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# Abbreviations

AL	<i>Augustinus-Lexikon</i>
AM	<i>Augustinus Magister</i>
ANF	A Select Library of Ante-Nicene Christian Fathers
Aug.	Augustine
<i>Ad Simpl.</i>	<i>Ad Simplicianum</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessiones</i>
<i>C. Acad.</i>	<i>Contra Academicos</i>
<i>De ciu. dei</i>	<i>De ciuitate dei</i>
<i>De doct. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana</i>
<i>De dua. an.</i>	<i>De duabus animabus</i>
<i>De diu. qu.</i>	<i>De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>
<i>De mag.</i>	<i>De magistro</i>
<i>De mor.</i>	<i>De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus manichaeorum</i>
<i>De ord.</i>	<i>De ordine</i>
<i>De trin.</i>	<i>De trinitate</i>
<i>De util. cred.</i>	<i>De utilitate credendi</i>
<i>Exp. ad Rom.</i>	<i>Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos</i>
<i>In ep. Ioh. tr.</i>	<i>In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem</i>
<i>Retr.</i>	<i>Retractationes</i>
<i>Sol.</i>	<i>Soliloquia</i>
Aug(L)	<i>Augustiniana. Tijdschrift voor de studie van Sint Augustinus en de Augustijnenorde</i>
AugStud	<i>Augustinian Studies</i>
BA	Bibliothèque Augustinienne
Basil	Basil of Caesarea
<i>Hom. de grat. act.</i>	<i>Homilia de gratiarum actione</i>
BT	Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana
CCG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CCL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina

Clem.		Clement of Alexandria
	<i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus</i>
	<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromateis</i>
CSEL		Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EAA		Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes: Antiquité
EAHS		Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes: Hors série
FC		Fathers of the Church
Greg. Nys.		Gregory of Nyssa
	<i>Or. Catech.</i>	<i>Oratorio Catechetica</i>
<i>HTR</i>		<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
Iren.		Irenaeus
	<i>Adv. haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>JECS</i>		<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
John Chrim.		John Climacus
	<i>Scala</i>	<i>Scala Paradisi</i>
John Chry.		John Chrysostom
	<i>In Ep. ad Rom. hom.</i>	<i>In Epistulam ad Romanos homiliae</i>
<i>JThS</i>		<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCC		Library of Christian Classics
LCL		Loeb Classical Library
NBA		Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana
NPNF		A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Christian Fathers
OCT		Oxford Classical Texts
Orig.		Origen of Alexandria
	<i>Comm. in Ioh.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Iohannem</i>
PG		Patrologia cursus completus. Series Graeca
Ps.-Dionys.		Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite
<i>REA</i>		<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
<i>RecTh</i>		<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médié- vale</i>
SC		Sources Chrétiennes
<i>SVF</i>		<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>
<i>ThQ</i>		<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>VChr</i>		<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WSA		The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century



## Friendship and Shared Reading Experiences in Augustine\*

NAOKI KAMIMURA

**ABSTRACT:** Friendship plays an essential role in Augustine's relations with others. He enjoyed his close friendship with an unnamed young man while teaching at Thagaste. After the loss of his dear friend he took solace from other friendship in Carthage. In Rome, Milan, and the 'Cassiciacum estate', he had been shared with his friends the same aim of the coenobitic mode of life. Amicable agreements were marked by the sharing of property, fraternity, conversations, prayer, and reading. Shared reading experience performs a basic function in Augustine's mediating perceptions of the reality. When he met Cicero's *Hortensius*, he attended to the study of philosophy. His engagement in the scriptures was elevated by a comparative study of neoplatonic treatises. His conversion to the religious mode of life occurred through his reading of Pauline epistles. This paper considers the way in which Augustine turns to reading in place of his friendships, and/or in combination with it. It is argued whether for him there is some positive correlation between friendship and shared reading experience. He spiritualises both of them despite their adhesions to sensory and temporary things. It is because friendship and reading experience permit him to approach the divine matters that lay beyond the practical attitude towards reading experiences and his friends.

The various strands of Augustine's ideas on society come together in his complicated and eloquent body of thought. Although his discussion might carry the risk of misunderstanding and oversimplification, it is clearly indicated that, from the viewpoint of an individual in the Mediterranean world of Late Antiquity, society for humans is an indisputable good thing. Augustine inherited the traditions originally formulated by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by a relevant statement found in Book 19 of the *City of God*, which

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of the ways in which much scholarship has been devoted to the study of Augustine's practical philosophy, see F. E. Cranz, 'The Development of Augustine's Ideas on Society before the Donatist Controversy', *HTR* 47 (1954) 255–316; R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of Saint Augustine*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge 1988); M. Ruokanen, *Theology*

is one of the most comprehensive among the corpus of his works and that was to take him about fourteen years, even if sporadically, to finally finish in 427.<sup>2</sup> Augustine asks about the indissoluble relationship to others rhetorically, as follows:

The philosophies hold the view that the life of the wise man should be social; and in this we support them much more heartily . . . How could that City have made its first start, how could it have advanced along its course, how could it attain its appointed goal, if the life of the saints were not social? And yet, who would be capable of listing the number and the gravity of the ills which abound in human society amid the distresses of our mortal condition? Who would be competent to assess them?<sup>3</sup>

The wise would behave as humans, in a socially and naturally given context of being, by their love for other human beings in their social groupings that they form. All human beings should love one another in God, with an intense, mutual and ordered love. Human social nature is one of the most fertile grounds for happiness. But social life is also full of anxiety and concern. Although such an ideal state might be impossible in this life, all that can be hoped for now is that people should love a few others reciprocally, in an intense relationship founded on love of God. And love between humans is defined as that of friendship, in which they aim to extend their love to others as far as possible.<sup>4</sup>

Augustine's writings depict him as a person who highly valued friendship. In his life and thought, friendship has an indispensable value in the quest for

*of Social Life in Augustine's De civitate Dei*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 53 (Göttingen 1993); D. F. Donnelly (ed.), *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York 1995); M. Vessey, K. Pollmann, and A. Fitzgerald (eds.), *History, Apocalypse, and the Secular Imagination: New Essays on Augustine's City of God* (Bowling Green, OH 1999); P. Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', in E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge 2001) 234–252; J. Doody, K. L. Hughes, and K. Paffenroth (eds.), *Augustine and Politics* (Lanham, MD 2004); M. Hollingworth, *The Pilgrim City: St. Augustine of Hippo and His Innovation in Political Thought* (New York 2010).

<sup>2</sup> For the genesis of the *City of God*, see G. Bardy, 'Introduction générale à *La Cité de Dieu*', in G. Combès and G. Bardy (eds.), *La Cité de Dieu, Œuvres de saint Augustin*, BA 33 (Paris 1959) 22–35; J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*, Supplements to VChr 14 (Leiden 1991) 62; G. O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford 1999) 34–36.

<sup>3</sup> Aug., *De ciu. dei* 19.5; CCL 48,669: 'Quod autem socialem uitam uolunt esse sapientis, nos multo amplius adprobamus. Nam unde ista Dei ciuitas, . . . inchoaretur exortu uel progrediretur excursu uel adprehenderet debitos fines, si non esset socialis uita sanctorum? Sed in huius mortalitatis aerumna quot et quantis abundet malis humana societas, quis enumerare ualeat? quis aestimare sufficiat?' Eng. trans. in H. Bettenson, *St Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Classics (London 2003).

<sup>4</sup> See Aug., *Ep.* 130.6.13; CSEL 57,54–55: 'itemque amicitia non angustis finibus terminanda est; omnes enim, quibus amor et dilectio debetur, amplectitur, quamuis in alios propensius in alios suspensius inclinatur; peruenit autem usque ad inimicos, pro quibus etiam orare praecipimur. ita nemo est in genere humano, cui non dilectio etsi non pro mutua caritate pro ipsa tamen communis naturae societate debeatur.'



human perfection.<sup>5</sup> Some illustrations of his need for friends from his youth can be found in *Confessions*. In this review of his moral past, Augustine looks back with a critical eye on those early days, when, in Rome, Milan, and the country estate near Cassiciacum shortly after his conversion, he shared these same interests and wishes with friends. Many references to his early relationships show that he regarded them as sinful, as they led his friends and himself away from God. But Augustine's attraction towards the coenobitic mode of life was also dependent on his need to be encircled by dear friends.<sup>6</sup> His experiences of that form of living would find fulfilment in his later thoughts on ascetic community, of which he would organise the first in Thagaste after his return to North Africa,<sup>7</sup> and the second in Hippo after his ordination to the priesthood in 391. With reference to the similarities between his early experiences and those of monastic life, the following may be mentioned: the importance of the renunciation of property and sharing of all things, and the members spending their life in prayer, spiritual reading, and conversation.<sup>8</sup>

Some scholars have explored the characteristics of his views on friendship and the evolution of these ideas in his works. These are worthy subjects in their own right.<sup>9</sup> My concern is, however, in the correlation between friend-

<sup>5</sup> J. J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: the Growth of St. Augustine's Mind up to His Conversion* (London 1954) 86: 'one of the remarkable features of Augustine's character—his capacity for making friends'.

<sup>6</sup> See P. Courcelle, *Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: antécédents et postérité*, EAA 15 (Paris 1963) 26; L. Verheijen, *Nouvelle approche de la règle de saint Augustin*, Spiritualité orientale et vie monastique 8 (Begrolles-en-Mauges 1980) 238; A. Sage, *La vie religieuse selon saint Augustin*, EAHS 5 (Paris 1972) 181.

<sup>7</sup> For the significance of Augustine's activities at Thagaste, see G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule* (Oxford 1987) 45–62; D. C. Alexander, *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church: Emergence and Implications*, 386–391, *Patristic Studies* 9 (New York 2008) 179–243.

<sup>8</sup> See C. White, *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge 1992) 215–216; Alexander, *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church*, 13–14.

<sup>9</sup> On this issue, see V. Nolte, *Augustins Freundschaftsideal in seinen Briefen: Unter Hereinbeziehung seiner Jugendfreundschaften gemäß den Philosophischen Schriften und den Confessionen*, Cassiciacum 6 (Würzburg 1939); M. A. McNamara, *Friendship in Saint Augustine*, *Studia Friburgensia*, ns 20 (Fribourg, Switzerland 1958); J. F. Monagle, 'Friendship in St. Augustine's Biography: Classical Notion of Friendship', *AugStud* 2 (1971) 81–92; J. McEvoy, 'Anima una et cor unum: Friendship and Spiritual Unity in Augustine', *RecTh* 53 (1986) 40–92; G. Bonner, 'Augustine's Attitude to Women and 'Amicitia'', in C. Mayer (ed.), *Homo Spiritualis: Festgabe für Luc Verheijen zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*, Cassiciacum 38 (Würzburg 1987) 259–275; I. Hadot, art. 'amicitia', in C. Mayer, et al. (eds.), *AL* 1.1/2 (Basel and Stuttgart 1986) 287–293; T. J. Van Bavel, 'The Influence of Cicero's Ideal of Friendship on Augustine', in J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (eds.), *Augustiniana Traiectina: communicationes présentées au colloque international d'Utrecht, 13–14 novembre 1986* (Paris 1987) 59–72; White, *Christian Friendship*; L. Pizzolato, *L'idea di amicizia nel mondo antico classico e cristiano* (Milan 1993) 296–318; J. T. Lienhard, 'Friendship with God, Friendship in God: Traces in St. Augustine', in F. Van Fleteren, et al. (eds.), *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, *Collectanea Augustiniana* (New York 1994) 207–229; E. Cassidy, 'Le rôle de l'amitié dans la recherche du bonheur chez S. Augustin', in J. Follon and J. McEvoy (eds.), *Actualité de la pensée médiévale*, *Philosophes médiévaux* 31 (Louvain-la-

ship and shared reading experience (and other literary pursuits). For Augustine revealed himself as highly appreciative of the utility and indispensability of these activities in his life. These pursuits permitted him to approach divine matters that lay behind their adhesion to temporal things. In this paper, I shall examine two particular aspects of Augustine's concept of friendship in his works. These are: 1) the idea of friendship from the viewpoint of its spiritual sources; and 2) his views on shared activities in relation to friendship. I am especially concerned with exploring the way in which, despite individual fluctuations, a shared reading experience, combined with friendship, secures a future basis for human perfection.

## 1 THE INVULNERABILITY OF FRIENDSHIP AND ITS SPIRITUAL PRESCRIPTION

The ideal of openness and intimacy that Augustine sought in friendship would never be dissolved for slight reasons, since it involves mutual love in human relations. The ingredient that is necessary for a lasting friendship is that friends desire one purpose and one will: the harmonious agreement of desiring and rejecting the same things among close friends. When obstacles arise, one would attempt every means to remove them and make a firm commitment to friends.<sup>10</sup> With regard to the reciprocal bond of friendship, in his early writings, Augustine would have been influenced by the traditional views put forward by Classical writers, especially as approved by Cicero's *De amicitia*.<sup>11</sup> To his unnamed confidant who died young, Augustine applies Horace's felicitous phrase: 'his friend was "half his soul"'.<sup>12</sup> Of friends at Carthage, he says that the unity of friendship makes a single being out of many, which echoes of

Neuve 1994) 171–201; D. Konstan, 'Problems in the History of Christian Friendship', *JES* 4 (1996) 87–113; D. X. Burt, *Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MA 1999); C. Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford 2000) 158–193; S. Rebenich, 'Freund und Feind bei Augustin und in der christlichen Spätantike', in Th. Fuhrer (ed.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike: Texte, Personen und Institutionen*, *Philosophie der Antike* 28 (Stuttgart 2008) 11–31.

<sup>10</sup> See Aug., *Ep.* 73.10 to Jerome and *Ep.* 74 to Praesidius, a bishop of Numidia, written in 404; McNamara, *Friendship in Saint Augustine*, 179–185; White, *Christian Friendship*, 132–133. Cf. R. Hennings, 'The Correspondence between Augustine and Jerome', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 27 (Leuven 1993) 303–310; A. Fürst, art. 'Hieronymus', in C. Mayer, et al. (eds.), *AL* 3 (Basel 2004–2010) 317–336 at 323–324.

<sup>11</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia* 6.20; LCL 154.130: 'Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensus'. See also Van Bavel, 'The influence of Cicero's Ideal of Friendship'. Augustine continues to show approval of the Ciceronian definition of friendship in *Ep.* 258, written to Marcianus, an old friend of his Thagaste days (Cf. C. Acad. 3.6.13). As Maurice Testard has shown (*Saint Augustine et Cicéron*, 2 vols., EAA 5–6 (Paris 1958) 1.270 and n. 2), Augustine changes the order of words into '*humanarum et diuinarum* ou *diuinarumque*' and makes the definition more spiritual.

<sup>12</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.6.11; BA 13,426: 'dimidium animae meae'. Eng. trans. in P. Burton, *Confessions*, Everyman's library (London 2001).

Cicero's *De amicitia*: 'as it were, one soul out of many'.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in his later life, Augustine writes to Anicia Faltonia Proba, a Roman noble woman, in *Epistula* 130 (411/412): 'Thus in no human affairs is anything dear to a human being without a friend'<sup>14</sup>—a statement very similar to Laelius' words: 'how can life be what Ennius calls "the life worth living", if it does not repose on the mutual goodwill of a friend?'<sup>15</sup>

Despite sharply demanding and expressing this unity, Augustine was sometimes tortured by the loss of friendship, from his youth onward. During his wanderings in search of true wisdom, many of his acquaintances remained his friends, but he was grief-stricken when some were separated from him by circumstances. He explains this affection in his letter to Zenobius, written at the end of 386, his friend and pupil in Milan, who was also the most zealous for the study of moral philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

[T]hough my mind sees in itself that you are a true and simple man, the sort of person who can be loved without any worry, we, nonetheless, admit that, when you depart from us in terms of the body and are separated by place, we seek this contact with and sight of you to the extent that brothers are permitted to desire it. If I know you well, you, of course, are fond of this defect in us, and though you desire for your dearest and closest friends everything good, you are afraid that they will be healed of this defect. . . . As for myself, when I long for someone who is absent, I want to be longed for too. I am, nonetheless, as vigilant as I can be and strive to love nothing that can be absent from me against my will.<sup>17</sup>

How much the absence of his friends meant is apparent. When separation is imposed, he is afraid that their union would gradually lessen and disappear.

<sup>13</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.8.13; BA 13,430: 'ex pluribus unum facere'. See Cicero, *De amicitia* 25.92; LCL 154,198: 'ut unus quasi animus fiat ex pluribus'.

<sup>14</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 130.2.4; CSEL 57.44: 'ita in quibuslibet rebus humanis nihil est homini amicum sine homine amico.' Eng. trans. in R. Teske, WSA 2/2 (2002). See A.-M. La Bonnardière, 'La lettre à Proba', in eadem. (ed.), *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, Bible de tous les temps 3 (Paris 1986) 181–188; E. Clark, 'Theory and Practice in Late Ancient Asceticism: Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5.2 (1989) 25–46. On the chronological evidences and contents of Augustine's letters, see esp. J. Divjak, art. 'Epistulae', in C. Mayer, et. al. (eds.), *AL* 2 (Basel 1996–2002) 893–1057.

<sup>15</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia* 6.22; LCL 154,130: 'qui potest esse vita vitalis, ut ait Ennius, quae non in amici mutua benevolentia conquiescit?'

<sup>16</sup> See Aug., *De ord.* 1.2.4; BA 4/1,78: 'quod signum in te futurae sapientiae perniciosius cupiditatibus diuino iure praescribit, . . . cum eruditioni operam dederis, qua purgatur et excolitur animus nullo modo ante idoneus, cui diuina semina committantur.'

<sup>17</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 2; BA 40/A,208: 'cum te uerum ac simplicem, qualis sine ulla sollicitudine amari potes, in semet ipsa mens uideat, fatemur tamen congressum istum atque conspectum tuum, cum a nobis corpore discedis locisque seiungeris, quaerere nos eoque, dum licet cupere fratribus. Quod profecto uitium, si te bene noui, amas in nobis et, cum omnia bona optes carissimis et familiarissimis tuis, ab hoc eos sanare metuis. . . . Ego quidem quamdiu desidero absentem, desiderari me uolo. Inuigilo tamen, quantum queo, et nitor ut nihil amem quod abesse a me invito potest.' Eng. trans. in R. Teske, WSA 2/1 (2001).

This is because he has put so much energy into loving his friend and misses the union deeply. Such close relationship is also evident in the prefatory epistle of *De ordine*,<sup>18</sup> where he states that friendship would stand firm during their discussion of questions of order in the universe. Hence, his complaint about Zenobius' absence reminds us of Cicero's attachment to the affinity of friendship: 'What is sweeter than to have someone with whom you may dare discuss anything as if you were communing with yourself?'<sup>19</sup> His experience of this frailty was taken seriously by Augustine. Their transience and vulnerability imposed on friendship seems to be one of the central motifs of his outlook.

But how does Augustine define the invulnerability of friendship? What prescriptions does he give for its loss? There seem to be two approaches to this issue. The first is that Augustine thinks a friend's absence cannot destroy the relationship. The friend's physical presence is superfluous for its preservation. This is due to there being contact with the friend's soul. Augustine's mature thought resorts to this spiritual aspect of human companionship. Next, the emphasis on shared activities between friends becomes the focus of his ideas on this reciprocal bond, since they can be closer to one another in their souls by virtue of their common interests. References to shared pursuits appear consistently in his writings.

I shall initially consider the first approach. The reflection on the friendship formed with an unnamed young man at Thagaste centres around his review of friendship in *Confessions*. He refers to it as 'a friendship sweeter to me than all the sweetnesses of my life, as it then was'.<sup>20</sup> In his story, Augustine defines true friendship: 'it is only true friendship when you glue together those who cleave to you by diffusing your love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5), which you have given us.'<sup>21</sup> The love that flows from the gift of the Holy Spirit lays the foundation for true friendship. All other that differ from this 'true' are false and empty.<sup>22</sup> It is not human beings but God's grace that provides the solid basis for true friendship.

Another text that is important to his outlook is found in *Ep.* 218 (414/415–

<sup>18</sup> Aug., *De ord.* 1.2.4: BA 4/1,778–80: 'qualemque uitam nos uiuamus, carissimi tui, etquem fructum de liberali otio carpamus, hi te libri satis, ut opinor, edocebunt nomine tuo nobis quam nostra elaboratione dulciores'. For close relationships at the Cassiciacum estate, see also another prefatory epistles in Cassiciacum dialogues: C. *Acad.* 1.1.4; *De beata uita* 1.5.

<sup>19</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia* 6.22; LCL 154,131: 'Quid dulcius quam habere quicum omnia audeas sic loqui tu tecum?'

<sup>20</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.4.7; BA 13,418: 'amicitia mea, suauis mihi super omnes suauitates illius uitae meae'.

<sup>21</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.4.7; BA 13,418: 'uera amicitia, quia non est uera, nisi cum eam tu agglutinas inter haerentes sibi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis.'

<sup>22</sup> See J. J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1992) 2.109; H. Pétré, *Caritas: étude sur le vocabulaire latin de la charité chrétienne*, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 22 (Louvain 1948) 38–40; P. M. Valente, *L'éthique stoïcienne chez Cicéron*, PhD diss. (Université de Paris 1956) 154–157.

430),<sup>23</sup> in which, to Palatinus, a catholic layman of Hippo who served as a deacon in the East, Augustine expresses the belief that, in the case of true friendship, it ought not to be valued according to the bodily presence of friends: 'Whether absent or present in body, we wish to have you in the one spirit by means of which love is poured forth in our hearts, so that wherever we may be in the flesh, our souls will be inseparable in every way.'<sup>24</sup> Remarkable in this passage is the allusion to Romans 5:5, as he explicitly appeals to it in *Confessions*.<sup>25</sup> It is used by him as a proof-text to justify the empowerment of the love of God. In spite of friends' absence, he asserts that friendship is preserved. Thus, sharing in the love of God, friends can never be far from each other. Since they are present to one another in their souls, so that friendship would be possible between those who have never met.<sup>26</sup>

This belief lies at the centre of Augustine's view of the spiritual aspect of friendship. We can also give some indication of his view of love and friendship: his sentiment that each love is characterised by its different degrees.<sup>27</sup> For all the creatures in the world are good and yet some objects are more proper to love. God is the ultimate object of love, while other loves are subject to that love.<sup>28</sup> Concern is expressed over the radical disparity between human love of God and love for others. But both are given by God's grace, rather than achieved by human beings. This belief is considered to be the key pin in the emphasis he laid upon the need for grace in human affairs. This is the basis for Augustine's prescription for the transience of friendship.

But if these prescriptions enabled him to overcome the loss of friendship, why does he so readily express his distress over human friendship? Indeed, in

<sup>23</sup> Concerning the formula of the twofold commandment to love God and neighbour, see also Aug., *Ep.* 258.4; White, *Christian Friendship*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 218.4; CSEL 58,427-428: 'nos autem te siue absentem corpore siue praesentem in uno spiritu habere cupimus, per quem diffunditur caritas in cordibus nostris, ut quolibet loco fuerit caro nostra, nullo modo separata esse possit anima nostra.' Eng. trans. in R. Teske, WSA 2/4 (2005). See Aug., *De trin.* 9.4.6; CCL 50,298: 'Quamquam et amici corpore uidentur separari posse, non animo in quantum amici sunt'. Before considering in detail his view with regard to its creative element, some indication of friend's presence should be given. Such an idea is hinted at in *Ep.* 2 when Augustine writes to Zenobius: 'everything that a sense of the body attains cannot remain in the same way even for a moment of time, but slips away, flows off, and holds onto nothing actual, that is, to speak Latin, it does not exist.' We find here the idea, frequently affirmed in his letters, that friend's physical presence is superfluous for the preservation of the unity of friendship: see also Aug., *Ep.* 9.1 to Nebridius in 387/388.

<sup>25</sup> For the use of Romans 5:5 in the works of Augustine, see A.-M. La Bonnardière, 'Le verset paulinien Rom., v. 5 dans l'œuvre de saint Augustine', *AM* 2 (Paris 1954) 657-665.

<sup>26</sup> See Aug., *Ep.* 9.1 to Nebridius; *Ep.* 193.2 to Mercator (418); and *Ep.* 267 to Fabiola (date uncertain).

<sup>27</sup> See Aug., *De mor.* 1.26.49; CSEL 90,53-54: 'Tu autem ipsum salubriter diligis, si plus quam te diligis deum. Quod igitur agis tecum, id agendum cum proximo est; hoc est, ut etiam ipse perfecto amore deum diligit.'

<sup>28</sup> See Aug., *Ep.* 140.2.4.

the *City of God*, Augustine looks at the frailty of friendship as follows:

what consolation have we in this human society, so replete with mistaken notions and distressing anxieties, except the unfeigned faith and mutual affections of genuine, loyal friends? Yet the more friends we have and the more dispersed they are in different places, the further and more widely extend our fears that some evil may befall them from among all the mass of evils of this present world.<sup>29</sup>

Augustine's pessimism concerning the vicissitudes to which friendship is subject still persists. In addition, his conviction that true friendships are spiritual, in which the warmth of friends is anchored in the bond created by love 'poured forth in our hearts', would be paralleled by his continuous emphasis on the sharing of daily experiences in friendship. If Augustine did not think it necessary for friends to live in close proximity, what reason can be given for his stress on shared activities and common interests in friendship?

## 2 READING EXPERIENCES IN COMBINATION WITH FRIENDSHIP

Around the time 373–374, during which he was strongly inspired by the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius* to convert to the love of wisdom, that is *philosophia*,<sup>30</sup> the discovery of Cicero prepared him to adopt philosophy as a way of life in which Augustine would combine contemplative elements of this philosophy with communal life with his fellows.<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that, during the same period, Augustine was deeply concerned with Manichaeism. The encounter with Manichaeism would appeal to him to settle the rational grounds for belief<sup>32</sup> and to offer a religious and moral commitment to asceticism. Although these two apparently similar constructs attracted him as separate entities, there seems to be a common realm where from his youth, Augustine's longing for unity among friends stimulated interest in the shared activities of friendship.

The atmosphere of those days is clear from *De duabus animabus* (392 or 393), in which Augustine touches on the irresistible forces of Manichaeism, one of which is the intimate companionship (*familiaritas*): 'like some twisted chain wrapped many times around my neck',<sup>33</sup> and the other their urge for

<sup>29</sup> Aug., *De ciu. dei* 19.8; CCL 48,672: 'quid nos consolatur in hac humana societate erroribus aerumnisque plenissima nisi fides non ficta et mutua dilectio uerorum et bonorum amicorum? Quos quanto plures et in locis pluribus habemus, tanto longius latiusque metuimus, ne quid eis contingat mali de tantis malorum aggeribus huius saeculi.'

<sup>30</sup> See E. Feldmann, *Der Einfluß des Hortensius und des Manichäismus auf das Denken des jungen Augustinus von 383*, 2 vols., PhD diss. (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster 1975) 1.14–43; G. Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie. Notes critiques*, EAA 149 (Paris 1992) 17–20.

<sup>31</sup> See G. Madec, "'In te supra me". Le sujet dans les *Confessions* de saint Augustin', *Revue de l'Institute catholique de Paris* 28 (1988) 45–63 at 46.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. Aug. *De mor.* 1.2.3.

<sup>33</sup> Aug., *De dua. an.* 9.11; CSEL 25/1,65: 'tamquam sinuosum aliquod vinculum multipliciter collo involutum.' Eng. trans. in R. Teske, WSA 1/19 (2006).

disputations with 'Christians, who were unlearned but still striving to defend their faith in combat'.<sup>34</sup> Such was the devotion to Manichaeism that Augustine the 'auditor' eagerly participated in public debate by 'reading the works of others'.<sup>35</sup> And later in 386 at the Cassiciacum estate, it is also evident from the *Soliloquia* that Augustine's fraternal grouping 'may together, with one mind, seek to know our souls and God'.<sup>36</sup> The members of the group help one another in the attainment of their aims. As a result, he produced a series of dialogues that show his fellows the liberal arts as a way of ascending grades of human perfection towards the contemplation of truth.<sup>37</sup> Augustine and his intimates are regarded as fellow seekers ascending the ladder of education through the corporeal to the incorporeal realm, following the ascent of the soul towards the divine matter.

Some of his letters provide further evidence of devotion to friendship, in combination with literary pursuits. Correspondence between Augustine and Paulinus of Nola illustrates this clearly.<sup>38</sup> Alypius, one of Augustine's friends, who was *praefectus urbi* in 391,<sup>39</sup> brought them into contact in 394 by sending several copies of Augustine's books to Paulinus.<sup>40</sup> Paulinus immediately wrote to Augustine as follows:

You see, my admirable brother, with whom I am one in heart, who are to be loved in Christ the Lord, how I acknowledge you as a friend, with what great awe I admire you,

<sup>34</sup> Aug., *De dua. an.* 9.11; CSEL 25/1,65: 'in disputationibus ... cum christianis imperitis, sed tamen fidem suam certatim, ut quisque posset, defendere molientibus.'

<sup>35</sup> Aug., *De dua. an.* 9.11; CSEL 25/1,65–66: 'aliis lectionibus'.

<sup>36</sup> Aug., *Sol.* 1.12.20; CSEL 89,31: 'animas nostras et deum simul concorditer inquiramus.' Eng. trans. in G. Watson, *Saint Augustine: Soliloquies and Immortality of the Soul*, Classical texts (Warminster 1990).

<sup>37</sup> Concerning the evolution of Augustine's view of the ascent of the soul, see C. van Lierde, 'The Teaching of St. Augustine of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2–3', in J. Schnaubelt, F. Van Fleteren, and J. Reino (eds.), *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, Collectanea Augustiniana (New York 1994) 5–110; B. Neil, 'Neo-Platonic Influence on Augustine's Conception of the Ascent of the Soul in *De quantitate animae*', in P. Allen, W. Mayer, and L. Cross (eds.), *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church 2* (Brisbane 1999) 197–215; F. B. A. Asiedu, 'The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism', *VChr* 55 (2001) 299–317; B. Studer, *Augustins De trinitate: Eine Einführung* (Paderborn 2005) 140–147; N. Kamimura, 'Augustine's First Exegesis and the Divisions of Spiritual Life', *AugStud* 36.2 (2005) 421–432; L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge 2010) pt. 2: Ascent.

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. P. Courcelle, 'Les lacunes de la correspondance entre saint Augustin et saint Paulin de Nôle', *REA* 53 (1951) 253–300 at 294–296; J. T. Lienhard, 'Friendship in Paulinus of Nola and Augustine', *Aug(L)* 40 (1990) 279–296; D. E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 27 (Berkeley, CA 1999); F. B. A. Asiedu, 'Caritas, amicitia, and the Ideal Reader: Paulinus of Nola's Reception of Augustine's Early Works', *Aug(L)* 53 (2003) 107–138; S. Lancel and M. Moreau, 'Note introductive', in S. Lancel, et al. (eds.), *Lettres 1–30, Œuvres de saint Augustin*, BA 40/A (Paris 2011) 395–398.

<sup>39</sup> On Alypius, see A. Mandouze, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire, 1: Prosopographie de l'Afrique chrétienne (303–533)* (Paris 1982) 53–65.

<sup>40</sup> See Aug., *Ep.* 24.2–3.

with what great love I embrace you, I who daily enjoy the conversation of your writings and am fed by the spirit of your mouth.<sup>41</sup>

Since they had never met one another,<sup>42</sup> they at first conformed to the rules of sophisticated letter-writing. After Paulinus' friends, Romanus and Agilis, gave Augustine a portrait of Paulinus 'from their lips',<sup>43</sup> Augustine writes to Paulinus that it was as if he had received 'another letter of yours . . . like the sweetest part of your presence'.<sup>44</sup> '[T]hese and similar very pleasing and very holy vistas [are offered] to your readers',<sup>45</sup> which seems to nurture their nascent community.<sup>46</sup>

These exchanges are closely related to their concern for one another. Lively curiosity about the course of their lives is shown, as they exchange pleasantries and greetings with one another.<sup>47</sup> Paulinus is simply satisfied with formal courtesies. However, Augustine allows himself to express a strong desire for his friend's presence. In his reply to Paulinus, he says that 'from their very faces and eyes as they spoke we read with an inexpressible joy you yourselves, who were written in their hearts'.<sup>48</sup> Augustine is fascinated by seeing a friend's faces and eyes in which 'the many inclinations of our soul are recognized now in our eyes'.<sup>49</sup> His yearning to see this physical presence comes to be closely connected with his concern for the events of the inner life. Sharing a keen interest in the state of one another's soul, he is intrigued by recreating

<sup>41</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 25.2; BA 40/A,414: 'Vides, frater unanime, admirabilis in Christo Domino et suscipiende, quam familiariter te agnouerim, quanto admirer stupore, quam magno amore compectar, qui quotidie conloquio litterarum tuarum fruor et oris tui spiritu uescor.'

<sup>42</sup> See P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London 1967) 161–162; J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364–425* (Oxford 1975) 211–215; C. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford 2000) 73.

<sup>43</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 31.2; CSEL 44.2: 'eorum ore'. See Mandouze, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, 1, 998; Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols*, 141–142. Cf. P. Allen, B. Neil, and W. Mayer, *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Realities*, Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 28 (Leipzig 2009) 46–47.

<sup>44</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 31.2; CSEL 44.2: 'aliam epistulam uestram, . . . et suauissimam partem uestrae praesentiae'.

<sup>45</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 27.3; BA 40/A,456: 'Haec atque huius modi suauissima et sacratissima spectacula litterae tuae . . . legentibus'.

<sup>46</sup> An unfortunate interval in their correspondence (398–405), however, and the following crisis in their relationship, in which Paulinus found himself torn between Augustine and his adversary Pelagius, makes it difficult to expect the growth of their intimacy. See McNamara, *Friendship in Saint Augustine*, 127–132; Courcelle, 'Les lacunes de la correspondance', 284–288, 299; Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 227–235. Although their love for each other was courteous enough to overcome crises, affectionate relationship in their early correspondences disappeared.

<sup>47</sup> See Aug., *Ep.* 28.1.

<sup>48</sup> Aug., *Ep.* 31.2; CSEL 44.2: 'per ipsum etiam uultum oculosque loquentium uos in cordibus eorum scriptos cum ineffabili laetitia legeremus.'

<sup>49</sup> Aug., *De diu. qu.* 47; CCL 44/A,74: 'multi motus animi nostri nunc agnoscuntur in oculis'. Eng. trans. in B. Ramsey, WSA 1/12 (2008). See also Aug., *Ep.* 27.1; BA 40/A,454: 'animum mihi tuum, hoc est te ipsum interiorem, aspiciendum patefeceris.'



a friend's appearance, even if he confirms that friendship is preserved in a friend's absence.

It can thus be seen that the need for friendship and peaceful harmony is necessarily accompanied by increasing concern for the whole itinerary both of his and his fellows' souls. Peter Brown has shown Augustine as 'a man who needed to have friends around him, who could never be content with a world of disembodied souls, turning in despair away from human communication to God'.<sup>50</sup> Augustine could not take an optimistic view of perfect friendship. Only in heaven would human companionship be perfect, where mutually loving members of the City of God would be formed for the enjoyment of mutual fellowship in God. This distress was all the more reason to be forced to reveal his inner self and to know the course of another's soul. This compelling concern makes him turn frequently to reading and other literary pursuits, since these activities provide him with the opportunity to examine another's soul through verbal and written signs.<sup>51</sup>

In fact, Augustine's reading combined with his absorption in companionship often appear in his interest in the manner in which personages in a story lived and the way they adopted to new modes of life. Although a story had not provided a solution for serious trouble, such might not be the case. In Book 4 of *Confessions* we have a most vivid picture of his friendship.

[S]hared talk, shared laughter, mutual acts of kindness, the shared reading of good literature, of moments of levity and seriousness; occasional disagreements that were without ill-feeling, as a man can disagree with himself, which gave a relish to our more usual concord; . . .<sup>52</sup>

While he was teaching at Thagaste, Augustine found his intimate friend. Their mutual bond was 'fired in the heat of our shared studies'.<sup>53</sup> His friend's death deeply upset Augustine. He was struggling to resolve his grief, and was obliged to explain the intensity of his sorrow in detail. It may be clear from texts that the unity of true friendship must be referred not to human love for others but to love of God. The same can be said for his consolation in other friendships after his subsequent return to Carthage. These vulnerable friendships continuously suffer from agony. It might seem that this is one of the anecdotes that reflects the duality of his response to friendship, although

<sup>50</sup> Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 161.

<sup>51</sup> Concerning the possibility of errors in these processes, see Aug., *De util. cred.* 4.10. Cf. B. Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA 1996) 189–190.

<sup>52</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.8.13; BA 13,430: 'conloqui et corridere et uicissim beniuole obsequi, simul legere libros dulciloquos, simul nugari et simul honestari, dissentire iterdum sine odio tamquam ipse homo secum atque ipsa rarissima dissensione condire consensiones plurimas'.

<sup>53</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.4.7; BA 13,418: 'cocta feruore parilium studiorum'.

consideration of his grief would make him face his guilt about friendship and expose his sin.

At the end of Book 3, Augustine was sharing a household with his mother at Carthage.<sup>54</sup> Then he met a young man at Thagaste,<sup>55</sup> which resulted in his return to Carthage. Although there would be no references to his friendship during his first stay at Carthage, this does not exclude the possibility of his forming friendships with classmates. And Augustine was still in the grip of the Manichaean community. Despite the emphasis on loss of friendship, some close relationships with Manichaean friends endured during this period:<sup>56</sup>

What refreshed and renewed me most of all was the solace I derived from other friends, who shared my love for the thing I loved instead of you—that great myth, that long lie which entered my mind as it itched to be tickled through my ears, and rubbed it as an adulteress strokes her lover. That myth of mine did not die if one of my friends did, and in my friends I found other pleasures, which captivated my mind even more: . . .<sup>57</sup>

The yearning for sharing the Manichaean *fabellae* with friends is the enduring indication of his preoccupation with this failed community. Augustine introduced it to a school friend with whom he resumed the literary pursuits of childhood.<sup>58</sup> He discussed the difference between absolute and relative beauty with his Manichaean friends, and their pursuits produced his first book, *On Beauty and Aptness*. Therefore, if Augustine presumed that his Manichaeans were the first audience of these descriptions, there was an admonition to them. The sequence of their failed community comes from their shared literary labours. Hence, Augustine exhorts them to read another passage, which will be the beginning of their consolation: ‘it is he that has made all these things, and he is not far off’.<sup>59</sup>

Concerning another reading experience, there is a more direct admonition. In Book 8, Ponticianus, a fellow countryman and a servant of the emperor,<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See Aug., *Conf.* 3.11.19.

<sup>55</sup> See Aug., *Conf.* 4.4.7.

<sup>56</sup> See N. McLynn, ‘Disciplines of Disciplineship in Late Antique Education: Augustine and Gregory Nazianzen’, in K. Pollmann and M. Vessey (eds.), *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to Confessions* (Oxford 2005) 25–48 at 41–42.

<sup>57</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.8.13; BA 13,430: ‘maxime quippe me reparabant atque recreabant aliorum amicorum solacia, cum quibus amabam quod pro te amabam, et hoc erat ingens fabula et longum mendacium, cuius adulterina confricatione corrumpebatur mens nostra pruriens in auribus. sed illa mihi fabula non moriebatur, si quis amicorum meorum moreretur. alia erant, quae in eis amplius capiebant animum’.

<sup>58</sup> See Aug., *Conf.* 4.4.7.

<sup>59</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 4.12.18; BA 13,438: ‘ipse fecit haec et non est longe’.

<sup>60</sup> On Ponticianus himself, see Mandouze, *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, 1, 884. With regard to the role of Ponticianus’ story, see also G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford 1987) 9–13; Stock, *Augustine the Reader*, 95–102; C. Vaught, *Encounters with God in Augustine’s Confessions: Books VII–IX* (Albany, NY 2004) 72–84; L. Ayres, ‘Into the Poem of the

tells Augustine and his friend Alypius, first, the story of St. Anthony, a well-educated and well-respected hermit in Upper Egypt, closing with the story of the 'vast numbers of monasteries'<sup>61</sup> inspired by him, then slides into a vivid story of Ponticianus himself and his friends.<sup>62</sup> One of the significant features of these stories is that they reveal the existence of a circle of friends who are interested in one another: not only Ponticianus and his audiences, but his fellow-personages and their fiancées in the last tale to which Augustine and Alypius are continuously attentive and deeply involved in.

[H]e [i.e. Ponticianus] and three fellow-officers of his at Trier had gone for a walk in the market gardens adjacent to the city walls, ... They were strolling along in pairs, he with one companion and the other two some way apart. ... the second pairs wandering in no particular direction, stumbled upon a little hovel ... There they found a book containing the *Life of Anthony*. One of them began to read the *Life*, and was set on fire with wonder; ... Then, filled all of a sudden with holy love and sober shame, and angry at himself, he cast his eyes on his friend ... He read, and was changed within, where you could see; and, as became apparent soon afterwards, his mind began to put off the world.<sup>63</sup>

Consequently, both those who were agents for public affairs and the women to whom the agents had been engaged decided to dedicate their lives wholly to God. Ponticianus and his comrade could not give up their passions for the success. They 'wept for themselves [i.e. new converts]; they joined piously in their friends' joy, commended themselves to their prayers.'<sup>64</sup>

It is interesting to note that these stories are full of expressions of their affection and of visual appeal. They imply that Augustine, his friends, and personages in these stories could see one another's faces and eyes.<sup>65</sup> Satisfied with their curiosity, the deeper their sympathy, the closer their friendship. It might perhaps strengthen their hope in the quest for a new mode of life. Indeed, mutually verbalising and hearing the episode satisfied their curiosity. If

Universe: *Exempla*, Conversion, and Church in Augustine's *Confessiones*, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 13 (2009) 263–281. Cf. D. Johnson, 'Story and Design in Book Eight of Augustine's *Confessiones*', *Biography* 14 (1991) 39–60.

<sup>61</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 8.6.15; BA 14,36: 'monasteriorum greges'. See also Alexander, *Augustine's Early Theology of the Church*, 166–167.

<sup>62</sup> See Aug., *Conf.* 6.6.14–15.

<sup>63</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 8.6.15; BA 14,38–40: 'se et tres alios contubernales suos, nimirum apud Treueros, ... exisse deambulatum in hortos muris contiguos atque illic, ut forte combinati spatiabantur, unum secum seorsum et alios duos itidem seorsum pariterque digressos; sed illos uagabundos intruisse in quandam casam, ... et inuenisse ibi codicem, in quo scripta erat uita Antonii. quam legere coepit unus eorum et mirari ... tum subito repletus amore sancto et sobrio pudore iratus sibi coniecit oculos in amicum ... et legebatur intus, ubi tu uidebas, et exuebatur mundo mens eius, ut mox apparuit.'

<sup>64</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 8.6.15; BA 14,40–42: 'fleuerunt se tamen, ... atque illis pie congratulati sunt et commendauerunt se orationibus eorum'.

<sup>65</sup> See Aug., *De diu. qu.* 47 (n. 49 above).

speaking and hearing centre around their yearning, what impact do they have on each other?<sup>66</sup> Here, as for example in the case of Ponticianus' colleagues and Augustine, there seems to be a noticeable gap. Even after Augustine became more attentive than ever to Ponticianus' story, 'in rapt silence',<sup>67</sup> he could not respond to what he had heard from the innermost centre of his being. He did not proceed to make a decision on a new form of life. This is not the other case that Ponticianus' companion decided to do, and that later at the decisive moment in a garden Augustine will make every effort. When, therefore, these pairs of friends are genuinely concerned for one another's well-being, such a distinct pattern of behaviour suggests beyond their intimate friendship that there would be a source of strength that changes dramatically and irrevocably their course of life.

Another point that requires notice is that a radical contrast emerges among those who are involved in and affected by the last story. Among the court officials, those who happened on a certain cottage resolved to become 'friend of God'<sup>68</sup> after one of them read about the life of Anthony, while others—Ponticianus and his friend—were still reluctant to embrace an ascetic way of life after they heard in detail what their comrades had decided to do. In focusing our attention on the audiences of this tale, those who had been pledged in marriage followed them, while not only Ponticianus and his friend but Augustine and Alypius could not imitate the fiancées' decision. The story of Anthony and its reading might be said to be at the centre of a series of overlapping and interconnected events. In fact, not only the reader of the *Life*, but both his colleague who learned Anthony's conversion and their brides were sequentially converted to a new way of living. These conversions are taken to confirm that the reading experience would show them how to find a way out of their entanglements. All the same, another audiences could not decide their own mind. Why does Augustine juxtapose these conversions with the lack of resolution? It seems that, although the reading experience partially serves as a motivating force in overcoming their obstacles, it also points to the fact that there remains serious difficulties that unable them to impart an impetus to the immediate and future direction of their lives. It can thus be seen that Augustine links together a sequence of the incidents that will eventually lead them to continue the struggle with the question about the way to become entirely divorced from their old selves

<sup>66</sup> My own reading owes a considerable debt to Carl G. Vaught: see Vaught, *Encounters with God in Augustine's Confessions*, 80–83.

<sup>67</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 8.6.15; BA 14,38: 'nos ... tacebamus'.

<sup>68</sup> Aug., *Conf.* 8.6.15; BA 14,40: 'amicus ... dei'. See Lienhard, 'Friendship with God, Friendship in God', 213–214; White, *Christian Friendship*, 213. Cf. Konstan, 'Problems in the History of Christian Friendship', 95–97.

### 3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Augustine's approach to the correlation between friendship and the reading experience is deeply affected by his continuous interest and regard for quality in human life—a phenomena that was part of the cultural climate of the late fourth and early fifth century.<sup>69</sup> His concern for literary pursuits interacts with his yearning for the coenobitic way of life. Therefore, Augustine's perception of the combination of friendship and shared reading pursuits converge into the possibility of human perfection in this life. Despite the agony caused by human frailty in revealing one's inner self and communicating with others, he has not indulged in an impractical belief of perfection in this life. Instead, he proceeds in a humble way. Within his community, reading and other literal pursuits nourish his steadfast adhesion to divine matters. Often cast into despair by errors and misunderstandings one another, for Augustine, the formation of friendships and reading experiences foreshadows human perfection in heaven, thereby confirming the creative efficiency of its correlation in their community lives.

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<sup>69</sup> See White, *Christian Friendship*, 3–4.