstances of sin and all of its details including where, when, and how the sin was committed are narrated during confession.¹⁵ In order to relate these circumstances, the penitent must

“reducere ad memoriam” [lead back to the memory] his soul’s transgressive past. This phrase is employed frequently in texts such as Quinel’s and, more specifically, in Middle English texts—for instance, the *Speculum Christiani* composed around 1450¹⁶—to describe the process of recollection within confession. The phrase indicates an active act of exploring the memory in a search for all recollections of sin, even those that were, as the Bishop writes, “tradidimus oblivioni” [handed over to oblivion] or forgotten. The necessity of engaging in this process is strongly indicated here. The penitential process, of which confession is a significant part, depends on the ability to remember every sin that must be atoned for:

Whether in the space of one life alone [...] or in the other world, the soul had to prepare itself fully before it came before the throne of Christ. It was not a self that waited, peaceably or with anxiety, to receive the magnificent, but essentially external, gesture of God’s *indulgentia* for as yet unatoned sins. Every moment counted. All outstanding accounts must be paid off; every moment of the past mattered, lest any escape the memory of the penitent and so fail to be included in a conscious process of repentance and atonement.¹⁷

Spiritual “accounts” must be settled before death, yet this assessment can be applied to penitence in general and how recollection is the tool by which penitents must account for every moment of their past in order to achieve a complete, effective confession and receive forgiveness for all sins.¹⁸

As appears in the previous excerpt from Bishop Quinel, the Biblical quotation Isaiah 38:15, “I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul,” is frequently included in passages referencing the need to explore the memory within confession. Medieval scholars applied this quotation to confession, interpreting it to mean that penitents need to reflect on their lives, particularly with the aim of recalling what sins they have committed. The *Fasciculus Morum*, a fourteenth-century preacher’s handbook written by an English Franciscan friar, concisely defines the Biblical passage in the context of confession:

Et sic facta discutere iuxta illud Psalmi: “*Recogitabo tibi omnes annos meos in amaritudine anime mee,*” hoc est, revolvere et cogitare debes quantum vixisti, quomodo tempus tuum expendisti, quot bona dimisisti, quot mala commisisti, qualem societatem peccando amisisti (quia Dei et Ecclesie), quibus adhesisti (quia diabolo et sociis eius). (V.VII. 11–20)¹⁹

[And then you must examine your deeds, after the words of the Psalm: “*I will recount to you all my years in the bitterness of my soul,*” that is, you must turn over in your mind and reflect on how long you have lived, how you have employed your time, how many good deeds you have failed to do, how many evil ones committed, what fellowship you have lost through sin (namely that of God and the Church), and who have become your companions (namely the devil and his followers).]

There is an emphasis here on long-term memory, on how a penitent should reflect not only on sins in the recent past but also on his entire history, “all his years,” in an effort to recall sins from every point in his life. Guibert of Nogent, the abbot of the Nogent-sous-Coucy monastery in northern France in the early twelfth century, provides an example, albeit an earlier, non-English one, of an individual engaging in such a process when he writes how his mother, a virtuous woman, constantly examined her past in order to find sins that needed to be confessed:

Confessio igitur veterum peccatorum, quoniam ipsam didicerat initium bonorum, quotidie pene nova cum fieret, semper animus ejusdem exactione praeteritorum suorum actuum versabatur, quid virgo ineunte sub aevo, quid virita, quid vidua studio jam possibilior peregerit, cogitaverit, dixerit semper rationis examinare thronum, et ad sacerdotis, imo ad Dei per ipsum cognitionem examinata deducere. (1.14)²⁰

[She confessed her former sins almost every day, for she had learned that this is where all goodness begins. Her mind was ever occupied with an examination of her past deeds, summoning relentlessly to the tribunal of reason what she had done, thought, or said, whether as a young girl, as a married woman, or as a widow with a wider possibility of action. She would bring the fruits of her examination to the priest, or rather to God through his intermediary.]

Guibert’s mother does not only recall the sins she committed since her last confession, but also, as instructed in the verse from Isaiah, thinks even back to when she was a young girl in order to be able to list her sins to her priest. According to the *Fasciculus* and the implications in the description of Guibert’s mother, the act of confession cannot take place if the mental list of past sins has not been constructed so that it may be narrated. In order to speak sins, a penitent must remember them.

In the preceding examples, the responsibility for exploring the memory is placed on the penitent. Quinel states that an individual should look “in se” [within himself] for recollections of sins, and the *Fasciculus* is written as a command in that “you,” the potential penitent, must remember.²¹ Other texts examined later place more onus on the confessor, dividing the responsibility with the penitent.

FORGETFULNESS IN CONFESSION

The process outlined in the brief examples I have given so far is one in which the penitent engages in an ideal confession, recalling all of his sins and receiving forgiveness for them. Yet, medieval authors were aware that the process did not always run smoothly. They were concerned with issues that might arise in the confessional and about which penitents needed to be wary. In particular, a main concern is forgetting sins during confession. Indeed, forgetfulness itself can be a sin in certain circumstances as can the recollection of inappropriate, distracting memories. Both are considered transgressions that must themselves be remembered and confessed. In the late fourteenth- or early-fifteenth-century *Myroure to Lewde Men and Wymmen*, a prose version of the *Speculum Vitae*, composed in Northern England in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, forgetting sins is equated with blindness, so that the penitent cannot see into the conscience:

Other sixe vices þere beþ þat letteþ amendement of lyf & bringeþ [it to] apeyrement, þat beþ these: tarienge, rechelesnes, forþetyng, slownes, laches and faylinge. (120.19–20)

Þe þridde is forþetyng þat comeþ of rechelesnes. For whoso is recheles & noght besily beþinkeþ him forþetiþ lightly may synnes boþe grete & smale þat he haþ doo, of whiche he moot schryue [confess] him zif he wole haue forþeuenes of hem. And so rechelesnes and forþeting beþ to man ful gret periles, for þei makeþ him forþete his synnes of whiche he schulde schryue him and aske forþeuenes in his lyf. For wiþoute askynge he may not haue forþeuenes; and hou schal he repente him and aske forþeuenes of þat he haþ forþete? And þere is no man þat resoun haþ, zif he wole wel examyne his owne conscience, þat he [f.52v] nemay eche day fynde inowh wherof to repente him & schryue him. But rechelesnes & forþetyng makip a synful man so blynde þat he may no þing see in his conscience, & þat is ouergret perill. (120.34–42, 121.1–3)²²

The penitent cannot ask “forzeuenes” for the sins he cannot remember because he cannot feel repentance for those sins. This causes “ouerget perill,” indicating that the forgetting of sins is quite serious.

There are texts that speak about the methods of avoiding such forgetfulness. The confessor’s role, for instance, can include prevention against sins being forgotten.²³ Other texts suggest confessing frequently in order to avoid forgetfulness. The fourteenth-century penitential *Handlyng Synne* by Robert Mannyng of Brunne, a Gilbertine monk from Sempringham, England, warns against waiting to confess:

(Pe secunde poynt of shryfte)
 Pe secunde poynt ys, next þyr by,
 Þat þou shalt shryue þe hastely.
 For whan þou dost hyt yn longe respyte,
 Hyt ys forzete þat longe ys olyte [delay].
 Seynt Bernard þarfore to swyche chyt [rebuke]
 Ad seyt, “moche forzyt þat longe abyte.”²⁴

The *Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen* includes a similar warning:

The secunde condicioun is þat it scholde be hastifliche [hastily] for fyue skiles...Pe fite skile is drede of forzetynge; for if a man longe tariþ his schrifte & styntþ not of mysdoynge, his synnes moste nedes multeplye so moche þat he schal not holde hem in mynde but forzete hem or many of hem, so schal noght he conne clene schryue him of hem, & þat is a greet perill. (124.19–40)

If a penitent “longe tariþ his schrifte” [long delays his confession] or does not “shryue hastely” [confess hastily], then he risks being unable to “holde [his sins] in mynde.” This anxiety with forgetfulness finds its way into texts such as Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Love*, in which forgetting, inside and outside of confession, is a sin that she seeks to overcome by contemplating ways to avoid it during the composition of her work.²⁵

RECOLLECTION OF SIN AFTER CONFESSION

Recollection has a vital role both before and during confession by instigating the desire to participate in the sacrament or ensuring a complete declaration of guilt. What role, then, does recollection have after

confession is complete? Do penitents still need to recall their sins once they have been forgiven? Surprisingly, medieval writers are relatively quiet on this subject, at least in comparison with the amount of discussion that is given to recollection within the sacrament. Still, a few texts do explore recollection post-confession, most of which indicate that the memories are either no longer necessary or, at the least, do not cause the penitent any further guilt. For instance, in his twelfth-century *De conversione*, the well-known and influential theologian and Cistercian monk Bernard of Clairvaux, whom Robert Mannyng of Brunne quoted in the earlier passage from *Handlyng Synne*, finds relief from the recollection of sins after they are forgiven by God. He is careful to state that the memories do not disappear, but, rather, they cease to cause the penitent pain:

Hujus indulgentia delet peccatum, non quidem ut a memoria excidat, sed ut quod prius inesse pariter et inficere consuevisset, sic de caetero insit memoriae, ut eam nullatenus decoloret. (XV.28)²⁶

[God's] pardon wipes out sin, not from the memory, but in such a way that what before was both present in the memory and rendered it unclean is now, although it is still in the memory, no longer a defilement to it.]

Bernard, throughout the *De conversione*, describes the memory as the repository for the filth of sin, until, as portrayed here, the sins are pardoned by God and, thus, are cleansed. He does not specifically state why the recollections remain, but it is implied that they serve as reminders for the future, deterrents against other sinful acts. In contrast, the *Fasciculus Morum* indicates that the memory is erased by confession:

Si ergo ad memoriam facta preterita reducere velimus, quomodo, si bene an male, vixerimus, oportet librum consciencie diligenter revolvere [...] Et certe tunc clare poterimus cognoscere que sunt corrigenda et que non, *et per confessionis abrasionem, in qua lingua pro cultello habetur, mala corrigere valeamus.* (V.XXXI.13–33)

[If we, then, wish to bring our past deeds back to memory in order to see how we have lived, whether well or badly, we must carefully leaf through the book of our conscience [...] Then we will certainly be able to discern clearly what needs to be corrected and what not, and *we can correct the errors through the erasure of confession, in which our tongue is used as a pen knife.*]

Verbal confession is a “cultello,” a pen knife that scrapes away the writing, the sins, on the book of our conscience. Sin, then, can be forgotten once it has been properly confessed.²⁷ Unlike Bernard, the *Fasciculus* does not make any provision for retaining guilt-free memories of sin for future instruction. They are, instead, erased as they have no further purpose. The process of recollection comes to an end, at least for a particular set of memories.²⁸

The concepts discussed here through a collection of manuals, handbooks, and treatises provide only a brief background of the prevalent theological and philosophical practice of reviewing the past during confession as well as the issues that pertain to the concern with forgetfulness in the confessional. This tradition emphasizes the personal past, which encompasses the entire record of an individual's behavior and attitudes, as well as the exploration of the history of the soul. The phrase “reducere ad memoriam,” which appears in a significant number of works on this subject, expresses the active process of deliberately searching the memory for any recollection of sin. In this search, there is the risk that certain sins will not be recalled, that they will be forgotten, and it is the responsibility of the penitent, possibly with the help of either his priest or God, to continue hunting for these lost memories until all sins are properly confessed. What remains to be seen then is how the practice of recollection within confession as well as how the anxieties with forgetfulness were adopted and adapted in both secular and religious Middle English literary texts.

NOTES

1. Augustine, *St. Augustine's Confessions*, ed. and trans. William Watts (New York: MacMillan, 1912). All translations, however, and emphases are mine unless otherwise noted (Augustine 1912).
2. For a discussion of *Omnis utriusque sexus*, see Peter Biller, “Confession in the Middle Ages: Introduction,” *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, eds. Peter Biller and Alastair J. Minnis, York Studies in Medieval Theology 2 (York: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), 3–33. For a discussion of confession before the Fourth Lateran Council, see Alexander Murray, “Confession before 1215,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 3 (1993): 51–81. For a post-Fourth Lateran discussion, see Leonard E. Boyle, “The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology,” *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 30–43.

- For an older, yet definitive study of confession, see Henry C. Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church* (Philadelphia: Lea Brothers, 1896) (Biller 1998; Murray 1993; Boyle 1985; Lea 1896).
3. Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. Bernard Standring (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 143 (Riehle 1981).
 4. Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000) (Hilton 2000).
 5. See Chap. 3's discussion concerning Isidore of Seville in *Piers Plowman*.
 6. See Chap. 6's discussion of Boethius.
 7. See the character of *Anima* from *Piers Plowman* in Chap. 3.
 8. Rosemarie Potz McGerr, "Retraction and Memory: Retrospective Structure in the *Canterbury Tales*," *Comparative Literature* 37.2 (1985): 97–113 (102) (McGerr 1985).
 9. Todd Breyfogle, "Memory and Imagination in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Literary Imagination: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Todd Breyfogle (Chicago: U or Chicago P, 1999), 139–154 (140) (Breyfogle 1999).
 10. Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 193.
 11. The same issues with memory exist in texts throughout the medieval time period. However, given the Middle English scope of this study, the works discussed here are mainly confined to the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries.
 12. *Middle English Sermons*, EETS, o.s., 209 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940).
 13. Jane M. Toswell, "Of Dogs, *Cawdels*, and Contrition: A Penitential Motif in *Piers Plowman*," *YLS* 7 (1993): 115–121 (Toswell 1993).
 14. Quotation taken from *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. David Wilkins, 4 vols. (London: Sumptibus R. Gosling, 1737). Emphases added. Translation, with a few revisions, from R.A. Shoaf, "'Mutatio Amoris': 'Penitentia' and the Form of *The Book of the Duchess*," *Genre* 14 (1981): 163–89 (172). Also, see Joseph Goering and Daniel S. Taylor, "The *Summulae* of Bishops Walter de Cantilupe (1240) and Peter Quinel (1287)," *Speculum* 67.3 (1992): 576–94. Goering and Taylor have found that Quinel's *Summula* is practically a reproduction of the *Omnis etas*, which they attribute to Walter de Cantilupe, bishop of Worcester (1236/7–1266). For a more in-depth study of the idea of places as memory devices, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory* (Wilkins 1737; Shoaf 1981; Goering and Taylor 1992).
 15. Shoaf, "'Mutatio Amoris'," 172.
 16. See Chap. 4 for more discussion of *Speculum Christiani*.

17. Peter Brown, "The Decline of the Empire of God: Amnesty, Penance, and the Afterlife from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages," *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds. Caroline Walker-Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 41–59 (54). Jerry Root, in "*Space to Speke*": *The Confessional Subject in Medieval Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 64, states, "The new emphasis on frequent confession transforms the 'space of grace' from the final urgent moments of the deathbed confession to the quotidian experience of daily life. Retrospection and memory give way to a more regular self-examination." This assessment, however, assumes that there is only a long-term memory. Even shorter periods between confessions still require the penitent to recall his sins (Brown 2000; Root 1997).
18. Root, "*Space to Speke*," 62, comments, "The manuals, in addition to designating confession as something private and sacred, indicate that the penitent should fill this space positively. A good confession should be accusing, shameful, and complete, but it should also be voluntary and well ordered." Part of being "well-ordered" is the systematic exploration of memory.
19. Quotations and translations taken from *Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook*, ed. and trans. Siegfried Wenzel (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989) (Wenzel 1989). Emphases added.
20. Quotations from Guibert of Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. and trans. Edmond-René Labande (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981). Emphases added. Translations from *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, trans. Paul J. Archambault (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) (Guibert of Nogent 1981; Archambault 1996).
21. See Chap. 4 for discussion of the confessor's role through the example of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.
22. *A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen: A Prose Version of the Speculum Vitae*, ed. from B.L. MS Harley 45, ed. Venetia Nelson (Heidelberg: Winter, 1981) (Nelson 1981).
23. See Chap. 4's discussion of the confessor role in *Confessio Amantis*.
24. Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1983), 283 (Robert Mannyng of Brunne 1983).

25. For a more complete discussion, see my article “Julian of Norwich and the Sin of Forgetting,” *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41 (2) (2015): 148–162 (Tracy 2015).
26. Quotations from Saint Bernard, *De conversione*, *Patrologia Latina* 182.12. Translation from *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. Gillian R. Evans, ed. Emilie Griffin, Harper Collins Spiritual Classics (New York: Harper Collins, 2005) (Bernard of Clairvaux 2005).
27. See Haukyn from *Piers Plowman* in Chap. 3 and *Confessio Amantis* in Chap. 4 for further discussions of recollection after confession.
28. The Middle English drama *Everyman* and its reliance upon man’s “book of reckoning” may be a literary example of this tabulation and erasure.

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