Saints, Scholars, and the World of the *Carmina Burana*

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The Benediktbeuern *Ludus de Nativitate*, a church play composed sometime in the twelfth or thirteenth century and performed during the season of Advent, opens with an odd set of stage directions: "First let the station of Augustine be placed in the front part of the church, and let Augustine have on his right side Isaiah and Daniel and the other prophets, whereas on the left are Archisynagogus and his Jews."[1] The call for St. Augustine of Hippo to appear on stage with a group of ancient prophets is odd because Augustine himself was an outspoken critic of the theatre—we know him better in the company of church fathers like Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Jerome, chorusing loudly the official posture of Christendom against the "idolatrous" art of dramatic performance.[2] No patriarch, in fact, was better qualified than Augustine to preach the spiritual dangers of the playhouse, since no patriarch had more intimate experience with them prior to spiritual conversion; one of the earliest acts of youthful rebellion he records in the *Confessions* is a habit of lying to his parents and schoolmasters so he "could watch some futile show or…imitate what I saw on the stage," and while indulging in the vices of maturity as a student at Carthage, he found in the drama of the pagans both a cathartic balm for his guilty conscience and inspiration for further bad behavior: "I was much attracted by the theatre because the plays reflected my own unhappy plight and were the tinder to my fire. Why is it that men enjoy feeling sad at the sight of tragedy and suffering on the stage, although they would be most unhappy if they had to endure the same fate themselves?"[3] In Augustine's polemic, the activity of theatre is not only corrupt in its very nature ("futile"), but it also facilitates the moral corruption of its audiences through the influence of mimesis. So what is he doing on a medieval stage?

In what follows, I argue that the presence of Augustine on stage, together with other representations of the church father in literary texts of the period, manifests another facet of his reception and interpretation within the university cultures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For the scholars and clerics responsible for literary texts like the *Ludus de Nativitate*, Augustine represented far more than his doctrinal or theological positions. Rather, Augustine's self-representation in the *Confessions* became a mirror for their own experiences and a model for their literary interests, and the mimetic relationship that developed between them shaped, in turn, how Augustine was depicted on stage and represented on the page. However, if the medieval scholars and clerics discovered in Augustine a spiritual father with whom they could most intimately identify, they also found in him a heavy burden of influence; Augustine—who had mastered (so it seemed) the canon of Greco-Roman literature and philosophy only to convert to Christianity and lay the foundations of its theological tradition—posed a formidable intellectual precedent for Christian scholars encountering for the first time Virgil, Cicero, and the rest of the pagans via their education in Latin. The anxieties of this influence, the challenge for the medieval scholars of living up to the legacies of Augustine and the burden of living in his shadow, created, I will argue, a culture of curious-mindedness and scholastic ambition that would carry into Renaissance, setting the stage for intellectual overreachers like Doctor Faustus.

In order to trace this reception, I'll first consider how Augustine's body of writing reflects the character of the twelfth-century manuscript in which the *Ludus de Nativitate* appears. The play itself is one of six religious dramas grouped together in the *Carmina*

Burana, a literary manuscript discovered in the Benediktbeuern monastery of Bavaria and notorious for another oddity—namely, that its editor (or editors) unceremoniously lumped the religious drama alongside a larger set of secular texts. Indeed, the "Benediktbeuern plays" and the so-called "songs of the *Carmina Burana,*" which range from satirical and topical verse to secular love lyrics to bawdy parodies of hymns and prayers,[4] combine to form an anthology of such heterogeneity that modern critics have been more comfortable imagining the pious and profane material as separate, almost dichotomous spheres.

The critical division is largely the response to a question of authorship. With many of the poems and plays possessing no known provenance outside the manuscript itself, critics have assigned different, at times competing cultural contexts to interpret texts that have been physically bound together. While Anne Duggan asserts, for instance, that the essential context for interpreting the *Carmina Burana* (with all its church drama) is "the student world of the late twelfth-early thirteenth century,"[5] David Bevington nonetheless maintains that the "chief aim" of the dramatic art is "to create beautiful works of wisdom and piety" commonly associated with the cloisters.[6] Criticism generally follows Bevington's assumption when interpreting the *ludi*, attributing the church drama to the efforts of reverent monks while casting the secular verse onto the revelry of goliardic students. To do so, however, is to treat as unclean a cultural inheritance that Augustine had long since made clean, by virtue of his exegetical writings together with his own autobiography.

The *Confessions*, it will help to recall, is also a text that turns on the co-mingling of its secular and sacred content, doubling as a discourse for edification and sordid tell-all of life before faith. Before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine's days as a young scholar inside the Roman Empire—wandering from Thagaste to Madaura, from Carthage to Rome—were as much consumed with *panem et circenses* as the search for philosophical truth. At age sixteen began his sexual addiction, a habit apparently at its worst after transferring his studies from small-town Madaura to Carthage.[7] Away from home in the big city of Carthage, he simultaneously rose to the top of his class in rhetoric and fell in with a student group known as the 'Wreckers.' For a while, Augustine admits, he "found their friendship a pleasure," and he himself had "swollen with conceit" over his superior intellectual status within the group. Yet the frat proved so gleefully perverse, violent, and vain that Augustine was driven to his first conversion experience—he had been reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, and its power completely "altered [his] outlook on life": "All my empty dreams suddenly lost their charm and my heart began to throb with a bewildering passion for the wisdom of eternal truth."[8]

Augustine is still about five books from the garden in Milan, and while he does describe his continued migration between fashionable philosophical circles of the day (the Sensualists, the Manicheans, etc.), his pursuit of eternal truth probably seemed to most readers like the more conventional quest of careerism and worldly ambition. After qualifying to instruct students of his own, he quickly decided to follow his friend Alypius to Rome, and it's hard not to smile at the reason: the Carthaginian students, he had

discovered, were indeed "beyond control and their behavior disgraceful," and Rome was said to provide a more stable learning environment.[9] From Rome he travelled to Milan, using his Manichean contacts to win the coveted position of "teacher of literature and elocution for the city."[10] Augustine himself puts it succinctly in a later passage: "I was eager for fame and wealth and marriage."[11] Certainly it is an honest self-assessment and value-critique, but it is as much to say that before his life of celibacy and leadership in the African church, Augustine lived the life of every well-educated Roman citizen with aspirations beyond his inherited station. A stable professorship, an influential marriage, perhaps a comfortable position in the imperial government one day—these, Augustine had to confess, were the real (if altogether predictable) reasons he had first sailed to Italy.[12]

Nonetheless, Aurelius Augustinus did become St. Augustine of Hippo, whose intellectual and spiritual influence over the intellectual and spiritual landscape of the Latin West was vast. Which is why his authorized *bildungsroman*—with its portrait of a scholar's existence as he slouches towards the Church—would exercise such an immense influence over the very first university students of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. For the scholars of medieval Europe, whose poems and plays would constitute the *Carmina Burana*, it was the *young* Augustine who had shaped into a typological precursor. [13] Roughly eight centuries after Augustine offered his *Confessions* to the Church, the Archpoet of Cologne offered to High Scholasticism a "Confession" of his own:

Pardon, pray you, good my lord,
  Master of discretion,
But this death I die is sweet
  Most delicious poison.
Wounded to the quick am I
  By a young girl's beauty:
She's beyond my touching? Well,
  Can't the mind do duty?[14]

The Archpoet's irreverent ode to his vices offers the best lyrical window into the goliardic lifestyles of the early university scholars,[15] and it plays primarily with the narrative that provided the clearest model for a frowned upon way of life in the European Middle Ages. When, for example, the poem's speaker begs pardon from an unnamed "good my lord," in all likelihood he is addressing an earthly master with little or no real authority over him. This is because the Parisian schools were such an anomaly, the emerging social classes of "Scholars" and "Masters" so new, that church and state were still sorting out who exactly had official charge of whom, and the Archpoet's confessor is taking full advantage of the confusion. Meanwhile, whoever was personally instructing so unruly a student was probably relying on the tuition dollars to make ends meet, and so was unlikely to take strong action either way.[16] Yet if the *Confessio* narrator is travestying the sincerity and seriousness required of an earthly confession in celebration of the new world order's moral and spiritual license, he is also miming the confession of

that first and greatest of goliards, namely Augustine, who also freely accused himself to his Lord with a list of the same vices and was by all accounts pardoned.

Wild oats and bacchanalia aside, there are other clear parallels between the biographies of church father and spiritual sons. Perhaps the most significant overlap was in the nature and purpose of their educational experiences, since what the twelfth century schoolmasters probably considered a progressive revision of the earlier monastic curriculum would have undoubtedly struck Augustine as a reversion—back to the models of Late Antiquity under which he himself developed. For the goliards, the gradual transition of learning "from cloister to cathedral," prioritizing in effect competence in public service over moral and spiritual development, reflected the demands of an increasingly hierarchical, professionalized network of bureaucracies then emerging across Western Europe, both secular and ecclesiastical. The education needed to meet these demands was, in short, the Latin language—specifically the Latin of Cicero's rhetoric, of Virgil's and of Ovid's poetry, and of Terence's drama—all of which became the bedrock of a curriculum that drew heavily from pagan literature and philosophy even as it continued to assume the supremacy of Christianity and its patristic tradition.[17] For the ambitious goliard just as for Augustine, then, the difference between patronage and poverty, between public appointment (entry level clerical position at the papal court!) and private disappointment (parish secretary work back home…), was an intimate knowledge of the *lingua franca* their international communities shared, a *lingua franca* acquired via careful study and imitation of the pagans.

It's not as if Augustine's example was competing for influence. As far as ancient autobiographies go, the *Confessions* is one of a kind, and medieval scholasticism was awash in all of Augustine's writings, the *Confessions* included. While debates will go on about Augustine's historical reception and interpretation, his general eminence in the Middle Ages cannot be disputed; it is possible that he was the most widely *cited* author between the fifth and fifteenth centuries,[18] although to say so risks obscuring the influence of his writings over discourses other than theology (imaginative literature, for example). From Bede to Bernard of Clairvaux, anyone interpreting the Scriptures during the medieval period at some point referred to the great African bishop, so that his "texts" were primarily encountered not in manuscript editions but rather in the references, footnotes, and glosses of subsequent church authors using him as both source and inspiration. If for earlier monastics this filtration process lent to Augustine an aura of infallibility approaching that of Holy Writ, the impression had only strengthened for university scholars of the twelfth century, who saw his sermons finally incorporated into the church's liturgy and used as the basis for sacred iconographical and architectural developments.[19] The *Confessions*, too, was disseminated in this manner, often "copied alongside anti-heretical works" addressed to more intractable theological controversies like Pelagianism or predestination.[20] There is no question, in other words, of Augustine's stature in monastic circles, where even the story of his total depravity could be wrangled into the service of orthodoxy.

But can we imagine readings of the *Confessions* that were other than orthodox? Setting aside the fierce competition between contemporary "Augustinian" orders, which left any "orthodox" reading of the text in a permanent state of heterodoxy, the *vagantes clerici* were not much interested in reading within the bounds of religious propriety anyway. They looked instead for opportunities to "thumb their collective nose at the very academic and ecclesiastical establishment that nurtured them,"[21] and the Archpoet's titular allusion is in this respect a case in point. Beyond the irresistible opportunities for lewd play presented by the text's subject matter, though, was the growing opportunity for the medieval clerics and scholars to read in Augustine's life the contours of their own biography. We know from manuscript research that the number of extant copies of the *Confessions* surged in the twelfth century[22] (the same century, to recall, in which the *Carmina Burana* was composed), a surge with at least two relevant implications: first, the full, unabridged account of Augustine's life was becoming more available, replacing those de-contextualized fragments only pertinent to theological aid and allowing for a clearer, more coherent sense of the extent to which their experiences mirrored one another. Second, the rise in surviving manuscripts suggests the possibility that the *Confessions*, a Latin text, had itself become a part of the educational curriculum. It's worth asking whether passages from the patriarch's autobiography were copied alongside its pagan counterparts on grounds of linguistic and rhetorical development, since to encounter the narrative in such a setting would inevitably foreground Augustine's own experiences as a student learning to think and speak like a Roman. Faced with the apparent contradiction of a church father whose conduct in early life was less than saintly

yet whose particular example was actively exalted as worthy of emulation, it is really no wonder where the medieval scholars and clerics found license to express themselves in words and in deeds that might, at times, seem secular.

Of all the sub-cultures and people-groups critically examined in the history of Augustine's reception across the European Middle Ages,[23] the scholars as a distinct social group have yet to receive sufficient treatment. This is partly due to the difficulties in discerning a distinct history of reception as such: first, because the scholars represent so porous a "caste" (in other words, they move on to other professions in which their ideas and perceptions of Augustine are inevitably subsumed and otherwise altered); and second, because in them many of the different critical narratives already intersect and compete. The shapes of their own attitudes and responses to the church father are easily obscured by the formally recognizable discourses of those talking *at* them, be they teaching or preaching or proselytizing. Yet it is precisely their dynamic, complex reception that makes the story so interesting, since it helped produce some of the most varied and rich literature of the period. Furthermore, an account of Augustine's influence over the late twelfth-, early thirteenth- century scholars will necessarily impact how we interpret their literary texts, starting with a critical reexamination of the sacred-secular divide. The relationship between these two categories becomes, in fact, far more dialectical, and it achieves synthesis in the very person of Augustine, a figure uniquely suited in medieval Western Europe to speak to and represent both its monastic and goliardic cultures.

My point here is close, I think, to the view of Peter Comestor, master and chancellor of the schools at Notre Dame and an advocate for a more collaborative approach to the study of theology between the university scholars of his schools and the canons regular of St. Victor; in an effort to reach across the aisle, he gave a sermon to the community of St. Victor in which he argued that his students should not be excluded from the spiritual company of both the monks and the canons regular, since all were descendants of the same spiritual father:

> For Augustine, just like a pregnant mother, has two breasts, a left one and a right one. At the left sit scholars of theology nourished with a form of doctrine; at the right canons regular nourished with a form of life. These two breasts are the exposition of Scripture and the rules of canonical life. He is therefore our teacher [as] he is your founder.[24]

Although Comestor does not, it seems, realize that Augustine had also "nourished" the wandering scholars with their own form of life, he nonetheless reminds the canons that the figure they imagine is distancing them from their worldlier counterparts, the university scholars, is precisely the figure which binds them so closely to the scholars. Hilduin, chancellor at the abbey school of St. Denis, likewise described Augustine as the common spiritual father of three groups of clerics: scholars, to whom he gave instruction; secular clerics, whom he reformed; and canons regular, for whom he established a special rule of life.[25] The same figure, then, that puts these supposedly dissimilar social groups in relationship is that which puts sacred and secular cultures in relationship more generally:

because both cultures issued from the mouth of the period's dominant authority the interpretation of texts from manuscript collections like the *Carmina Burana*—dramatic, lyric, or otherwise—should account for the ways in which these cultures mutually qualify and contextualize one another.

There remains, to be sure, something strangely *traditional* about such an approach, since in Christian thought the "sacred" has always relied on the "secular," not just as a binary term against which to define itself, but rather as its original point of departure, the fallen condition out of which it must emerge and so permanently bound to it. Long before St. Augustine, it was St. Paul who deliberately traded on his reputation as the "chief of sinners" to fashion himself into a champion of the early church (1 Tim 1:15); and the *Confessions* as such, while unique in its recognizably autobiographical form, is far from unprecedented in its confessional content. That tradition—in which the intimate details of one's squalid spiritual state are fully disclosed to the Christian community—had already been established by Paul as well, who is on the Scriptural record "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" prior to his spiritual conversion. (Acts 9:1) Indeed, neither Augustine nor Paul were ever so pious as to imagine a clear break between Christian theology and pagan philosophy; when, for instance, Augustine claims Virgil and Plato as honorary forerunners to Christianity,[26] he is again taking Paul's lead when atop of Mars Hill he claimed that the Athenians had, in fact, been worshipping Christ all along, only their worship had been misdirected towards an idol under the misnomer of "the unknown God." (Acts 17:22-31) It is this hybrid

tradition the medieval *clerici* would extend, embracing at once the glories of the pagan past and the riches of Christian truth; in their lives as well as their writings, they were following after Augustine, even as he had followed after Paul (plus Virgil and Plato).[27]

And of course, everyone was still following after Christ, which is why *The Christmas Play* calls for a church father to lead three Hebrew prophets, a priest, and a pagan oracle on stage: so that all can act as witnesses to the birth of Jesus re-enacted just a few scenes later. As for Augustine's anti-theatrical bias, it is his own supposed polemic against the Jews that prompts his posthumous conversion—a sermon, composed sometime during the sixth century but spuriously attributed to Augustine throughout the Middle Ages, entitled *Contra Judaeos, Paganos, et Arianos Sermo de Symbolo*, functions as the basic source-text for the *Ordo Prophetarum* and its subsequent liturgical and dramatic treatments.[28] The sermon cites in "lively dramatic" fashion the various Scriptural and non-Scriptural personages thought to have testified, whether directly or indirectly, to the coming Incarnation. Although Augustinian authorship has since been discredited, his spirit clearly hovers over the text; there is, for example, the *Adversus Judaeos*, an earlier and authentic tract/sermon of Augustine's in which, while outlining the ways that Christ and Christianity have spiritually superseded the old, "carnal" law of the Jews, he interprets several passages from the Psalms where David prophesies of a coming Messiah who is Jesus.[29] There is also the moment in the *City of God* in which Virgil is brought into the fold of approved prophets via the inspired utterances of the Erythraean Sibyl.[30] Yet the traditional number of credible witnesses required to confirm

the legitimacy of Jesus' divine office[31] had by the twelfth century ballooned into a host of biblical personages, including Balaam's Ass and Nebuchadnezzar, all ready to chorus the coming of Christ; one of the latest known iterations of the *Ordo Prophetarum*, played in the cathedral at Rouen in France, features no fewer than twenty-eight prophets in costume (Moses with his tablets, Aaron with his rod) for the Christmas *festum asinorum*.[32]

The Benediktbeuern *Christmas* pares down the number of processing prophets to five: Isaiah, Daniel, the Sibyl, Aaron, and the crowd-pleaser Balaam. The reduced roster hints at a growing realization that the number of prophetic witnesses to a miraculous event that *will* happen hardly matters unless there is a credible witness to later confirm that it actually *did* happen. Such authority, the text suggests immediately by way of theatre space, is given to Augustine alone, and so the bishop is positioned as a figure of consummation, succeeding where even the Major Prophets fail in confirming the historical truth of the virgin birth. Augustine is "placed in the front part of the church" with the ancient prophets on his right and a cohort of dissident Jews on his left, creating a visual impression that conforms to iconography witnessed in other visual media[33] in medieval art: he is not only situated at the head of a line of canonical prophets, but seated also in a location of central eminence—the apex, so to speak—towards which both lines are striving. The prophets extend appropriately from Augustine's right side, traditionally the position of strength and paternal sanction, symbolizing the correctness of their messages concerning Christ; at the same time, the passage of the Hebrew prophets' line

through a Roman patriarch before its final destination in Jesus seamlessly passes the spiritual torch on to Christ even as it tacitly filters out his Jewish blood.

The impressive imagery of Augustine's initial appearance is matched verbally: when his "mind" is eventually invoked by the Boy Bishop and prophets alike to correct the aggravations of Archisynagogus and his followers, Augustine's opening summons echoes the rhetorical cadences of YHWH when addressing the Israelites, employing the royal plural with reference to his retinue of prophets: "Let this nation concealed in darkness/Come forth to us/And let this people given to error/Present itself to us…" (184) The effect of these comments, staged in such a way, is to make out of Isaiah, Daniel, and the rest of the attending prophets not so much a series of typological forerunners for which Augustine is the next fulfillment; the prophets instead appear more as a series of Augustinian emanations—or rather personae, since this is theatre[34]—stretching back past Isaiah to Moses and further still, all of whom spring from that single consciousness which is the source of all they say. What amounts to Augustine's on stage supersession is made all the more explicit when we keep in mind the *Ordo*'s fundamental revision of its earlier sermonic source: whereas in the *Sermo*, (pseudo-) Augustine appeals to the authority of the biblical prophets in order to justify his own message, in *The Christmas Play* it is the prophets who must "consult the mind of Augustine" in order to confirm the truth of their speech.

Perhaps our best gauge of the pomp and pageantry attendant upon Augustine's arrival is the reaction it provokes in his challenger: "O Augustine/By your genius you convey/Matters of greatest profundity,' answers Archisynagogus to his summons, with

all the deflationary sarcasm that Augustine has earned, 'when you predict the occurrence/Of a thing reason denies!" (185) It is for impious comments like these that Archisynagogus is usually considered one of the play's main sources of "dramatic interest."[35] I agree, but I want to reconsider what is thought to be the source of his vitality, since readings of his character tend to be skewed by the same divided consciousness that has troubled interpretation of the *Carmina Burana* manuscript as a whole. Karl Young makes a fine spokesperson for those critics who see Archisynagogus as one of the text's "worldly" features at odds with its devotional purpose:

> The literary sophistication [of the Benediktbeuern *Christmas*], and the formal learning of which it is made the vehicle, testify to the scholastic authorship of the play. It may be that it was composed by the pupils of the monastery, who put their heads together for a display of their grammatical, scientific, and philosophical attainments; or [it] may belong to the stock of the *vagantes*…the ascription of it to the wandering scholars is suggested by the element of worldly learning, and by the possibilities of humour in the role of Archisynagogus. In general, however, the play maintains its tone of learned gravity, supported by quotations from the Vulgate and not a few liturgical pieces.[36]

Young's procedure, his unstable either/or—which emphasizes the play's "learned gravity" so characteristic of the monastics even as he acknowledges the text's worldlier aspects and then displaces them onto the *vagantes*—has evolved surprisingly little over time. Efforts have been made, for example, to see Archisynagogus as something more

than a disposable anti-Semitic caricature or mere parodic buffoonery; but because the underlying assumption remains that whatever he represents is intended only to be soundly refuted in the name of "wisdom and piety," his function as a dialectical counterpart to Augustine has gone unrecognized.

In fact, Archisynagogus does possess many of the character qualities normally associated with the thirteenth century university/scholar world—so many, the text implies, that we should see him as an embodiment of that culture. When "frenzy and licentious use of wine" are not driving him and his cohort to "distraction," (184) he puns on classical literature wittily,[37] travesties scriptural passages irreverently,[38] and most tellingly of all, he challenges any and all comers to bouts of dialectical contest. It's true the debate between Augustine and Archisynagogus ingeniously incorporates the platform of polemical, anti-Jewish literature so popular during the period as an immediately recognizable (and officially sanctioned) auspice under which their argument may take place.[39] But dialectical dispute was hardly confined to allegorical debates between Church and Synagogue, and along with the common practice of church authors using Jewish opponents as surrogates for subversive ideas and doctrinal doubts arising from within the Christian community itself,[40] it is worth noting that the character of Augustine does not easily fit into the frame of allegorical polemic either—for the simple fact that he is not treated allegorically. His name is not, after all, "Church" or "Arch-Ecclesia." What's more, Archisynagogus takes a single (albeit brutal) cheap shot at Augustine's sexual history during their argument, mocking and discrediting his message of a virgin birth while at the same time particularizing his identity: "Why do you contradict/Stung by

your former downfall…" (185) That "stung" carries enough innuendo to signal the sort of "downfall" Archisynagogus is talking about: Augustine, as everyone knows, has enough experience in sexual matters to understand how the process of reproduction works, so talk of a virgin birth rings especially hollow in his mouth.

Archisynagogus's character traits together with his debate tactics suggest another, more popular venue for theological disputation. With the formal introduction of Aristotelian logic into schools in Paris, Oxford, and other major European cities, the process of *quaestiones disputatae* had become widespread in the twelfth century as the preferred mode of argumentation, interreligious or otherwise. More to the point, it had become the preferred weapon amongst the cleverest students looking to simultaneously embarrass their schoolmasters intellectually and forge a reputation for personal talent.[41] And it was not just the young scholars with a reputation for effective disputation; despite a pedagogical model of "inspired learning" that can be put together using several of his later texts, Augustine himself was better known as an advocate for the method and technique of logical dialectic, and he was also widely held as its premier practitioner:

> Since logic has such tremendous power, anyone who charges that it is foolish to study this [art], thereby shows himself to be a fool of fools…not to mention Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, who as our forefathers relate, initiated [the science of] philosophy and brought it to perfection, Father Augustine, *with whom it is rash to disagree*, praised logic so highly that only the foolhardy and presumptuous would dare rail against it.[42]

Salisbury's argument here is aimed in two directions: he would dispute, on the one hand, with any monk or hermit disparaging the study of formal logic as time better spent on the Holy Scriptures, pointing in the first place to Augustinian precedent. By the same token, any impudent scholar who thinks his superficial grasp of Aristotle is sufficient to debunk the mysteries of faith will have to answer a theologian who "at the age of twenty…managed to read and understand all the books of Aristotle…without help"[43] only to dismiss them in favor of Christianity's deeper truths. We'll soon explore how Augustine's own supposedly easy grasp of what became Scholasticism's curriculum proved burdensome for those scholars struggling to master the basics of Aristotelian logic; but for Salisbury's most gifted students, the thought of disagreeing with the ultimate schoolmaster, father Augustine, must have made their mouths water, since success would mean a secure intellectual reputation and a successful career within the universities.

Properly framed, the confrontation between Archisynagogus and Augustine represents not simply a confrontation between every scholar or cleric to receive a university education and the patriarch who is at once his rival, friend, father, and master, although this is certainly what it is; it represents a confrontation between these two parties just as a twelfth century scholar might have imagined it—performed, that is, on stage and with an audience watching, as "live" an encounter as any classroom packed with students awaiting the outcome of a tense debate between their teacher and a haughty peer. Augustine, for his part, enters into the debate with Archisynagogus, albeit in a way that immediately closes off the debate and makes reason irrelevant to their discussion.

When Archisynagogus states his essential claim—that "to believe from inviolable virginity/Should thus proceed a small child/Is to believe erroneously" on grounds that an immaculate conception is a "thing reason denies" and "a confusion in the order of things" (185)—Augustine counters in the terms of his opponent:

> At the fortunate occurrence
>
> Of such a unique event,
>
> These arguments and sophistical precepts
>
> Are manifestly defective
>
> For reason teaches
>
> That nature is not rejected
>
> If once you see something revealed
>
> That is beyond the ordinary. (186)

Reason, claims Augustine very reasonably, is a discourse that knows, and is always talking about, its own limitations, being itself bound to the natural world. The laws governing the ordinary order of things, laws expounded in the philosophical/scientific investigations of Aristotle, remain as fixed and firmly established as Archisynagogus insists; however, this does not preclude, so Augustine argues, the extraordinary (read: unreasonable) action of God breaking into and working within that system. When we speak of a "unique event" in which the divine intervenes in history, we are, manifestly, not speaking reasonably. We are speaking of "something revealed" from "beyond the ordinary," and must therefore adopt new terms—the terms of faith. To which Archisynagogus responds:

> He should say "the man is dead";
>
> Besides, this is taken for granted,
>
> Which in Aristotle
>
> Is explained for children.
>
> But this rule of yours
>
> Then suffers rebuttal
>
> When talk reaches us
>
> Of "a virgin mother"! (186)

The language of Archisynagogus' rebuttal is difficult to parse (Bevington glosses the first line as "obscure" and then attempts, somewhat arduously, to reconstruct the rest). I myself prefer to interpret Archisynagogus' incoherence as part of the play's brilliance: on the one hand, Archisynagogus falters in his contest with Augustine, having been unexpectedly disarmed of the only argumentative mode in which he is trained i.e. logic and reason. On the other hand, he actually assumes the alternative language of "unreason" suggested by Augustine, except in its more commonly, and comically, understood sense: the language of madness. Error.

For Augustine, the language of unreason is a language of faith that begins with wonder, and he does everything he can to make out of his audience wonder-wounded hearers. His crowning imagistic analogy—whereby he compares the harmless passage of sunlight through glass with the "descent" of Christ into the virgin womb of Mary, (187) doubtless gesturing to the gorgeous stained glass windows of the cathedral in which the performance was held—is followed swiftly by choral singing and antiphonal responses

between Augustine and the prophets drenched in figurative language and biblical poetry. Archisynagogus and his followers are likewise caught up in the antiphonal responsories…only instead, they attempt to interrupt the songs of praise with shouts of objections and denials:

> The untouched bride brought forth the king
>
> Of kings,
>
> A thing to be wondered at,
>
> […] *Let Archisynagogus say with his companions:*
>
> A thing to be denied!
>
> *Again Augustine with his followers:*
>
> A thing to be wondered at!
>
> *Again Archisynagogus with his companions*:
>
> A thing to be denied!
>
> *Let this be done several times* (187)

The back and forth is undeniably hilarious, but to characterize the choral exchanges as nothing more than a ridiculous "shouting match"[44] is to miss that their quarrel extends the dialectical confrontation never formally concluded between Augustine and Archisynagogus. Even when opportunities for a scene of straightforward worship are most available, those opportunities are consistently refused; instead, attempts to proceed with what could turn into a worship service are constantly undercut, and the worship itself intruded upon by voices of dissent and doubt. These interruptions function, in effect, as the only possible rebuttal to Augustine's reasoning against reason, but it is a

very complicating rebuttal nonetheless. In this case, the caricaturized "stubborn Jew" becomes a vehicle for some very troubling theological complications: if, for Augustine, faith begins with "wonder," what happens when wonder fails to capture the audience, or else is not allowed to capture it? Or, what's worse, what if "wonder" is exposed as nothing but an aesthetic effect, a trick of the art?

Augustine himself is spared the direct force of these questions by the opening curtain to the play proper. After Augustine exhorts Archisynagogus to sit and watch with him the nativity story and thereby learn the truth concerning Christ's birth (if hymns can't convince the Jews maybe a bit of theatre can…), both take their seats as fellow audience members, and we are transported to the Annunciation scene described in the Gospel of Luke.[45] As it turns out, it is the angel Gabriel who, after delivering Augustine's message to Mary concerning her virgin birth, will face Archisynagogus' answer in more explicit terms (we are meant, I think, to recognize the conflation of Gabriel with Augustine, who has finally achieved apotheosis). When Gabriel later attempts to deliver his prophesy to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the field, he is unexpectedly contradicted by a devil, and this third annunciation scene (counting the prophets) proceeds to re-stage the argument between Augustine and Archisynagogus more or less exactly. Most crucial is the devil's open mockery of the tactic used by Augustine and the angel alike to breach the dispute's impasse:

> You simpleminded folk, look
>
> How adroit [the angel] is,

Who thus makes

Contraries out of the truth!

And, that his lies

Might deceive with trifles,

All that he utters

He represents in harmonious song. (197, my emphasis)

Initially these clear-headed assertions are enough to block the lone angel's intoxicating music; however, after more comic back and forth—now occasioned by the bewildered shepherds walking on and off stage, caught helplessly between both parties—a group of angels suddenly gather and cancel the dispute with a burst of loud, choral singing. The shepherds, for their part, manage to confirm unwittingly the truth of the devil's speech even as they joyfully embark on their journey to see the God-child:

At this angelic song

I draw my breath deeply;

At this song I have within me

The joy of lute-playing!

Let us go forward therefore

Together to the manger,

And with bent knees

Let us adore the son. (198, my emphasis)

The shepherd's irrational response to the dispute, embodying as it does both positions in uneasy tension, parodies a satisfying resolution to the conflict, one that ultimately fails to appear.

Or is a resolution to the debate beside the point? Between the attempted liturgy, the spoiled worship service, and the scholastic disputation, it can be easy to forget that we remain planted squarely in the mimetic world of theatre, a world with its own curious sovereignty.[46] Augustine himself was at once fascinated and exasperated by the particular freedom of the theatre—fascinated because the art so bravely flouts the conventions of the natural world, yet exasperated because the natural world seems paradoxically *more* involved precisely in those moments its boundaries are being transcended: "But what sort of pity can we really feel for an imaginary scene on the stage?' he asks of an art for which, we'll remember, he no longer cares. "The audience is not called upon to offer help but only to feel sorrow [or joy, or even faith…], and the more they are pained the more they applaud the author. *Whether this human agony is based on fact or is simply imaginary*, if it is acted so badly that the audience is not moved to sorrow, they leave the theatre in a disgruntled and critical mood; whereas, if they are made to feel pain, they stay to the end watching happily."[47]

Whether he realized it or not, Augustine offers here a poignant meditation on the powerful effects that his own tragi-comedy, the *Confessions*, would have on readers; the narrative's influence on the medieval scholars alone manifested itself in the most practical, real-world terms, however fabulous the fiction. As Augustine begs indulgence

from his audience at the autobiography's close, the echoes of theatre and mimesis in the midst of his theological speculations are unmistakable: "When they hear me speak about myself,' he wonders aloud to God, with the reader in his peripheral vision, 'how do they know whether I am telling the truth, *since no one knows a man's thoughts, except the man's own spirit that is within him* (1 Cor. 2:11)?"

> But if they listen to what you [God] tell them about themselves, they cannot say 'The Lord is lying', for to heed what you tell them about themselves is simply to recognize themselves for what they are. But charity believes all things—all things, that is, which are spoken by those who are joined as one in charity—and for this reason I, too, O Lord, make my confession aloud in the hearing of men. For although I cannot prove to them that my confessions are true, at least I shall be believed by those whose ears are opened to me by charity."[48]

All of which is to say, the drama of another life may teach you a lot about your own, provided a little Christian charity suspends your disbelief. With Augustine back from the dead, not to mention an angelic chorus and a virgin birth, the *Christmas* players probably prayed for charity from their audience too.

While Augustine had indeed proven in some respects a liberating precursor, inspiring the scholar's wandering, goliardic existence and justifying their love for pagan literature, he established, at the same time, a daunting precedent for those Christian scholars who sought to emulate his career. His intellectual reputation—which, as we have

already seen, he promoted in the *Confessions* and which contemporary biographies and apocryphal stories steadily inflated—played an important role in fueling Scholasticism's culture of curious-mindedness, worldly aspiration, and scholarly achievement; that culture produced, in turn, such "damnable" scholars as Peter Abelard, against whom prominent monastics like Bernard of Clairvaux would proclaim, "There are men who wish for knowledge merely in order to know; it is ugly curiosity," and whose example conservative schoolmasters like Richard of St. Victor would use as a warning to his own students:

> It is one thing to search rashly that which is impossible, however it may be useful, and it is another thing to investigate that which is useless, however it may be possible. The former belongs to the domain of excessive heights, and the latter to that of superfluous products. Presumption in incomprehensible things is forbidden…[49]

Although such warnings against the vain pursuit of knowledge, commonly associated with the vice of pride, derived from multiple sources and were ultimately rooted in Scripture, they also echoed the language of Augustine in the *Confessions*, who weaves them throughout the narrative of his educational experiences at Carthage. More interestingly, he invokes them constantly as he recounts his dealings with the major influence on his early thought and character: a Manichean bishop named Faustus, described by Augustine as a "great decoy of the devil" who had "charmed" many people into becoming Manicheans with his eloquent rhetoric and reputation for great learnedness.[50] In the Renaissance, of course, the character of Faustus would come to

represent the quintessential "doomed scholar" when the immensely popular *History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*—the historicity of which was vouchsafed by the letters and sermons of Luther and Melanchthon[51]—spread his dealings with the devil across Europe; Marlowe further contributed to the legend's cultural dissemination, adapting the story to the Elizabethan stage and summarizing his fate in the play's epilogue:

> Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
> And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
> That sometime grew within this learned man.
> Faustus is gone. Regard his hellish fall,
> Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
> Only to wonder at unlawful things,
> Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
> To practice more than heavenly power permits.[52]

Marlowe's representation of Faustus has been interpreted as entirely a product of the Early Modern period, the "epitome of Renaissance aspiration…[representing] all the divine discontent, the unwearied and unsatisfied striving after knowledge that marked the age in which Marlowe wrote."[53] I think, however, that the Early Modern Faustus was inherited from the university cultures of the 12th and 13th centuries, and it emerged, ironically enough, out of what E.L. Saak has termed "myth of Augustine" being actively cultivated at the time[54]; the clerics and scholars who took the church father as a model for

intellectual life had taken, in Saak's words, "a fiction, a fantasm,"[55] one that fostered the same impulses and vices for which Faustus was later damned.

It is worth observing, first of all, how closely Augustine himself resembles the Faustus of the *Confessions* who so suddenly turns from intellectual hero to religious rival. During his time at Carthage, Augustine confesses that he, too, was a Manichean, and he was also teacher of rhetoric at Carthage. He recalls "badly" wanting Faustus to come to the city and dispel his doubts about the divination and astrological practices of their sect. Although their mathematical formulas had proven successful in foretelling various equinoxes and eclipses, and their powers of prediction were "a source of wonder and astonishment to men who did not know their secrets," their calculations often conflicted with those which Augustine had carefully studied in "other books."[56] More troubling still, a "man of deep understanding" had advised him in a "kind and fatherly way" to consider the Manicheans sciences as nothing but a faux science, the successes of which were better explained by probability and chance. For example: "[The old man] said that people sometimes opened a book of poetry at random, and although the poet had been thinking, as he wrote, of some different matter, it often happened that the reader placed his finger on a verse which had a remarkable bearing on his problem. It was not surprising, then, that the mind of man, quite unconsciously…should hit upon some thing that answered to the circumstances and the facts of a particular question."[57]

Matters were hardly settled when Faustus actually did arrive in Carthage—Faustus, whose reputation for philosophical brilliance held Augustine in "keen

expectation" for nine years, had proved a novice in philosophical disputation, and he had failed to adequately address any of Augustine's questions about astrology. The result was, at first, severe disappointment: "I began to lose hope that he could lift the veil and resolve the problems which perplexed me."[58] In retrospect, however, Augustine realizes he had not waited for Faustus in vain; on the contrary, it was Faustus who had turned him toward Christian truth, albeit inadvertently by way of his failure, and he credits the irony to the far deeper wisdom of God's providential design: "The keen interest which I had had in Manichean doctrines was checked by this experience…so it was that, unwittingly and without intent, Faustus who had been a deadly snare to many now began to release me from the trap in which I had been caught. For in the mystery of your providence, my God, your guiding hand did not desert me."[59]

Throughout the *Confessions*, Augustine deliberately identifies his former self in sinners like Faustus, with the assumption that such an identity has long since been renounced and repudiated in favor of Catholic truth. Yet even as he feels God exorcising the "Faustian" part of himself, Augustine seems nonetheless to assimilate it back into his newly fashioned Christian identity, making out of Faustus not so much an oppositional figure as a negative or inverted image of himself and restoring several Manichean ideas under the guise of Catholic orthodoxy. The clearest example is Augustine's description of his final conversion to Catholic faith in the garden of Milan, which explicitly reproduces the divination practices he had closely associated with the Manichaeism; the moment in which Augustine heeds the "divine command…to open the book of the apostle and read

the first chapter [he] might find" differs little, formally speaking, from the *sortes vergilanae* which Augustine's old mentor had warned him was so "foolish"—only in Augustine's interpretation, the passage from the book of Romans on which his eyes first fell was "applied" to him by God's providential design. In another instance, Augustine criticizes Faustus for having widely promoted his intellectual reputation, claiming "it is sheer vanity for a man to profess his learning, even if it is well founded, whereas it is his duty to you, O God, to confess his sins"[60]; Augustine then proceeds, sanctioned by the ritual of confession in which his writing participates, to promote his own significant intellectual abilities: "I read and understood by myself all the books of Aristotle and all the books that I could find on the so-called liberal arts, for in those days I was a good-for-nothing and a slave to sordid ambitions…What was the value to me of my intelligence, which could take these subjects in its stride, all those books, with their tangled problems, which I unraveled without the help of any human tutor, when in the doctrine of your love was lost…?"[61] Finally, he condemns the curious-mindedness of those who search out the "secrets" of God's created order by way of astrology and divination, claiming in a characteristic passage that: "Their conceit soars like a bird, their curiosity probes the deepest secrets of nature like a fish that swims in the sea; and their lust grows fat like a beast at pasture…they become fantastic in their notions; they who claim to be so wise…they exchange the truth of God for a lie, reverencing and worshipping the creature in preference to the Creator."[62]. At the same time, however, he condemns those who question the motives and piety of his own pursuit of the "hidden matters" of "Divine

Wisdom" as lazy-minded and frivolous, responding to a group of such critics in the *Confessions* as follows:

> My answer to those who ask 'What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?' is not 'He was preparing Hell for people who pry into mysteries'. This frivolous retort has been made before now, so we are told, in order to evade the question.[63]

The aggressive, almost arrogant tone of the passage; the dissatisfaction with what has been revealed in Scripture; the casual, indeed frivolous disregard of hell as a potential punishment for inquirers who "pry into mysteries"—not only does Augustine manifest the core vices for which he condemns the Faustus of his youth, he also does not seem very far from the cavalier confidence that keeps Marlowe's tragic hero from breaking off his misguided pursuit of power and omniscience. "Come,' says Doctor Faustus, disputing with a devil, 'I think hell's a fable."[64]

Certainly this side of Augustine's character would have made an impression on the young theological students of the Scholastic generations, especially those "exhausting themselves," as Peter of Celle observed disapprovingly from his Cistercian cloister,[65] with the heavy demands of the liberal arts curriculum and laboring particularly, as Peter Comestor observed of his own community of scholars at St. Victor, "night and day over the complexities of Aristotle, [over] obscure matters that he discusses so briefly that it is as if he had hardly treated them at all."[66] Augustine's report of his easy grasp of these subjects in youth as well as his comprehensive philosophical education played a vital role in fostering the saint's widespread reputation for learnedness; but in fact, it was not the

only report available. It features prominently in other biographies of the church father produced during the period, most of which strongly emphasized his intellectual merits either for devotional or polemical purposes. Most influential of all was the biography provided by Jacobus de Voragine in his hagiographical anthology *Legenda aurea*. Jacobus, himself a member of the Dominican order and adherent to the Augustinian Rule and who was also reputed to have memorized all of Augustine's writings, first compiled the stories of the *Legenda* around 1260; the text's subsequent popularity (over a thousand manuscripts survive) as well as its availability in multiple European languages, makes its life of Augustine "an essential primer" for understanding how he was received in both the medieval and Renaissance periods.[67]

As the product of an Augustinian friar, Jacobus' is naturally an exalted portrait of the spiritual father of his order, and though he draws much of his material from the *Confessions* as well as an earlier biography by Augustine's contemporary Possidius, his narrative exaggerates certain aspects of these sources for several reasons—to promote Augustine's life as the ideal model for all religious life, to encourage and instruct current members of the order with his example, and to enhance the overall prestige of the order so as to attract new members. With these ends in mind, he first introduces Augustine with a lavish simile—"like as the emperor Augustus precelled all other kings, right so [Augustine] excelled all other doctors, after that Remigius saith: The other doctors be compared to stars and this to the sun"—after which follows an abridged version of Augustine's education: "He [Augustine] was sufficiently instructed in the arts liberal, so

that he was reputed for a sufficient philosopher and a right noble doctor, for he learned all by himself, without master, in reading the books of Aristotle and all other that he might find of arts liberal."[68]

Jacobus' representation of Augustine's self-taught genius became a key component in the rise of the "myth of Augustine," an image gradually constructed and actively promoted by the Augustinian Orders of medieval Europe in their efforts to establish themselves as the keepers of his legacy and his "true spiritual sons."[69] Re-imagining Augustine as founder and teacher of the Order, a movement at its peak in the early 14th century but already well underway in the mid- to late- 13th century, was both a textual and iconographic enterprise, and its central focus was reframing the narrative of the saint's life as the story of a worldly philosopher withdrawing to the ascetic life of his Rule after conversion; scholars and historians of the Order like Henry of Friemar, Jordan of Saxony, and Gregory of Rimini—all of whom travelled to and lectured in the major universities of Europe—often included in their edited manuscript collections, whether sermons or letters or books, a version of the *Vita Sancti Augustini*, which generally followed the basic plot of the life found in the *Legenda aurea*. Similarly, Augustinian Churches, particularly in Northern Italy (Erfurt, Pavia, etc.), displayed stained glass life cycles depicting the major events of Augustine's life, including scenes from his education, his conversion in the garden of Milan, and after his conversion, teaching theology to his friends, who were considered the earliest members of his Order.[70] Yet above all, medieval Augustinians favored, and so constantly represented to the public,

two subjects: that of the saint handing down his Rule, which dated from the second half of the thirteenth century, and that of "The Allegory of Knowledge," a popular image for illuminated manuscripts of Augustine's texts in which the saint sits enthroned amid personifications of the liberal arts and sciences, bestowing them with attributes appropriate to each. Regarding the image of Augustine as 'teacher of the order,' Dorothee Hansen has argued: "its theme is not the pious monk and founder of the Rule, but the intellectual Augustine, the *praeceptor* of the Order's learnedness."[71]

We might guess which public this image of Augustine most impressed. Given that the various religious orders of Europe openly competed with the nascent universities for new members, the "intellectual Augustine" was at least partially designed, no doubt, to persuade young, talented students that to join the Augustinian Order was to experience the best of both educational worlds: they could receive the spiritual and pietistic training via a structured life within the Order without sacrificing altogether the liberal arts education offered by the universities. The Order also offered students, at least implicitly, the opportunity to follow more directly in Augustine's footsteps than a scholar's life ever could, not simply by instructing them in a way of life closer to the precepts of his Rule, but by allowing them to *convert* from their university careers to a more spiritually oriented, while still philosophically grounded, way of life. Yet whereas the Augustinians were able channel the influence of their founder's biography to develop a strong presence within the universities and attract new members, the other religious orders of Europe, from the Franciscans to the Cistercians, maintained a staunch oppositional position between themselves and what they perceived as the moral corruption and spiritual vacancy of the schools. The Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux was among the earliest and

most influential of the monastics to express a fundamental antagonism between the cloisters and the universities; he was outraged both by the "crass" method of dialectical disputation, which he considered was profaning the study of sacred theology and Scriptural exegesis, as well as a host of vices that seemed to emanate directly from the schools: curiosity, ambition, worldliness, and lust. "I beg you brothers," he exhorted the Parisian scholars in a sermon of 1139,

> Spare your souls. Spare the blood that was spilled for you. Beware of the horrible peril. Avoid the fire that was prepared…Don't you realize that your chastity is imperiled by delights, your humility by riches, your piety by mundane affairs, your truth by excessive chatter, your charity by your worldly life? Flee from the middle of Babylon! Flee and save your souls![72]

Bernard's drastic rhetoric here captures what became a major theme of much preaching to the scholars—the dire state of the state of their souls, the salvation of which depended on renouncing university study entirely and returning to the spiritual safety of the cloister. For monastics and other conservative educational reformists, the scholars did not share in the legacy of Augustine so much as in the legacy of his counterpart, Faustus, and from the terms of their polemic spring the contours of the Faustus legend, most clearly witnessed in the myriad of similiar legends and anecdotes used to supplement the more straightforward moral and spiritual admonitions. Perhaps the best-known and most widely circulated story of a scholar renouncing the temptations of university life for the sake of his spiritual fate was the legend of the conversion of Master Serlo of Wilton, a particularly popular anecdote among preachers warning scholars against the dangers of a too ardent devotion to secular study. Jacobus de Voragine eventually included the story in

the *Legenda aurea*, but earlier figures from the scholastic theologian Peter the Chanter, to the influential preacher James of Vitry, to the Dominican Stephen of Bourbon were responsible for its wide dissemination in the late 12th and early 13th centuries.[73] The story, as recounted by James of Vitry in one of his sermons, runs as follows:

> Likewise it happened in Paris that a certain student, wearing what seemed to be a cope made entirely of parchment and covered completely with tiny writing, appeared on the day after his death in the presence of his former master. When the master, called Sela, asked the student about the cope and the writing that covered it, he replied: "These writings burden me so much that they weigh more than if I carried on my head the tower of that church." (And he pointed to the church of St. Germain des Pres, not far from where they stood.) "These writings," he continued, "are sophisms and curiosities on which I spent my days. I cannot express to you verbally just how greatly I suffer under this cope, but I can show you by having you feel a drop of my sweat." At that, the master extended the palm of his hand to catch the drop, and the heat pierced him as violently as if it were a very sharp arrow. Immediately, the master departed from the schools of logic and entered the Cistercian order…[74]

A similar story is found in a late-twelfth century manuscript from the Cistercian abbey of Aulne. A scholar dies after having promised a close friend that if he met Virgil in hell, he would ask the poet the meaning of a certain set of verses, the meaning of which the two scholars had debated together frequently; the spirit of the dead scholar does in fact

reappear to his friend, but only to pass along a warning from Virgil that if he did not renounce the study of poetry and the liberal arts in his own lifetime, he too would be damned to hell as they had been—a warning the friend heeds, retreating in terror to a nearby monastery.[75] The closest analogue to the Faustus legend, however, appears in the writings of the German Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach. In his *Dialogus miraculorum,* he relates a "true story" he claims to have heard from a pious abbot while travelling in the region of Morimond in France; the abbot tells of a young man who had done "homage to the devil in exchange for greater intelligence and a stronger memory—and as a result became the greatest scholar in Paris."[76] Only after his death, however, did he realize his folly, and when he came before the throne of God, he repented the vanity of his life as a scholar and pleaded for mercy so as to escape the pains of hell. Miraculously, God did grant the scholar mercy in the form of a second-life, and he immediately renounced the schools and devoted himself to monastic living.

The story would not always end so mercifully. As he struggles to "convert" back to Christian faith almost four centuries later, Marlowe's Doctor Faustus declares that, despite his own homage to the devil in exchange for all knowledge, supernatural powers, and a lifetime of illicit pleasures, he both can and will "leap up"[77] up to God for salvation—only he never does, and the audience watches as a group of devils drag the scholar from Wittenberg to hell. According to the *English Faust Book*, Marlowe's direct source, a group of scholars had discovered Faustus' dismembered corpse in his bedchamber after the twenty four years of his contract with Mephistopheles had expired.[78] What accounts for the severity of Faustus' fate in the Early Modern period? Within the context of the Renaissance, the construction of Augustine's image, let alone

the interpretation of his theology, was as complex and contested as it had ever been; yet even so, his identity as the ideal Christian scholar had only grown more pronounced,[79] especially within humanist and Neo-Platonist circles, and as such his intellectual biography proved just as much of an inspiration and justification for the enthusiasm with which Early Modern Christians recovered and studied the texts of the ancients. In the wake of the Reformation, however, the story of Augustine's conversion, indeed the very idea of conversion itself, risked being emptied of all significance by the outbreak of confessionalism. If the myth of Augustinian learning spurred Christian scholars to the same kind of ambitious, intellectual overreaching in the sixteenth century as it did in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Augustine's conversion story could no longer channel these impulses into the pursuit of Christian truth.

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[1] The play-text to which I refer is "The Christmas Play" (*Ludus de Nativitate*) from *Benediktbeuern* printed in Bevington's *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975). For the opening stage directions, see pg. 180. Subsequent quotes will be cited internally.
[2] For Tertullian, see *De Spectaculis* ("Against the Theatres") printed in *Tertullian: Apology and De Spectaculis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931); for Chrysostom and Jerome, see Chambers' *The Medieval Stage* v. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1903), 15-16, especially the footnotes.
[3] I refer throughout to R.S Pine-Coffin's translation of Augustine's *Confessions* (New York: Penguin, 1961). For the quotes above, see book I, section xix (39) and III, ii (55-56). For Augustine's other attacks on the theatre, see *City of God* (New York: Random House, 2000), II viii-ix (47-48), II xxv-xxvii (68-71), and III i-iii (74-76).
[4] Peter Dronke, "Latin Songs in the *Carmina Burana*: Profane Love and Satire" in *The Carmina Burana: Four Essays*, ed. Martin H. Jones (London: Center for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2000), 28-29.
[5] Duggan, "The World", 2.
[6] Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 77.
[7] *Conf.* 44.
[8] *Conf.* 55-59.
[9] *Conf.* 100.
[10] *Conf.* 107.

[11] *Conf.* 118.
[12] For Augustine's early career, see James J. O'Donnell's *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), esp. chapter 1 ('The View from Africa') and chapter IV ('Augustine Unvarnished')
[13] A popular study of the lives of the medieval scholars is Helen Waddell's *The Wandering Scholars* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1955). My essay relies on Anne Duggan's description of the 12th c. student/university world as the "essential context" for the *Carmina Burana* in "The World of the *Carmina Burana*" in *The Carmina Burana: Four Essays*, ed. Martin H. Jones (London: Center for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2000), 1-24.
[14] The Archpoet of Cologne, "His Confession" trans. Helen Waddell in *The Norton Anthology of Western Literature*, ed. Sarah Lawall (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 1396 (lines 41-48).
[15] Cf. Duggan, "The World", 8 and 10.
[16] See Stephen C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and Their Critics 1100-1215* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), chapter 1 esp. 15-17.
[17] Duggan, "The World", 13.
[18] See Brian Cummings, "Autobiography and the History of Reading" in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 638.
[19] Though lately proven spurious, the pseudo-Augustinian sermon *Contra Judaeos, Paganos, et Arianos Sermo de Symbolo* was considered authentic throughout the Middle Ages. I explore the sermon in some depth below, in particular as it relates to the Benediktbeuern *Christmas Play*'s "Ordo Prophetarum". For a detailed account of the sermon's incorporation into the medieval *lectios* of the Advent season as well as the development of its dramatic form, see Karl Young's essay "Ordo Prophetarum" in *Transactions* (Madison: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters 1922), 1-82. The essay can also be found in an online archive at: http://archive.org/details/ordoprophetarum00youn. For the sermon's influence on church architecture, see Dorothy F. Glass's "Pseudo-Augustine, Prophets, and Pulpits in Campania", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 41 (Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1987), 215-226.
[20] Cummings, "Autobiography", 641.
[21] Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition: 400-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, 202.
[22] Cummings, "Autobiography", 639.
[23] The scholarship on Augustine's reception in the Middle- and Late-Middle Ages is vast. For a good introduction to his reception among the monks and hermits of his Order, see E.L. Saak's *Creating Augustine: Interpreting Augustine and Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). For his reception among humanists, especially within Italian intellectual circles, see for example Meredith Gill's *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance: Art and Philosophy from Petrarch to Michelangelo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West from the Carolingians to the Maurists* (v. 2) ed. Irena Backus (Brill Academic Publishing, 1997).

[24] Excerpt from Ferruolo, *Origins,* 209.
[25] Ferruolo, *Origins,* 210.
[26] Cf. Saint Augustine, *The City of God,* "How Plato has been able to approach so nearly to Christian knowledge," VIII, xi (255). For Virgil, cf. X, xxvii (333).
[27] "Be followers of me, even as I follow the example of Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:1.
[28] Edward Noble Stone provides an English translation of chapters XI-XVI (the section against the Jews) of the sermon, available in digital archive: http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00001291/00001. Young cites the sermon as the source for the procession in "Ordo Prophetarum", 3. Some consider Saint Quodvultdeus, a fifth century bishop of Carthage and a pupil of Augustine's, to be the genuine author of the sermon cf. Regula Evitt's essay "Eschatology, Millenarian Apocalypticism, and the Liturgical Anti-Judaism of the Medieval Prophet Plays" in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050* ed. Richard Landes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 205-229.
[29] See the entry "Adversus Judaeos" in Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini's *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 12-14.
[30] Augustine, *City of God*, XVIII, xxiii (628-629).
[31] Traditionally only two or three are needed, as for example 2 Corinthians 13:1.
[32] Young, "Ordo Prophetarum", 64.
[33] Cf. Pamela King's "Spatial Semantics and the Medieval Theatre" in *The Theatrical Space* ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 51.
[34] For a discussion of Christianity's adoption of terms and concepts explicitly theatrical into the language of its theology, see John Parker's essay "Persona" in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[35] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 41.
[36] Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, v. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 195.
[37] "Xanthus River, hasten backwards!" Archisynagogus proclaims incredulously (185), referring to the river running across the plain near Troy, as described in the *Iliad,* XX, lxxiv.
[38] For example, Archisynagogus tells the prophets at one point, "O what simplemindedness/Constrains them to be so foolish/Who would predict a camel/To descend from a cow!" (184), mocking the irrationality of their prophecies while alluding, obliquely, to a formula for that which is impossible coined by Christ himself: "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" Matthew 19:24.
[39] For an overview of the polemical literature representing debate between the allegorical figures Church and Synagogue popular during the period, see Margaret Schlauch's "The Allegory of Church and Synagogue" in *Speculum* v. 14 no. 4 (1939), 448-464.
[40] Cf. Christopher Lee, "Augustine vs. Archisynagogus: Competing Modes of Christian Instruction in the Benediktbeuern *Ludus de Nativitate*" in *Florilegium* v. 23 no. 2 (2006), 83-84.

[41] Duggan, "The World", 6; Lee, "Augustine vs. Archisynagogus", 86-87.
[42] From *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, reprinted in the "Commentary" section of Augustine, *City of God*, 897-898.
[43] *Conf.* book IV, section xvi (87)
[44] Vincent Mariscano, "Adaptations of the Pseudo-Augustine *Sermon Against the Jews* in the Benediktbeuern *Christmas Play* and Frankfurt *Passion Play*" in *Colloquia Germanica* v. 15 (1982), 61.
[45] See Luke 1:26-38
[46] Menaphon, in a grasping description of the titular hero's physical description, in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great part I*: "'Twixt his manly pitch/a pearl more worth than all the world is placed/Wherein by curious sovereignty of art/Are fixed his piercing instruments of sight…" II.i.11-14.
[47] *Conf.* book III, section ii (56, my emphasis)
[48] *Conf.* book X, section iii (208)
[49] See quotes in Arpad Steiner, "The Faust Legend and the Christian Tradition" *PMLA* 54.2 (1939), 394.
[50] *Conf.* 97.
[51] For the references to Faustus in the writings of Luther and Melancthon, see Philip Palmer and Robert More's *The Sources of the Faust Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), chapter 3.
[52] See Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus A- and B- texts* ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 198 (Epilogue, 1-8).
[53] See the introduction to *Doctor Faustus: the A-text* ed. Roma Gill (New York: Methuen Drama, 2003), ix.
[54] Several critics have explored the parallels between Marlowe's representation of Faustus and Augustine's story of conversion in the *Confessions*. See for example Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, "The Conversion of St. Augustine and the B-Text of *Doctor Faustus*," *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Literature,* t.ii (1979), 1-8; and James Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), chapter 3. More recently, John Parker has argued that Faustus, in his infamous construction of "the devil's syllogism," actually quotes the Latin of Augustine's *Confessions* rather than that of "Jerome's Bible," the Vulgate. See Parker, "Faustus, Confession, and the Sins of Omission," *ELH* 80 (2013), 32-39.
[55] Saak, *Creating Augustine,* 140.
[56] *Conf.* 98.
[57] *Conf.* 74.
[58] *Conf.* 98.
[59] *Conf.* 99.
[60] *Conf.* 95.
[61] *Conf.* 88-89.
[62] *Conf.* 93-94. Augustine cites here Rom. 1:21-25.
[63] *Conf.* 262.
[64] Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 144 (II.i.130).

[65] Quoted in Ferruolo, *Origins*, 88.
[66] Quoted in Ferruolo, *Origins,* 237.
[67] See Meredith Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance: Art and Philosophy from Petrarch to Michelangelo* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), chapter 1
[68] *The Golden Legend* ed. F.S. Ellis v. 4-5 (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 45-46.
[69] Saak, *Creating Augustine*, 20.
[70] Saak, *Creating Augustine,* 140.
[71] Dorothee Hansen, "The Image of the Teacher of the Order and the Allegory of Knowledge: A Study of Augustine" (Berlin: 1995), 39.
[72] See Ferruolo, *Origins*, 47.
[73] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 20.
[74] Quoted in Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, 20.
[75] Ferruolo, *Origins*, 67.
[76] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* 1.32 ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne, 1851), I: 36-38.
[77] Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, 195.
[78] See *The English Faust Book: A Critical Edition Based on the Text of 1592* ed. John Henry Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 180.
[79] For Augustine's transformation into the ideal humanist scholar, see for example Arnoud Visser, *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority 1500-1620* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), especially chapters 2 and 3. According to Visser, Augustine's identity was dramatically reshaped by the development of the printing press, which "released" his image from the strict possession of the Augustinian Orders; humanist scholars in particular were impressed by the sheer volume of his writings, which appeared in several comprehensive folios over the course of the 16th century.