

St. Monica

How strong an effect did St. Augustine's *Confessions* have on St. Monica's Historical Reception?

Devotion to St. Monica throughout history has largely been defined by her depiction in Augustine's *Confessions*. Despite early biographies of Augustine and Augustine's other works, *The Confessions* is almost always precisely adhered to in hagiography and art.

Throughout the centuries, to varying degrees, it has been recognised that *The Confessions* is highly stylistic and is not a purely objective account.¹ Augustine offers the reader a guide to conversion, which makes St. Monica a stand-in for figures who guide others to conversion.² So not only the extent to which *The Confessions* is used, but *how* it is understood, affected how St. Monica was received.

During and shortly after St. Monica's own time, she became a respected religious figure. A literal reading of *The Confessions* yields a close result of her Late Antique reception. Allegorical elements of *The Confessions* were not lost on their Late Antique audience, but they understood Augustine to represent persons who appear in the work truthfully. In Letter 27 Augustine says that he wrote his *Confessions* to represent his friend St. Alypius of Thagaste well to St. Paulinus.³ This would only be successful if the work was recognised as truthful.

The development of Augustinianism created the Augustinian saints. The Christians whom Augustine interacted with throughout his *Confessions* achieved a popularity in later centuries that they did not enjoy at the time.⁴ Perhaps the most extreme example was St. Alypius who had no known relics, shrines or feast day, but was inserted into the calendar by church authorities.⁵ The sole representative for Alypius' piety was Augustine's *Confessions* but this was enough to warrant his canonisation. It is noteworthy that Navigius whose piety is known primarily from Augustine's less popular works and Possidius' *Vita* did not attain sainthood.

While other Augustinian saints seem to have only benefited from the connection to the *Confessions*, the Cult of St. Monica's relationship is more complicated. Saints whose popularity depended on another saint typically develop new traditions. A good example is St. Non, the mother of St. David, whose cult developed new traditions about her missional activities in Brittany that led her to overtake St. David's popularity in Brittany.⁶

¹ Miller, Isaac. "St. Augustine, the Narrative Self, and the Invention of Fiction." *Qui Parle* (1995): 54-82, p.55

² Kotzé, Annemaré. "Augustine's confessions: the social and literary context." *Acta Classica: Proceedings of the Classical Association of South Africa*. Vol. 49. No. 1. Sabinet, 2006, pp.150-152.

³ St. Augustine tr. Joseph Green Pilkington. *The Confessions and letters of St. Augustin: with a sketch of his life and work*. Eerdmans, 1979. [pages not given]

⁴ Gagliardi, Isabella. "L'ordine Nello Specchio Dei Suoi Santi: Il Leggendaro Agostiniano (1329-1331) Custodito Presso La Biblioteca Laurenziana Di Firenze/The Augustinian Order In The Mirror Of Its Sants: The Augustinian Legendary (1329-1331) At The Laurentian Library Of Florence." *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* 71.2 (2017): 459-476, p.459

⁵ Campbell, Thomas, ed. Charles George Herbermann "St. Alypius." *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* 1. Robert Appleton Company, 1907.

⁶ Richards, Ian. "The Welsh female saint: patterns within a social framework." *The Student Researcher Journal of Undergraduate Research* (2012), p.72

Such traditions about St. Monica developed in the Mediæval period, especially after her relics were moved from Ostia to Rome, but her cult's independence from the Augustinian saints was short-lived.⁷ When comparing the most popular accounts to the most independent ones, it seems that adherence to Augustine's narrative is the greatest marker for success. Many of the most popular accounts are essentially simplified versions of *The Confessions* with only her parts included.⁸

The Confessions is **almost** always consulted alone or reacted against, making *The Confessions*' influence basically inescapable in Monica's *cultus*. Different roles proved to be important for her *cultus*: being a widow; mother; philosopher; wife; and founder. In addition, Augustine clearly sees Monica as deeply African, so Monica's role as an African is important as well.⁹

Other works by Augustine may be more useful than *The Confessions*. Agostino Trapè, Prior General of the Augustinian Order, compiled Augustine's writings about Monica into *Mia Madre*: a work that has been translated into many languages.¹⁰ It shows that only a portion of Augustine's thoughts about Monica are in *The Confessions*.¹¹ *De Ordine* and *De Beata Vita*, for example, were written with her while she and Augustine were in Cassiacum.¹² Although we have no work solely written by Monica, a co-authored work is important. Small but meaningful parallels between Monica's thought and speech were not lost on historic audiences, such as Monica and Augustine's shared sarcasm.¹³ More meaningful influences will be discussed throughout this paper.

Motherhood

The most consistent role that St. Monica has in Augustine's *Confessions* is as Augustine's mother. Her situation and character changes greatly over the course of the work, but her relationship with Augustine remains constant.¹⁴ As a result, throughout history, Monica has been portrayed in this role more than any other.¹⁵

There is a lack of Monica's presence in early biographies about Augustine; she is unnamed throughout St. Possidius' *Vita Augustini*.¹⁶ Augustine's *Confessions* is not more comprehensive, as he fails to mention the names of his siblings and cousins, who were all important to Monica.¹⁷ The only mention of Augustine's brother Navigius in Augustine's *Confessions* is negative (he fails to understand Monica's desire to be buried in Italy) and he goes unnamed. Although Possidius does not give Navigius' name he does mention Navigius' holiness and his daughters who became nuns. Monica's role in converting all her children, grandchildren and niblings is appreciated by Monica's early biographers but it is unmentioned in *The Confessions*.

⁷ Holgate, Ian. "The Cult of Saint Monica in quattrocento Italy: her place in Augustinian iconography, devotion and legend." *Papers of the British School at Rome* (2003): 181-206, p.181

⁸ Mayeski, Marie Anne. "New voices in the tradition: Medieval hagiography revisited." *Theological studies* 63.4 (2002): 690-710, p.694

⁹ Healey, Joseph G. "Now It Is Your Turn: East Africans Go in Mission." *Missiology* 31.3 (2003): 349-366, p.355

¹⁰ Trapè, Agostino, *Mia Madre*. Città Nuova 1983

¹¹ Trapè tr. John E. Rotelle, *My Mother* Augustinian Press, 1987.

¹² Boersma, Gerald. "Monica as Mystagogue." *Wisdom and the Renewal of Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb* (2016): 104.

¹³ Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: a biography*. Univ of California Press, 2013, p.17

¹⁴ Brown, p.17

¹⁵ Clark, Gillian. *Monica: an ordinary saint*. Oxford University Press, 2015, p.169

¹⁶ St. Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine*. Vol. 6. Arx Publishing, LLC, 2008, p.4

¹⁷ St. Augustine ed. Gillian Clark. *Confessions Books I-IV*. Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.2

Augustine's total corpus contradicts and supplements *The Confessions*. Navigius is shown positively in *Against the Academics* and takes part in some of the debates.¹⁸ He contributes more heavily to *De Beata Vita*, typically agreeing with Monica, often against Augustine.¹⁹ Adeodatus himself is appreciated in *De Magistro*, a debate between him and Augustine. As will be discussed later, Monica was the most important influence on Augustine's sister, the author of the Augustinian *Rule for Nuns*. Augustine's letters to his sister and her congregation is our most important primary source for her, and throughout he shows a deep respect for her and her legacy.²⁰ Although Navigius is at least hinted at in *The Confessions*, Augustine's cousins Lastidian and Rusticus only appear in *De Beata Vita* in Cassiacum, and he praises them for their common sense, which he describes as "indispensable".²¹ Navigius' son Patrick is referenced in Sermon 356 as a subdeacon under Augustine's care.²² This shows that Augustine appreciated Monica's role in his extended family and recognised how they influenced each other.

Works that heavily rely on *The Confessions* overemphasise Augustine's relationship with Monica so she appears as a devoted mother of an only child, rather than a matriarch of a large extended family. Most depictions of Monica's motherhood focus on her relationship with Augustine and they often appear together alone, or at least Augustine appears as the favourite child.²³ The subject "St. Monica and Her Son (*singular*)" is where Monica appears most often, in a tradition very similar to Elizabeth and her only son John.²⁴ Even in Augustine's *Confessions*, Monica sent Augustine away for many years so that he would not corrupt the rest of Monica's household with his Manichaean heresy, yet these years Monica spent with her extended family in Augustine's absence are very rarely depicted.²⁵

John M. Quinn described St. Monica as "the hound of Heaven, tirelessly [hunting] for the wandering Augustine."²⁶ The role St. Monica has in *The Confessions* is comparable to the Good Shepherd, who leaves His flocks to find the lost sheep, but Monica did not leave her flocks, in fact she left the lost sheep for the sake of the flock. The Augustinian Order understood this by recognising Monica's role in the *Rule for Nuns* and recognising that that rule predated theirs, making Monica the ancestor of their order, but this recognition rarely reached into the popular conscience long enough to affect art or popular devotion.²⁷ The letters of Augustine were greatly useful to Augustinians, but they did not have the devotional quality

¹⁸ St. Augustine, tr. Michael P. Foley, *Against the Academics: St. Augustine's Cassiciacum Dialogues*, 1. Yale University Press, 2019, p.18

¹⁹ Such as when he agrees with Monica and Adeodatus that freedom from an unclean spirit is the sign of possessing God after hearing all the other opinions, see: St. Augustine, tr. Michael P. Foley, *On the Happy Life: St. Augustine's Cassiciacum Dialogues*, 2. Yale University Press, 2019, p.30.

²⁰ She would eventually be known as Perpetua, but she was first called this long after her death, so this name is uncertain, see: Romanelli, Joseph. *Nachfolge der heiligen Monika: mit einem Anhang von Gebeten für die christliche Mutter &c.* Verlag der Buchh. des Kath. Erziehungs-Vereins, 1877, pp.47-48. The most consulted letters about "Perpetua" are Letters 210 and 211, both written after her death, see: Smither, Edward.

"Pastoral lessons from Augustine's theological correspondence with women." *HTS Theological Studies* 72.4 (2016): 1-6, p.3

²¹ *On the Happy Life*, p.22; Walsh, DC "From Beata Vita S. Aurelii Augustini: Florilegium Patristicum." *The New Scholasticism* 6.1 (1932): 91, p.91

²² Kondro, Rachel Claire. "Clerical Misconduct, Charity, and the Common Good: Saint Augustine's Sermons 355 & 356." *CONCEPT* 34 (2011), p.10

²³ Atkinson, Clarissa W. *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Medieval West*. Cornell University Press, 2019, p.76

²⁴ Kidd, Rebecca Ann. "Alexandre Cabanel's St. Monica in a Landscape: A Departure from Iconographic Traditions." (2019), p.25

²⁵ St. Augustine, tr. Henry Chadwick, *Confessions*. Oxford University Press 1991, p.49

²⁶ Quinn, John M. *A companion to the "Confessions" of St. Augustine*. P. Lang, 2002, p.499

²⁷ St. Augustine, *The Monastic Rules*. Vol. 4. New City Press, 2004, p.25

or the popular appeal (especially of the autobiographical portions) of *The Confessions*.²⁸ Nevertheless, Augustinian art was more likely to portray Monica as a matriarch surrounded by a large group of people at her death than just Augustine alone.²⁹

Widowhood

Monica's widowhood is worth consideration as consecrated widows are not a clerical order that exists in the modern church hierarchies, so modern readers are typically unfamiliar with the implications.³⁰ In Monica's time, consecrated widows were not as popular as they had been, but Jerome's writings about Ss. Marcella, Paula and Melanie shows they were far from extinct.³¹

Consecrated widows are described in 1 Timothy 5:2-16, comparable to the consecrated virgins of 2 Corinthians 11:2. Widows led virgins, as widows were typically older.³² In fact, Paul recommended young widows to remarry rather than seek consecration (1 Timothy 5:11). Monica, being old and having no desire to remarry, was ideal. The authority over virgins that Monica expresses strongly suggests her ordination into this order and Augustine's anecdote of her stern warnings against drunkenness given to her virgins is best understood in this context.

The orders of consecrated virgins and widows continued in pockets throughout Europe but for most Catholics, they merged with nuns.³³ As a result, St. Monica was perceived as either a pious laywoman (when in the role of mother and wife) or an Augustinian nun (during her widowhood).³⁴ Following the rediscovery of her relics, Monica was often portrayed in Augustinian habit.³⁵ Nuns and Abbesses had a similar role to consecrated virgins and widows, but they had fewer privileges it was rarer for them to teach men.³⁶

In the 19th Century, the lack of women clergy and teachers in Latin Catholicism, when Methodists and others ordained women, made Monica's lay status important.³⁷ Rev. Alban Butler frequently portrayed saints in a way that supported the Catholic church in the various theological and ecclesial debates of his time, and his portrayal of St. Monica is no different as it emphasises her motherhood and marriage.³⁸

Philosophy

As consecrated widows were teachers, Augustine recognised Monica as a philosopher in her own right. In *Against the Academics* (one of the books composed in Cassiacum before Augustine's baptism), Augustine praises Monica's rejection of the academies as True

²⁸ Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: communicative purpose and audience*. Brill, 2004, pp.9-10

²⁹ Bourdua, Louise, and Anne Dunlop, eds. *Art and the Augustinian order in early Renaissance Italy*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007, p.42

³⁰ Rees, Elizabeth. "Christian Widowhood." *New Blackfriars* 76.896 (1995): 393-400, p.396

³¹ Rees, "Christian Widowhood.", pp.395-396

³² Rees, "Christian Widowhood.", p.395

³³ Rees, "Christian Widowhood.", p.396

³⁴ Zins, Katie Allison. "St. Augustine Among the Mendicants: The Order of Augustinian Hermits and Early Renaissance Art in Italy." (2016), p.198

³⁵ Holgate, p.191

³⁶ Rees, "Consecrated Virginity." *New Blackfriars* (1982): 229-236, pp.229-230

³⁷ Latin Catholicism rather than Roman Catholicism due to the role of female clerics in Eastern Roman Catholics groups such as the Maronites, see; Martimort, Aimé Georges. *Deaconesses: An historical study*. Ignatius Press, 1986, p.176

³⁸ Butler, Alban. "May 4" *The Lives of the Saints: Complete Edition*. Catholic Way Publishing, 2015, [pages not given]

Philosophy and something he wished to emulate.³⁹ In Augustine's *Confessions*, Augustine wrestled with the different ways of attaining true knowledge, having once only favoured academic philosophy in his youth, he appreciated Monica for her *Vera Philosophia* that she attained through faith.⁴⁰ Her lack of liberal arts made her appealing as many Christians were not educated in the ways Augustine was which made him a more alienating figure than Monica.⁴¹

In Augustine's *De Beata Vita*, it is Monica that teaches Augustine much of his theology of happiness and desire.⁴² In *De Ordine*, Augustine specifically contrasts Monica's philosophy with that of the Academics; when Monica asked "What are you doing? I have never read of women entering into such debates in any of your books." Augustine replies "I don't give two hoots about the judgment of the proud and the ignorant... And there will be some, believe me, who will find my talking with you here more pleasing than finding platitudes or high-brow stuff. There were plenty of philosopher-women in ancient times and I rather like *your* philosophy."⁴³

Included in the debates of the book are notable disagreements between Augustine and Monica. When Augustine claims that evil must have always existed as justice requires evil to judge, Monica replies: "Not for me to dare say such a thing." and she agrees with Augustine's opponent Licinius who says that God merely would have to have the faculty to decide between good and evil.⁴⁴

Later writers who presume Monica to essentially be the female counterpart of Augustine underestimate her independence. Augustine understands *Vera Philosophia*, the search for wisdom which can be separate from 'academic' philosophy, through her, and by her, understands that *Vera Philosophia* can be achieved through her faith and love of scriptures with no academic influence.⁴⁵

Marriage

Augustine used Monica's married example to exemplify a wife being subject to her husband Patrick in *The Confessions* and appears less independent than during her widowhood, but Patrick's conversion is the fruits of her labour.⁴⁶ This can be understood variously. Some (even before Feminist interpretations) saw this as her enduring an abusive relationship as a trial, whereas others saw Augustine's description of her marriage as a way of supporting the Roman *Pater Familia* by merging it with Christian concepts.⁴⁷ St. Monica's role as a battered woman saint was important for feminists. Previous hagiographies that ignored her husband Patrick's behaviour are seen as part of the patriarchal problem.⁴⁸

In Augustine's *Confessions*, Augustine describes the way Monica raised him as a Christian as a 'victory over her husband', suggesting that she acted against Patrick's will.⁴⁹ This

³⁹ *Against the Academics*, 1.11.31–33

⁴⁰ Djuth, Marianne. "'Vera Philosophia' In Augustine's Thought After 396." *Augustiniana* 53.1/4 (2003): 53-68, p.56

⁴¹ Djuth, p.63

⁴² *On the Happy Life*, pp.29-30

⁴³ St. Augustine, tr. Silvan Borroso, *On Order (De Ordine)*. St. Augustine's Press 2007, p.41.

⁴⁴ *De Ordine*, pp.80-81

⁴⁵ Djuth, pp.53-54

⁴⁶ Chadwick, *Confessions*, p.168

⁴⁷ Shaw, Brent D. "The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine." *Past & Present* 115 (1987): 3-51, p.7

⁴⁸ Kienzle, Beverly Mayne, and Nancy Nienhuis. "Battered women and the construction of sanctity." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17.1 (2001): 33-61.

⁴⁹ Chadwick, *Confessions* p.14

is made more explicit in *Against the Academics*.⁵⁰ This is crucial to Monica's reception as a battered woman saint as both Patrick and Monica's portrayal in Augustine's *Confessions* is of a submissive wife and a tolerant husband. Readers aware of the behaviour of battered wives and abusive husbands saw in Monica's actions against Patrick's wishes an explanation for her fearful behaviour in the presence of her husband.⁵¹ If Monica had always been obedient to her husband, as Augustine claims in *The Confessions*, why would she react like a battered wife?

Monica was more active in her marriage than apparent from *The Confessions* alone and this was important for women that venerated her. Patrick's sinfulness and ultimate conversion, with the stress Monica received because of his unbelief were the most useful elements about Monica's marriage found in Augustine's narrative, but Monica going against her abusive husband's will to educate her children in the Christian faith (a narrative contradicted by *The Confessions*) was the most popular element of her married life for women.⁵²

Founder

Monica's fame predated Augustine's *Confessions*. Anicius Auchenius Bassus (who would later become Consul of the Western Roman Empire in 408) wrote her epitaph as she was buried alongside St. Aurea, the patron saint of Ostia.⁵³ Although it has been beautified with Renaissance additions, the body her expensive sarcophagus is from Antiquity.⁵⁴ Bassus' epitaph (which refers to Augustine as *altera lux*: a second light; and Monica as *virtutum mater*: a mother of virtues) shows that she was thought of as responsible not only for Augustine's conversion, but his merits as well, and had merit of her own.⁵⁵

Monica had a strong effect on the birth of Augustinianism as her daughter (possibly called Perpetua) became a consecrated widow in charge of consecrated virgins, similarly to Monica herself. She governed this community before Augustine governed his as Possidius mentions that Augustine would not allow his sister into his commune despite her already being a consecrated widow leading virgins and having a good reputation.⁵⁶

So, Perpetua's *Rule* predated Augustine's, as the earliest evidence of Augustine's monastic thought is Letter 211, written to his sister's nunnery shortly after her death.⁵⁷ In fact, Bellarmine and Erasmus believed that Augustine's *Rule* was essentially a masculinised version of the *Rule for Nuns*.⁵⁸ Monica was likely her inspiration, and the similarities between her *Rule* and Augustine's is either due to Monica's influence or Perpetua's influence on Augustine leading later Augustinians to see Monica as their founder.⁵⁹ Paintings show her distributing the Augustinian Rule, titled "St Monica Distributing her Rule".⁶⁰

⁵⁰ *Against the Academics*, 6.16.26

⁵¹ Kienzle, p.40

⁵² Atkinson, p.219

⁵³ Boin, Douglas Ryan. "Late antique Ostia and a campaign for pious tourism: epitaphs for Bishop Cyriacus and Monica, mother of Augustine." *The Journal of Roman Studies* (2010): 195-209, p.200

⁵⁴ Holgate, p.190

⁵⁵ Boin, p.200

⁵⁶ Pelikan, Jaroslav Jan. *Augustine through the ages: An encyclopaedia*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999, p.68

⁵⁷ *The Monastic Rules*, p.25

⁵⁸ *The Monastic Rules*, p.25

⁵⁹ Strocchia, Sharon T. *Nuns and nunneries in Renaissance Florence*. JHU Press, 2009, p.15

⁶⁰ Hickson, Sally Anne. *Women, art and architectural patronage in Renaissance Mantua: matrons, mystics and monasteries*. Routledge, 2016, pp. 36-40

While St. Monica received the most widespread veneration when relatively disconnected from the works of Augustine, her most lasting followers were within the Augustinian order and esteemed her for her connection to St. Augustine. Her role in the order was similar to the role Mary had in the wider Roman Catholic Church. Augustinians referred to themselves as the Children of Augustine, which made St. Monica their grandmother.⁶¹

Poetry from the order focused on St. Monica's tears as a central motif.⁶² The strong role that emotion and friendship had for the order made her a strong role model for all Christians and not just for women.⁶³ Other Augustinian saints are known mostly for their stories of sin and repentance, such as Augustine himself and his friend Alypius, but St. Monica's story is one of faithfulness from her childhood.⁶⁴

Her long lasting forms of veneration that developed in Ostia and the Augustinian Orders flourished throughout the peninsula during the Renaissance. The pre-existing local traditions included all-female sororities that were charged with the protection of relics and other functions typically reserved for the all-male priesthood.⁶⁵ Monica's independent importance had been brought to public attention by a woman called Giovanna, gaining the attention of the Augustinian Prior General who obtained the rights to Monica's relics from the Papacy.⁶⁶ It is noteworthy that this wave of devotion to St. Monica developed on a popular level first and later came to the attention of officials.

Male participation in the *cultus* seems to largely postdate this. The first major sign was a sermon in which the Prior General asserted that Monica should be venerated as the ancestor and spiritual mother of the order.⁶⁷ He quotes a previously unattested tradition that Augustine founded the Hermit Order shortly after Monica's death and that the nascent hermits attended her funeral.⁶⁸ These two elements of the Prior's sermon made Monica popular in art as she was depicted as a mother to Augustine (and thereby the order as a whole) and in her old age in Augustinian habit.⁶⁹ Both of these depictions stressed her importance as an Augustinian founder.

Monica maintained her importance as one of the Augustinian saints throughout the modern period. Following the Enlightenment, Catholics often sought to rationalise the lives of the saints by creating biographies comparable to biographies of any other historic figure.⁷⁰ Evidence originally dating from later sources fell out of favour, often being completely ignored, and were replaced with the earliest witnesses, even if this gave a shorter biography.⁷¹

The image of Monica surrounded by hermits and family at her death fell out of favour, as did references to Augustine's sister as Perpetua of Hippo.⁷² Her depiction as a clerical

⁶¹ Kidd, p.14

⁶² Viera, David J. "St. Vincent Ferrer's Catalan Sermon on St. Augustine." *Augustiniana* 38.1/4 (1988): 54-66, p.55; Moore, Rebecca. "St. Monica and the Mystical Gift of Tears." *Magistra* 4, no. 2 (Winter, 1998): 61.

⁶³ Kidd, p.16

⁶⁴ Chadwick, *Confessions*, p.168

⁶⁵ Holgate, p.193.

⁶⁶ Holgate, p.183

⁶⁷ Holgate, p.184

⁶⁸ Holgate, p.185

⁶⁹ Holgate, p.185

⁷⁰ Kitchen, John. *Saints' lives and the rhetoric of gender: male and female in Merovingian hagiography*. Oxford University Press, 1998, p.3

⁷¹ Kitchen, p.4

⁷² For example, even the Bollandists claimed that "Perpetua's" names was unknown, see: St. Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine*, p.xv

figure was replaced by an understanding of her as an example for the laity.⁷³ The more accurate understanding, including her extended family and her clerical role, can only be restored when *The Confessions* are understood critically alongside Augustine's other works.

African

In Mediaeval sources, there does seem to be an awareness of Monica's Africanism, but the way different cultures and ethnicities were understood was different in the Mediaeval period. For Monica, it was one of many attributes that signified her, and so it could be included or ignored, nevertheless she was known to be ethnically African.⁷⁴

Her decision to be buried in Italy was appreciated by Italians and it secured her relics even after the Vandal and Muslim invasion.⁷⁵ Despite her recognised Africanism, she was more associated with Italy and became the focus of veneration in the Basilica di Sant'Agostino, despite (or because) of its dedication to her son.⁷⁶ This began after her relics were translated there from Ostia, the place of her death.⁷⁷

Africanism's role amongst African-Americans is very different from what it is to Europeans and Africans due to racial discrimination in the United States along with the usual changes that undergo diasporas. The existence of an African, and therefore potentially black theologian, in Augustine was of immense importance to Black Christians during the aftermath of the abolition of slavery.⁷⁸

St. Monica was important as a full Berber, whereas Augustine's father was Roman and he identified as Punic, essentially a Middle Eastern ethnicity.⁷⁹ This made devotion to St. Monica more popular in comparison to devotion to Augustine (although to the mixed-race James Augustine and Michael Augustine Healey, this perhaps made him more helpful).⁸⁰ Augustine began to be portrayed as a mixed-race Black man and Monica as a fully Black woman.⁸¹

The most notable example of devotion to St. Monica for African-Americans is St. Monica's church in Chicago, founded by Ven. Augustine Tolton.⁸² Monica was a particularly good choice for patron saints as Monica and Augustine are venerated by Black and White

⁷³ Zins, p.198

⁷⁴ Augustine was often co-opted as his 'spiritual birth' was in Italy, whereas Monica was purely African, see:Zins, p.83

⁷⁵ Gill, Meredith J. *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance: art and philosophy from Petrarch to Michelangelo*. Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.41

⁷⁶ Grosse, Patricia L. "Moving St. Monnica's Bones: The Sensual North African Roman Funerary Rites of the Fourth Century.", p.1

⁷⁷ Holgate, p.181

⁷⁸ Clark, Adam. "Honoring the ancestors: Toward an Afrocentric theology of liberation." *Journal of Black Studies* 44.4 (2013): 376-394, p.389

⁷⁹ Brown, Sundar JM. "Saint Augustine Of Hippo.", p.1

⁸⁰ Rout, Leslie B. "The" Black Bishops" Mystery." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 9.1 (1972): 86-92, p.88

⁸¹ Raboteau, Albert J. "Black Catholics and Afro-American Religious History: Autobiographic Reflections." *US Catholic Historian* 5.1 (1986): 119-127, p.125.

⁸² Reed, Christopher Robert. *Black Chicago's first century: 1833-1900*. Vol. 1. University of Missouri Press, 2005, pp.323, 371; Sister Caroline Hemesath, S. S. F. *From Slave to Priest: The Inspirational Story of Fr. Augustine Tolton*. Ignatius Press.

Christians worldwide, throughout the ages.⁸³ Augustine Tolton intended to lead an integrated church, although St. Monica's was segregated after his death (failing as a result).⁸⁴

Conclusion

There have been several attempts to delve deeper into the character of Monica. The different approaches are to read Augustine's portrayal of her in *The Confessions* differently; to engage with other works of Augustine and other early writers; and to engage with how she was received by different groups, who may have received her inaccurately, to see how they benefited from her veneration.

The second approach benefited from the work of Fr. Trapè, who dedicated much of his life to translating the works of Augustine and making them widely available.⁸⁵ Although his compilation of all Augustine's thoughts on Monica in *Mia Madre* was helpful it is a niche work as it focused on the issue of motherhood, but the study of Augustine's less popular works led Monica to be reconsidered. It is clear that her role in *The Confessions* served a specific narrative purpose that gave an incomplete picture.

A comparison with other ancient members of the Order of Widows gave Monica a new sense of popularity amongst Catholic widows, who in 1981 (starting in St. Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham) proclaimed "Monica Weekend" as a yearly festival.⁸⁶ This coincided with a growing rediscovery of the Order of Widows, following the reestablishment of the Order of Consecrated Virgins.⁸⁷

St. Monica's veneration is not only closely tied to the works of St. Augustine, but his *Confessions* in particular. This has led her reception as a saint into potential inaccuracy and an unfair subordination to the *cultus* of her son Augustine. Enough alternate material about her survived to lead to moments of independence and the invention of new traditions. This was not limited to the Mediæval period, which is often seen as a period rife with falsified traditions and overactive imaginations, but some of her most significant developments occurred in the last two centuries.⁸⁸

Augustine's *Confessions* is seen by many as one of the greatest pieces of Christian literature ever written, so Monica's portrayal in it overtook other portrayals she had over time.⁸⁹ The amount of recent scholarship that reveals the various ways her life can be interpreted may change her veneration in a more lasting sense. Fr. Trapè's work in making Augustine's works, especially those concerning Monica, have been translated into dozens of languages

⁸³Clark, Adam. "Honoring the ancestors: Toward an Afrocentric theology of liberation." *Journal of Black Studies* 44.4 (2013): 376-394, p.389

⁸⁴ Reed, pp.405

⁸⁵ This is mostly as a part of his Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana series. See for example, his work on Augustine's letters: Gentili, D. "Opere di Sant'Agostino: Le Lettere 1-123 (Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana vol. XXI). Introduzione di Michele Pellegrino. Traduzione di T. Alimonti (1-30) e L. Carrozzi (31-123). Note di Luigi Carrozzi—Le Lettere 124-184 (Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana vol. XXII). Traduzione e note di Luigi Carrozzi." *Augustinianum* 12.1 (1972): 190-191.

⁸⁶ Rees, p.399

⁸⁷ Rees, p.400

⁸⁸ Grafton, Anthony. *Forgers and Critics, New Edition: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*. Princeton University Press, 2019, pp.23-24

⁸⁹ Starnes, Colin. *Augustine's Conversion: a Guide to the Argument of Confessions I-IX*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1990, p.xi

and have been published worldwide in contrast to the forceful, but all too local support for St. Monica's *cultus* in Quattrocento Italy.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Holgate, p.181

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