MEMORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES
APPROACHES FROM SOUTHWESTERN EUROPE

Edited by
FLOCEL SABATÉ

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# CONTENTS

List of Illustrations .................................................................................. ix

Foreword ................................................................................................. xiii

Introduction. Memory in the Middle Ages
   FLOCEL SABATÉ ............................................................................... 1

## PART ONE: MEMORY AND SCIENCE

Chapter 1. Memory and the Body in Medieval Medicine
   FERNANDO SALMÓN ..................................................................... 47

Chapter 2. James I of Aragon, Vicent Ferrer, and Francesc Eiximenis: Natural Memory and Artificial Memory
   XAVIER RENEDO ........................................................................... 63

## PART TWO: MEMORY OF THE PAST AS IDENTITY

Chapter 3. History, Memory, and Ideas about the Past in the Early Middle Ages
   ROSAMOND McKITTERICK ................................................................ 99

Chapter 4. Charter Writing and Documentary Memory in the Origins of Catalan History
   MICHEL ZIMMERMANN .................................................................. 117

Chapter 5. The Memory of Saints in the Hispanic Translationes of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries
   ARIEL GUIANCE ............................................................................. 145
Chapter 6. Establishing a Memory in Medieval Spain
ADELINE RUCQUOI .......................................................................................................................... 169

Chapter 7. The Legend of the Princess of Navarre:
A Founding Myth in the Sardinian Conflict against the Kings of Aragon
LUCIANO GALLINARI .......................................................................................................................... 191

PART THREE: MEMORY AND POWER

Chapter 8. Memory of the State or Memory of the Kingdom? A Comparative Approach to the Construction of Memory in France and England
JEAN-PHILIPPE GENET ....................................................................................................................... 209

Chapter 9. Art to Seal the Memory: Coronation Ceremonies and the Sword as Symbol of Power (Aragon, 1200–1400)
MARTA SERRANO ................................................................................................................................. 229

Chapter 10. Architecture and Legacy in Medieval Navarre
JAVIER MARTÍNEZ DE AGUIRRE ........................................................................................................... 253

Chapter 11. Family Memory in Late Medieval Catalonia:
The Marcs, Lords of Eramprunyà
MIREIA COMAS-VIA .............................................................................................................................. 271

PART FOUR: MEMORY AND COMMEMORATING THE DEAD

Chapter 12. The Tomb as Tool for Keeping Memory Alive:
The Case of Late Medieval Zaragoza
ANA DEL CAMPO GUTIÉRREZ ............................................................................................................. 285

Chapter 13. Wills, Tombs, and Preparation for a Good Death in Late Medieval Portugal
MARTA MIRIAM RAMOS DIAS .................................................................................................................. 297

Chapter 14. Ceremonial Topography in the Consueta Antiga of the Cathedral of Mallorca
ANTONI PONS CORTÈS .......................................................................................................................... 313
PART FIVE:
REMEMBERING THE MIDDLE AGES

Chapter 15. Memory and Identity in Catalan-Aragonese Sardinia from 1323 to the Present
   ESTHER MARTÍ .................................................................335

Chapter 16. Nineteenth-Century French Legal History and the Memory of the Middle Ages
   LUIS ROJAS DONAT ..........................................................357

Chapter 17. Spolia and Memory in Nineteenth-Century Venice
   MYRIAM PILUTTI NAMER .................................................379

Chapter 18. Neo-Medievalism and the Anchoring of New Spatial Identities: Linking New Regional and Urban Identities with Medieval Memories
   KEES TERLOUW ..............................................................393

Chapter 19. The Hegemony of the Cult of Anniversaries and its Disadvantages for Historians
   WILLIAM M. JOHNSTON ....................................................407
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 9.1: Seals of Peter II of Aragon (1207, 1212) and James I of Aragon (1220–1226). .............................. 231

Figure 9.2: Coronats of James I of Aragon: Valencia, Barcelona, and Aragon (1236–1276).................................. 232

Figure 9.3: Seals of James I of Aragon (1220–1226 and 1238–1276). ......................................................... 235

Figure 9.4: Lead seals of James I of Aragon (after 1231). .......................... 235

Figure 9.5: Shrine of James I of Aragon, the contents of the tomb, the original one, with the now-vanished sword from the fourteenth century, and the image on the tomb. Poblet, Monastery of Saint Maria of Poblet...... 241

Figure 9.6: The Imperial Sword, eleventh century. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum................................. 244

Figure 9.7: Pere Bernés, Ral of Peter the Ceremonious of Aragon and drawing in enamel on reliquary of St. George, fourteenth century. Valencia, Museo Catedral de Valencia............. 245

Figure 9.8: Genealogy of Poblet, detail, ca. 1410. Poblet, Monastery of Saint Maria de Poblet. ......................... 246

Figure 9.9: Pere Nisart, Predella from the Altarpiece of St. George, detail, ca. 1470, Palma, Museu d’Art Sacre de Mallorca............. 248

Figure 9.10: Miquel Alcanyiç, Marçal de Sas, and other painters, altarpiece of Centenar de la Ploma, detail, ca. 1409–1410, London, Victoria and Albert Museum .......................... 249

Figure 13.1: Tomb of King Peter I of Portugal, ca. 1358–1367. Alcobaça, Monastery of Alcobaça................................. 302

Figure 13.2: Tomb of Inês de Castro, ca. 1358–1367. Alcobaça, Monastery of Alcobaça................................. 302
Figure 13.3: Tomb of King Peter I of Portugal, ca. 1358–1367.
Alcobaça, Monastery of Alcobaça. ................................. 303

Figure 13.4: Tomb of King Peter I of Portugal, detail of the representation of the administration of the viaticum, ca. 1358–1367.
Alcobaça, Monastery of Alcobaça. ................................. 304

Figure 13.5: Tomb of King Peter I of Portugal, detail of the king and clergy at prayer, ca. 1358–1367. Alcobaça, Monastery of Alcobaça. .... 305

Figure 13.6: Tomb of an unknown bishop, fourteenth century.
Ourense, Cathedral of Ourense. ................................. 305

Figure 13.7: Tomb of an unknown bishop, detail of more distinguished figures meaning higher ranks of the church, fourteenth century.
Ourense, Cathedral of Ourense. ................................. 306

Figure 13.8: Tomb of Lope de Fontecha in the chapel of Saint Gregory, 1351. Burgos, Cathedral of Burgos. .................. 306

Figure 13.9: Tomb of Lope de Fontecha in the chapel of Saint Gregory, detail of a real funeral taking place, 1351.
Burgos, Cathedral of Burgos. ................................. 307

Figure 13.10: Tomb of Lope de Fontecha in the chapel of Saint Gregory, detail of one of the clergymen holding a processional cross and another in an attitude of mourning, 1351. Burgos, Cathedral of Burgos. .... 307

Figure 13.11: Master Pero of Coimbra and Telo Garcia of Lisbon, tomb in the chapel of Saint Mary. Braga, Cathedral of Braga. .... 310

Figure 13.12: Master Pero of Coimbra and Telo Garcia of Lisbon, tomb in the chapel of Saint Mary, right wall of the ark, 1334. Braga, Cathedral of Braga. ................................. 311

Figure 14.1: Heraldic shields from the Consueta Antiga, fourteenth century. Palma, Arxiu Capitular de Mallorca, Capbreus, còdexs i repetoris, 3403. ................................. 317
Figure 14.2: Anniversary of Jaume de Prades, fourteenth century. Palma, Arxiu Capítular de Mallorca, Capbreus, còdexs i repetoris, 3403. ........ 318

Figure 14.3: Canals for water of the Madîna Mayûrqa during the caliphal period. ................................................. 321

Figure 14.4: Roman network of roads............................................................. 323

Figure 14.5: Former chapel of St. Catherine, with the entrance to the bell tower in the background, 1404. Palma, Catedral de Mallorca. ........ 324

Figure 14.6: Hypothetical reconstruction of the cathedral precinct and location of altars, ca. 1370. ........................................ 326

Figure 18.1: Legitimation through backward and forward selectivity of iconic sites................................................. 404
MEMORY WAS EVERYTHING in the Middle Ages: it was vital to the functioning of medieval society. Christian religion was experienced on the basis that the biblical narrative and the lives of the saints were accepted as historical truths; sovereigns held their domains by invoking dynasties that dated back to the origins of humanity; while families, both noble and bourgeois, and even collective identities, such as that of cities and nations, justified their existence through stories that guaranteed their deep and unbroken historical roots. Memory was the record of a past taken as a basis for identity. Thus, it had both a collective and an individualized aspect. In the twelfth century, Chrétien de Troyes explained how the Knight of the Lion lost his human behaviour until he recovered his memory and, with it, his identity. Remembering was necessary to human existence. Only by doing so could the present be endowed with meaning, allowing the individual to adopt a way of life leading to parousia (salvation), and avoiding temptations and false messiahs. Thus, memory was vital to medieval personhood when understood holistically and was a notable trait at both the individual and collective levels. Rulers wielding different kinds of power (political, religious, and so on) attempted to consolidate their position by promoting specific visions and records of the past that would help form a shared memory. This book sets out from this expansive definition of memory, which incorporates both personal and public aspects of the term in line with common contemporary scholarly understandings of the word.1

History and memory were intertwined. It was important to follow the logic of a certain thread from the past to justify the prevailing order in the present. In light of this, exploring the manifestations of memory can be used by historians as a prism through which to penetrate the value system of a particular culture; thus, this volume uses memory as a means of analyzing the European Middle Ages. This project’s two companion volumes deal with the allied concepts of identity and ideology as part of a larger project that seeks to map and interrogate the significance of all three in the Middle Ages in Western Europe. Put simply, we understand people in medieval societies to have shared an identity based on commonly held memories functioning according to particular ideologies. Our contribution to the renewal of historical analysis lies in treating these concepts as intersecting paths of study. Consequently, the fruits of our combined research show ways these three concepts provide valuable tools for the researcher of past societies. We find this a useful path for approaching an understanding of the values and interpretative axes that informed the thinking of women and men in the Middle Ages.

1 This is in line with the way Carruthers analyzes “individual memory” and “public memory” in Mary Carruthers, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture (Cambridge, 1990).
Such an integrated approach requires interdisciplinarity, as opposed to the academic compartmentalization of history, art history, and the study of languages and literatures.

To face this challenge, we present a collective work structured in a particular way, beginning with a long introductory chapter on medieval memory by Flocel Sabaté. This introduction does not aim to map out memory in its entirety, but rather to provide insights into key aspects of medieval understandings of memory. It discusses the way memory was defined and understood as a natural faculty. Only by remembering, it was believed, were individual humans able to attain their true position within society and as God’s creatures; thus the capacity to recall was vital and required stimulation in order to ensure its good functioning. However, precisely what it was important to remember was dictated by the various holders of power. From this, we can observe political uses of memory and the way strategies of remembering are always oriented to suit particular interests, within an ideology of power.

Having established an overview of memory in the Middle Ages, the introduction is followed by nineteen focused chapters from leading researchers, all of which delve deeper into specific fields. Brought together for the common goal of illuminating medieval thought, these studies focus on concrete cases, highlighting exemplars from southern Europe, a region with a large amount of documentation but which to date has occupied a relatively minor position in the overall diffusion of research into the Middle Ages. This emphasis is acknowledged in the title of this book, *Memory in the Middle Ages: Approaches from Southwestern Europe*, offered as a means of enriching and deepening our study of the Middle Ages.

The resulting chapters have been organized according to five fields relevant to the way memory was structured in the Middle Ages: memory and its function in relation to science; the use of memory of the past in the construction of identity; the incorporation of memory into the mechanisms of power; the use of memory in the familial and social rituals around death and religious belief; and finally, control of how the Middle Ages has been remembered by subsequent generations in order to justify ideological positions.

Let me first summarize the chapters in this volume and indicate how, to my mind, they develop an overall picture of the topic at hand. Given that memory in the Middle Ages was a highly valued physiological function, it is logical that the first section focuses on the relation between memory and medieval science, beginning with a study by Fernando Salmón on how the working and location of memory within the human body was accounted for. In view of memory’s vital importance in retaining knowledge, educating through preaching, and correctly executing the duties linked to one’s position in society, a second study by Xavier Renedo delves into the mnemonic formulae adopted by leading moralists and preachers.

Public recourse to memory led to the development of shared, social uses that looked back to the past, recalling and evoking it with significations held in common by most members of society. The first chapter in the second section ("Memory of the Past as Identity") is Rosamund McKitterick’s analysis of the relation between memory and written records of memory in the Early Middle Ages. We are able to see how the authorities’ repeated invocation of the past played an important role in the construction of a common identity based on selective use of memory. It was manipulated through public forms of remembrance and commemoration, while formulaic inscriptions were used to
sustain the significant relation between certain dead people and the living. In the following chapter, Michel Zimmermann uses the particular case of Catalonia, a country with high levels of documentation for the Early and High Middle Ages, to examine the development of a common stock of memories based on a specific and limited set of interpretations of its myths of foundation. As Adeline Rucquoi demonstrates, a similar use of the past developed over time in Castile during the Middle Ages, although with very different traits. Here, literary works adapted these foundational myths to establish and popularize the supposedly very ancient origins of Spain. Successful use of the past often required not only persuasive narratives but also material evidence from which to generate a memory with sufficient resonance to propagate a social identity built on a specific ideology. This was the role fulfilled by relics, the reason both ecclesiastical and royal powers were concerned with controlling and managing these. This is the subject of Ariel Guiance’s analysis of the Iberian Peninsula, which, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, experienced specific translations: the transfer and relocation of various relics. Beyond invoking supposed common origins and seeking the protection of those objects that were deemed authentic, there was the potential for engaging an entire community in observing the rituals of a shared memory through a supposedly historical account. This is the topic of Luciano Gallinari’s work on the case of fourteenth-century Sardinia, where, in resisting the claims of the Crown of Aragon, the Giudice of Arborea presented himself as endowed with the right not only to rule the island but also to represent its identity. His claim was strengthened by a link to the distant royal family of Navarre, owing to a princess who by chance had reached the island in the eleventh century. This judge invoked and successfully appropriated the memory of a supposed history to promote a specific expression of a collective identity in a fraught political context.

Memory and power are clearly often closely interrelated and this is the focus of the third part of the book. It starts with Jean-Philippe Genet’s analysis of two contrasting ways of building the memory of sovereign power: those of France and England. While in the former, during the Late Middle Ages a memory of kingdom was elaborated, England held a memory of the kings themselves. In fact both ways ultimately converged in the generation of national fervour and the consolidation of states based on a specific memory. This was sustained by various rites of legitimation, which were used to underwrite memory. Marta Serrano analyses the case of Aragon, where the royal crown, the sword, and the help of certain saints were all enlisted to bolster memory. One effective way of establishing memory that justified power was to build a consistent and long-term architectural legacy. Javier Martinez de Aguirre studies the case of the sovereigns of Navarre, and the particular religious and civil constructions erected, especially in the fifteenth century, to justify a monarchy represented on the walls of these buildings through inscriptions and the royal coats of arms. Memory was of use to anyone who held power and wished to retain it. Consequently, diverse strategies were employed by baronial and bourgeois lineages to build their own distinct family memories, as Mireia Comas-Via demonstrates with reference to the case of the Catalan Marcs family.

Recording the past involves interrogating links with the deceased, and this is the subject of the fourth part of the book: “Memory and Commemorating the Dead.” Ana del Campo’s analysis proceeds from tombs in the city of Zaragoza. The reliefs on the graves
served to maintain a perpetual memory of the rise of each lineage, thereby inextricably linking religion to the care of souls and the pre-eminence of the historical line and its power. Wills and tombs also communicate the memory of the rites done to save the soul according to the late-medieval guidelines for a good death. In this sense, these rites had not only a religious function but also helped disseminate a memory of the deceased, establishing prayers and acts that needed to be repeated continuously, sometimes even over the tomb, as Marta Miriam Ramos Dias describes with cases in Portugal and Castile. Perpetual masses, like anniversaries, had to be carried out formally in a church to assure the eternal salvation of the deceased, and thereby became a permanent record of the dead. Moreover, since they occupied specific locations within churches, one can think in terms of a topography of memory, as Antoni Pons Cortès argues with reference to the cathedral of Mallorca.

Thus, memory was a tool for managing and ruling society in the Middle Ages. Centuries later it would also be used as a tool to influence certain social and political perspectives on the past. Accordingly, we dedicate the last part of the book to “Remembering the Middle Ages.” In some instances, we find elements from a past that have to some extent modelled the present. This is what Esther Martí explores in the case of Sardinia, which saw its identity strongly modified by Catalan influence in the fourteenth century, when the island was incorporated into the Crown of Aragon. Diverse elements including institutions, the customs of everyday life, and cultural heritage recall a memory of a past that has contributed to a specific identity, retained across the centuries. It is precisely its distance that makes the Middle Ages ideal for projecting a shifting and flexible set of memories, either of barbarity or civilization. Memory of the Middle Ages was also a subject of discussion among nineteenth-century authors, as Luis Rojas Donat explores. The uncritical appropriation of the Middle Ages as an ideal past can inspire its use in creating a new present, even in physical manifestations. As Myriam Pilutti Namer shows, this is very clear in reforms applied in the nineteenth century to Venice, a city whose political status was in regular flux and was in need of reexpressing its identity. The term neo-medievalism has been used to define these aesthetic expressions at the end of the nineteenth century, for trying to recover some supposed memory of a medieval model. A century later, at the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries, the same term has acquired another meaning among some researchers. These scholars (sociologists, political scientists) have responded to new political and social situations in Europe, which seems to be leading the continent to dispersal of power on different political levels, porous borders, and fluid and adaptable identities. It may not be so different, then, from the one that characterized the Middle Ages. This is the reason neo-medievalism has received a new meaning in some circles, as an intellectual movement that looks back to some aspects of the medieval political model to feed a debate on how to organize society at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Kees Terlouw analyzes this new concept of a medieval memory, used as a model to build better societies. Clearly, the Middle Ages should be approached with prudence, because uses and abuses of commemorations in western Europe can hinder understandings of the period under study. The cult of anniversaries could become a trap for historians, as William M. Johnston warns. As researchers, our aim is not to identify a definitive memory of the
Middle Ages; rather, we seek to build understanding of the functioning of memory in society in that period.

This set of chapters were carefully selected by the Consolidated Medieval Studies Research Group "Space Power and Culture," based at the University of Lleida, through the research project *Identity, Memory, and Ideology in the Middle Ages* (HAR-2009–08598/HIST), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. The project aimed to promote understanding of, and research into, the Middle Ages from three perspectives: identity, memory and ideology, understanding that the relations of these interlinked concepts to medieval society are a way for researchers to dig further into this period. Various complementary research projects funded by the Spanish government contributed to this publication, specifically with regard to the different meanings of medieval memory: *Memories From the Past: Uses and Traditions of Classical Literatures in Medieval Literature* (FFI-2009–0680-E); *Identity, Memory and Writing in the Middle Ages* (FFI-2010–12260-E) and *Memory in the Middle Ages* (HAR-2010–12231-E/HIST). This facilitated an ongoing framework for study, with several research meetings held in Lleida enabling different aspects of medieval memory to be tackled between 2009 and 2014. Several edited publications are a legacy of this work.2

Our research framework favoured intensive interdisciplinary work that integrated the contributions of historians, art historians, and philologists from different geographical backgrounds, and diverse traditions and schools. This volume (and its two companion volumes) is the latest in a rich seam of publications that we believe will be the seed for promoting ongoing research. In an effort to make the work in these volumes accessible to as broad an academic audience as possible, all original source texts have been translated into English, with the source quoted in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations have been provided by the contributors and editor of this volume.

In producing, selecting, revising, and bringing to fruition the final texts in this volume, the research project *Feelings, Emotion, and Expressivity* (financed by the Spanish government as project HAR–2016–75028–P), the ICREA–Academia award to Flocel Sabaté (2016–2020), and Arc Humanities Press’s peer review and pre-press processes have all been crucial, for which we are sincerely grateful. We hope that this volume, together with *Identity in the Middle Ages: Approaches from Southwestern Europe* and *Ideology in the Middle Ages: Approaches from Southwestern Europe*, will illuminate the links between identity, memory, and ideology in the Middle Ages, and open new pathways to how we interrogate and understand the Middle Ages.3

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3 Translations into English are generally provided as close to the original text as possible, and the original text and edited source is provided in the notes. We follow the press’s practice as a global publisher in retaining native forms as far as possible. Abbreviations to sources from the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (hereafter MGH) follow the guidelines to the *Deutsche Archiv* journal: www.mgh.de/fileadmin/Downloads/pdf/DA-Siglenverzeichnis.pdf.
Introduction

MEMORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

FLOCEL SABATÉ

"Christianity is found in the Gospels and in the lives of the saints."1

THese WORDS, WRITTEN in Barcelona in 1417 by Violant de Bar, the queen dowager of John I of Aragon, defined Christianity as a compendium of historical events which form an exemplar for life: the narrative events in the Gospels and the lives of the saints. Throughout the Middle Ages, memory, a compendium of what was recalled from the past, became the essential basis for one’s own identity and for establishing strategies to consolidate the future.

Medieval, particularly Christian, society gave great importance to memory; this chapter features this importance. It shows how memory penetrated all aspects of human relations, to the point that we can say life was memory. This led people of the Middle Ages to question the nature of memory, and so, in the second section of this introduction, we will see how medieval science interrogated the qualities of memory. The combination of these two aspects—the importance of memory in the lives of medieval men and women and the efforts of medieval science to define and place the memory physiologically—leads to a third point: the need to maintain and cultivate memory, the reason we dedicate the third section to the contemporary methods for stimulating the capacity to recall. It becomes clear that memory in the Middle Ages had a significant social dimension, which forces us to analyze it as a conscious strategy in the fourth section of this introduction. These social strategies ultimately reflect the powers-that-be, reinforcing their interests and dominant ideology. The introduction concludes with a section illustrating what we could term a guided memory.

Life is Memory

Medieval confidence in the past was inherited from classical culture along with a mistrust of change, thought to be inferior to what went before: the ancient models should not be forgotten or altered. Tacitus, for instance, is very clear: “in all matters the arrangements of the past were better and fairer and that all changes were for the worse; everything

1 “Christianisme per force se trobe en Evangelis ne Vida de Sants." From Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Cancelleria, Reg. 2052, fol. 29v; edited in Jaume Riera, Els poders publics i les sinagogues, segles XIII-XIV (Girona, 2006), 545.

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that is transformed, changes for the worse.” The so-called Fathers of the Church, writing in the two first centuries of Christianity, established the bases from which a line of continuity was drawn. In the second century CE, Irenaeus of Lyon restricted true knowledge as delimited by the teachings of the Apostles, the order established by the Church, and the apostolic succession. Origins and historical continuity were based on the Gospels, as guarded and interpreted by the Church, who could define the true, correct historical narrative, and the development of history was maintained on earth under the bishops. Fourth-century Christianity conquered history, as it were, establishing historical truth by moving beyond biblical history, which till then defined Jewish identity and operated within Roman history. From then on, the history of the world, the history of the Church, and the history of salvation became one and the same. The Church proclaimed a religious model for society that was justified in a story of continuity from the creation of the world until the \textit{parousia}. Consequently, the story around which society was built required the remembrance of historical continuity. We can see this in the Romanesque cloister of Aix-en-Provence, its capitals sculpted in the twelfth century successively showing the three phases of humanity: the Old Testament, the life of Jesus Christ, and the triumph of the Church in the Roman Empire. Christian religion is a record of a path: “Christian teaching is memory, Christian worship is commemoration.”

Life was a path towards salvation: “we are all of us pilgrims who pass along the way” as the Castilian Gonzalo de Berceo stated in the thirteenth century. It was the past that gave meaning, not novelty, as expressed by Paien de Maisières (late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries):

Today, the old paths are less appreciated than the new paths, because these are considered more beautiful, but they are only better in appearance; but it frequently occurs that the old ones are more appreciated.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{For private and non-commercial use only}
\end{itemize}
This does not prevent appreciating, with Anselm of Havelberg in the twelfth century, the benefits of novitas when it comes to improving the spirit and knowledge.10 Later, Bernat Metge comments, “people always enjoy new things.”11 This view did not alter an intellectual preference for the past, as shown in another fourteenth-century Catalanian text:

Maximus states that old men praise things from the past and complain about those of the present, because our lives continually worsen; our parents’ times were worse than those of our grandparents, and ours are worse than our parents, and those of our children will be even more full of vices.12

So, one only looked to the future rooted in a strong connection with the past, a well-defined past with which one was permanently linked through memory. Reference to memory was consistent across the Middle Ages. Religion relied on evocative images, which held a central position in popular worship,13 endowed them with particular symbolism where, to a large extent, aesthetics, pedagogy, mimesis, and symbolism referred to events in the past.14 Constant recollection of biblical stories—particularly the martyrdoms or miracles of the saints—all of remembrance of which served to generate devotion. Most aptly, the medieval cathedral has been defined as “the theatre of the memory,” because the images are useful “against the ignorance of the simple people, against the inertia of the emotions, and against the weakness of the memory.”15

Similarly, when political power addressed its subjects, previous sovereigns had not faded into oblivion but were held in the memory. Like other characters worthy of remembrance, such as the members of the royal household, their mention was always accompanied by the invocation of their memory: “King James of good memory, lord King John of good memory, highest Lady Joan of good memory, the very noble King Henry of good memory.” The adjective “good” was occasionally varied; it could be “clear” memory, for example. Evidently, the monarchs spoke similarly about their ancestors; for example,
mentioning “lord King Peter of good memory our father” and referring, in general, to “our ancestors of laudable memory.”

Meanwhile, daily life was based on the maintenance of agreements and undertakings from the past. Such documents recorded how affairs were organized and established at their outset.

However, complete memory was a characteristic of the divine. Christ knew everything, which meant he held it in his memory, according to Ramon Llull:

In the same way that the logical man has acquired the knowledge of logic through science, so our lord Jesus Christ in so far as he is man retains everything in the memory, and in so far as he is God has everything gathered under the habit created of the memory. Consequently, he remembers everything created, in so far as he is man and he is God; and so our lord Jesus Christ attends to and understands all the creatures, in so far as he is God and that he is a creature.17

So, although everybody has memory, only God has a memory of everything, which explains why he never errs: “clearly, to have a memory of everything but not to err in no way belongs rather to the divine than to the human.” Conversely, because they lack full and continuous memory, men, even kings, make mistakes, distracted by the numerous affairs of their reigns, as John I of Aragon explained in 1387.18 Consequently, good management of secular affairs depended on exercises to commit things to memory: reiterating statements, recalling topics related to current issues, and restating previous decisions.19

The same exercise in remembering was required in law courts: the witness’s memory was a vital element in trials.20 Given that it was often necessary to clarify the situation in disputes about rights, incomes, and possessions, witnesses were often asked for their records, as far back as they could take them. That happened, for example, in a trial in Girona in 1338, where a witness explained, “from his memory until now, he has seen that the court of the king held jurisdiction in the said parishes, and that is twenty-eight

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16 “Rei Jaume de bona memòria, lo senyor Rey en Joha de bona memòria, la molt alta senyora infanta dona Johana de bona memòria, el muy noble Rey don Enrique de buena memoria”; and “del senyor Rey en Pere de bona memòria pare nostre; als nostres antecessors de loable memoria.” From Tortosa, Arxiu Comarcal del Baix Ebre, Batllia II, 42, fol. 4r; Girona, Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Girona, XV.4, llibre 3, unnumbered; Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Cancelleria, reg. 2029, fol. 172v; Cancelleria, Papeles por incorporar, Cervera–2, fol. 1v; Cancelleria Varia, 28, fol. 33r; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, esp. 216, fol. 89r.

17 “Sicut logicus adquirit habitum logicae per scientiam, ita dominus Jesus Christus homo habit in memoria omnia in hoc, quod deitas, sub habitu memoriae creatae, recolere uult omnia, quae recolit, in quantum est homo et in quantum etiam est Deus; et sic attingit et comprehendit dominus iones Christus omnes creaturas, et quantum est Deus et in quantum est creatura.” Cited from Raimundus Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, ed. Pere Villalba, 3 vols. (Turnhout, 2000), 2:591.

18 “Omnium habere memoriam et in nullo penitus errare potius pertinent divinitatis quam humanitati nimium est.” Cited from Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Cancelleria, 1913, fol. 184r.

19 Barcelona, Arxiu de la Ciutat de Barcelona, Consell de Cent, B-VI, llibre 2, fol. 3v.

years and more,” while another stated “from his memory until now, which is twenty years, he has seen the executors of Girona acting in the said parishes.” The record can go further back still if it concatenated the memory of various people. However, a reliable memory in these records went no further back than a hundred years. Reliance on the powers of human recall shows the disadvantages and limits in numerous legal disputes. Thus, in some jurisdictional disputes in the Pyrenees between the abbot of Sant Joan de les Abadesses and the king, the latter explained:

It is true that the vicars and other officers from La Ral, in reality without any right and contravening ancient privileges and uses, usurped and seized all the jurisdiction that the abbot and the monastery have over their men in the vicariate of La Ral, which they had possessed for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, and seventy years and for so long in the past that there is no human memory to contradict it.22

This is not much different from what was said in 1395, also in Catalonia, in a legal dispute between the monastery of Poblet and the town of Valls over dominion of a farm, thus showing that it was really a formula with which to express the sequence of years going back beyond the record:

The aforesaid abbot and monastery said that they had and possessed and have had and possessed said farm of Doldellos in full possession with all its lands and assets for ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years and so long that there is no human memory to contradict it.23

In 1384, in Igualada, another Catalan town, the local rulers explained to the king that the clash between bands in the town was remembered to have lasted a hundred years:

In a humble explanation made to us an eminent citizen from the town of Igualada about the factions he said that for almost one hundred years and particularly for two and a half years between on one side the so-called Castellolins and, on the other side, the Ocellons had been fighting in this town and the surrounding area by instigation of the enemy of humanity.24

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21 “De sa memòria a ansà ha vist usar la Cort del Rey en les dites perròchies e ha XXVIII ayns e més”; and “de sa memòria a ansà qui es XX anys ha vists los saygs de Gerona usar axí mateix en els dites perròchies.” From Girona, Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Girona, I.1.2.1, lligall 3, llibre 2, fols. 15v and 16r.

22 “E’s cert que los vaguers e altres oficials de Sarreyal da flet sens tota conaxensa usurparan e levaran contra los dits privilegis e usos antichs tota la jurisdicció que lo abbat e lo manastir havian en llur homens dins la vagaría de Sarreyal constituits la qual havia possaïda per x, xx, xxx, xxxx, L, LX e LXX. anys passats e per tant de temps més avant que no era memòria d’omens en contrari.” From Sant Joan de les Abadesses, Arxiu del Monestir de Sant Joan de les Abadesses, Documents sobre la jurisdicció de l’abat e la veguería de la Ral, fol. 2r.

23 “Lo dit abat e convent deyen que ells tenien e posseïen e an tenguda e posseïda la dita granja de Dol de Lops en x, xx, xxx, XL, L, LX anys, e de tant de temps ençà que memòria de homens no és en contrari, per fi e franch alou ab tot sos terme e pertinençs.” Cited from Jordi Rius i Jové, “Transcripció i notes d’un plet pel domini de la Granja de Doldellos (1395),” Quaderns de Vilaniu 21 (1992): 29.

24 “[E]xposizione humili nobis facta pro parte proborum hominem ville Aqualate quod est super bandositatibus que quasi a centum annis et potissime a duobus annis et medio citer intra los Castells Aulins ex una parte e los Ocellons ex parte altera, in dicta villa et eius convincio instigate
One can also talk about social or collective memory, derived from interlinking these popular accounts, a memory that combines, completes, and eventually weaves a picture of everyday life beyond the individual experience. But this level of antiquity already surpasses the human record. So, across a wide range of disputes, documentation shows that supposed rights of ownership or any other kind, are so deeply rooted that they extend beyond the memory of contemporaries; it is no longer memory:

- Time that is no longer in the memory of men.
- Across such a large space of time that human memory is against [it].
- No human memory contradicts [it].

An ancient memory positively supports inherent rights. In 1425, King Alfonso the Magnanimous of Aragon backed a decision that was questioned because there could be no opposing precedents dating that far back: “it is so long ago that there is no contradictory memory.” Of course, one of the strategies for increasing patrimony was to occupy unpopulated lands, farm them, and finally obtain a title deed from the sovereign based on the lack of memory about other landholders: “so long ago that human memory does not contradict it,” as practised successfully in Castile at the end of the Middle Ages.

However, with no other basis than memories fading over time, disputes would frequently arise; memory required documented reinforcement. Very often, orders and legislation were collected in documentary form as a way to combat memory’s weakness. In 1196, King Peter the Catholic of Aragon began his disposition indicating: “given that human memory is feeble, we all need to adopt the consensus of the testimony inherent in what is written.”

Numerous documentary collections aimed to become the memory on which to base appropriate cases. For example, Sant Joan de les Abadesses made this case in the fifteenth century in his dispute with the king for jurisdiction over La Ral:

inimico humani generis viguentur.” Cited from Joan Cruz, *Els Privilegis de la vila d’Igualada* (Barcelona, 1990), 308.


26 “Temps que no és memòria d’òmnes”; “usu antiquissimo etiam usitato in tantum quod memoria hominum in contrarium non extabat”; “tan gran espay de temps que memòria d’omes no n’es en contra”; “atento tempore citra quod hominum memoria in contrarium non existit”; “memòria d’homes non és contrari.” From Tortosa, Arxiu Comarcal del Baix Ebre, Paheria i Vegueria I, procés 8, unnumbered; procés 48, unnumbered; Comú IV, 113; Vic, Arxiu Històric Municipal, llibre III, 57; Girona, Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Girona, l.1.2.1, Illegall 3, fol. 58r; Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d’Aragó, Cancelleria, 2217, fol. 108v; among many others.

27 “A tanto tempore citra de cuius memoria in contrarium non existit.” From Tortosa, Arxiu Comarcal del Baix Ebre, Paheria e Vegueria I, 56, fol. 1r.


Memory must be made in the way in which the agreements were made that established the jurisdictions of the town and the vicariate of La Ral between, on the one hand, the lord King James, of good memory, and the other kings who later succeed him and, on the other hand, the abbot of Sant Joan de les Abadesses.30

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, collections of breaches and abuses by lords31 were kept as they accumulated. Frequently, a document heading read, "This is the memory."32 The memory could be good or bad, because it might keep a record of the rights possessed or, conversely, the offences suffered. So, when an agreement was reached in 1203 between the bishop of Lleida and the countess of Urgell, it stated the importance of a solid memory: "Finally it shall still be possessed throughout life with good memory and in its full sense."33 Many legal judgements, especially those solving long conflicts, mention the desire to remain permanently in the memory: "in the memory of future [times]" in the words of the sentence of 1311 between the abbot of Ager and the bishop of Urgell.34

Writing down agreements, orders, and dispositions became essential for sustaining memory. In 1244, King James I of Aragon ordered his vicar and eminent citizens (proxoms) of Barcelona to always keep in mind a constitutional law about the kidnapping of maidens and secret weddings and to note these "in the book of your customs or uses, for the perpetual memory of matters."35 With similar words, in 1297 the king's grandson, James II, ordered his vicar in Manresa to record his orders, saying: "you must keep a copy of the present letter in the book of your court to have a perpetual memory of matters." He once again invoked memory when ordering the same officer to count the assets to be registered, and thus retain the existing rights permanently in the memory.36

All governments and administrations specified the things "that are kept in memory," as a way to permanently record agreements and provisions and manage all kinds of topics and conflicts.37 Municipal ordinances were put down in writing to invoke this neces-
sity, while at the same time insisting on the equivalence between a written register and memory. This was stated in Valencia in 1310,

Recognizing the forgetfulness of men who, through levity and the weakness of nature, can err and not have a memory of things, so the juries and prohom councillors ordered that the aforesaid ordinations and chapters be put in written memory, to which anyone can easily resort. 38

Almost as many contemporary examples can be found as there were towns and cities. In the Catalan town of Balaguer, for instance, in 1354, the municipal authorities, “put it in writing so that from here onwards the aforesaid ordinances shall remain in the firm and lasting memory.” 39

As a result, expressions about posar a la memòria (“putting it into the memory”) entered into everyday political affairs. For example, before the representatives of the city of Lleida set out for a general Cort assembly in Perpignan, in 1351, the local government ordered “that all the concessions that can be good and profitable for the city be expressed in writing as a chapter and memory, so that the representatives who go to the Parliament gathering in Perpignan can obtain them for the city.” 40

The introduction of documentary records in both administrative and official practice and in business and economic agreements was linked to improved methods of registering and better management. It followed the introduction of notarial systems, the organization of public documentation on a Roman legal basis, 41 and material improvements, like the spread of paper from the thirteenth century onwards. 42 However, this was still always done under the invocation of memory, with the document meant to assist the memory. Notaries and scribes tended to organize their writings well and produce compilations and summaries explicitly known as memorials. As a notary from Lleida explained before the end of the thirteenth century: “written from memory in the memorial book of Domènec de Siscar, public notary of said city.” 43 Memory played a vital role even in a new scenario dominated by the spread of writing, based on a wide social con-

38 “Com per oblidança d’òmens, los quals leugerament segons frèvol natura pot hom errar e no aver memòria de les coses, per ço manaren los dits jurats e prohomens consellers que-ls dits ordenaments e capítols sien meses en memòria de scriptura, a la qual cascú leugerament pot recórrer.” Cited from Antoni Furió and Ferran García-Oliver, Llibre d’establiments i ordenacions de la ciutat de València (Valencia, 2007), 23.

39 “Feren transladar e escriure, per ço que d’aquí a avant estiguessin los dits bans e ordinacions en pus ferma duradora memòria.” Cited from Robert Cuellas, El ‘Llibre de Costums, Privilegis i Ordinacions’ de la ciutat de Balaguer (Lleida, 2012), 149.

40 “Pensen que de totes gràcies que sien bones e profitoses a la ciutat sie feyt capí�tol e memòria als missatgers que van a les Corts a Perpinyà, per tal que aquells recapten e puxen aver aquells gràcies a la ciutat.” From Lleida, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida, llibre d’actes 399, fol 65r.


42 Thomas F. Glick, Tecnología, ciencia y cultura en la España medieval (Madrid, 1992), 59–61.

sensus of its continued importance; memory included representative testimonies and authorities involved with the events recorded in writing.\(^\text{44}\)

In fact, since the Central Middle Ages, lists of domains and assets were justified formally by the need to retain them in the memory. Very explicitly, for example, before the end of the twelfth century, the Catalan canonry of Sant Pere of Àger put in writing the “memory of the olive trees that Sant Pere has in Ager” or the “memory of the services in la Règula,” while declaring “that is the memory of the alodial lands of the monastery of Sant Llorenç.” Establishing the register of properties and rights was “to take into the memory,” to become “in accordance with the memory.”\(^\text{45}\)

In this way memory became essential for all aspects of life; at the same time, however, human memory was inadequate and partial, since it could betray and confuse events. So, efforts were required to maintain a record of the past that went beyond the human mind’s power of retention, making it necessary to resort to writing in all fields, whether public or private, formal or even playful. This is explained at the head of a cookbook written by master Chiquart in the court of the Count of Savoy in 1420:

> Man’s unretentive memory often reduces clear things to doubt. The foresight of worthy ancients therefore determined that ephemeral things should be rendered immortal by being written down, so that whatever the feebleness of the human mind cannot retain might survive by means of immutable writings. In order, therefore, that people in the present as well as those of future generations may know with certainty, the following is written down.\(^\text{46}\)

Memory does not necessarily refer to written documents; what matters is combating oblivion, lack of knowledge, and ignorance. In Girona, in 1399, when an important agreement was reached about jurisdictional redemption, it was written down “so that all the things mentioned above be retained better in the memory and that nobody could allege or pretend to allege ignorance of this.”\(^\text{47}\) The local authorities would make a public proclamation of the agreement every year on the day of the fair, when large numbers

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\(^\text{46}\) “Lubrica gencium memoria frequenter que clara sunt reducit dubia propter que fides veterum provida decrevit rerum seriem scripture testimonio perhempnari ut ea que mentis humane fragilitas non recollit scripturis apparent aurienticis stabilita noscant igitur tam modernorum presencia quam futurorum posteritas hec infrascripta.” Cited from Terence Scully, “Du fait de cuisine” / “On Cookery” of Master Chiquart (1420) (Tempe, 2010), 87.

\(^\text{47}\) “Per tal que totes les coses dessús dites mills sien en memòria retingudes e algun en açò no pusque ignorància pretendre o allegar.” From Girona, Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Girona XV. 4, llibre 1, fol. 8v.
of people were in the city. The struggle to retain memory, in this case, then, involved repeating once a year in public what they did not want to forget.

Elsewhere other techniques were used: stones used to mark out property boundaries, especially when these were new lands, intended as a permanent memory. Properties seized from Muslims in Valencia in the thirteenth century were defined “by placing milestones and markers for the eternal memory of these limits.”

However, the spread of literacy across different aspects of communication in the Late Middle Ages, especially where knowledge was concerned, focused memory on its written record, which was increasingly valued, while at the same time provoking distrust in orality or any pretension of memory not registered in writing. Nobody doubted that the mind’s fragility made the retention of knowledge vulnerable. In 1334, when Opicinus de Canistris fell ill and lost consciousness, as he himself explained afterwards, he could not talk and lost a large part of his “literal memory,” by which he meant the record of acquired knowledge. Although the path of life culminated in the afterlife, according to the prevailing religious paradigm, at the personal level, what remained after death of a human being was conserved in someone’s memory. This is how the Spanish poet Jorge Manrique expressed it on the death of his father:

He returned his soul to he whom he had given him it
(in its glory),
and still he lost his life
he left us a great comfort
his memory.

In general, the constant invocation of memory across different aspects of everyday life reflected not only a growing concern to support it by more written documents, but also an interest in better understanding such an important human function.

53 “Dio el alma a quien se la dio / (el cual la dio en el cielo / en sugloria), / que aunque la vida perdió / dejónos harto consuelo / su memoria.” Cited from Jorge Manrique, Poesía (Madrid, 1975), 148.
Memory Defined: What and Where It Is

“The predominant opinion in our youth, my brother Quintus, if you remember [...].”

So began Cicero in his second book of the *De oratore*, evoking his memory of infancy. Memory occupied a central place in Roman oratory, both in a civic and moral sense. As a record of the past, it was joined with intelligence, attentive to the present, but with an eye on the future. Memory, intelligence and foresight are the elements that constitute prudence, which dictates to us what is good and what is bad, as Cicero himself defines:

Prudence is the knowledge of things which are good, or bad, or neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence, and foresight. Memory is that faculty by which the mind recovers the knowledge of things which have been. Intelligence is that by which it perceives what exists at present. Foresight is that by which anything is seen to be about to happen, before it does happen.

This tripartite approach, linking memory, intelligence, and providence, was easily adaptable to a Christian outlook. Augustine of Hippo incorporated the reflection on memory in his thought. He presented a tri-functionality of memory, intelligence, and will, all complementing each other as a single mind, a single life, and a single substance:

Since, then, these three, memory, understanding, will, are not three lives, but one life; nor three minds, but one mind; it follows certainly that neither are they three substances, but one substance. Since memory, which is called life, and mind, and substance, is so called in respect to itself; but it is called memory, relatively to something.

St. Augustine places memory within the soul, although separated from the four perturbations of the soul (“desire, happiness, fear, and sadness”). He interprets it as having a vital connective function, storing images of everything we have known and sensed, excepting only what has been absorbed by its true enemy, oblivion:

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And I enter the fields and roomy chambers of memory, where are the treasures of countless images, imported into it from all manner of things by the senses. There is treasured up whatsoever likewise we think, either by enlarging or diminishing, or by varying in any way whatever those things which the sense has arrived at; yea, and whatever else has been entrusted to it and stored up, which oblivion has not yet engulfed and buried.  

The record of sensations, of the good and the bad, and, especially, the notion of what we know, what we are, and what we believe, as well as the remembrance that we have forgotten things, is all in the memory, although stored in an untidy way and under various and sometimes complex references. Thus, memory is the most important of all things, the keystone that supports all the references and the identity:

These things do I within, in that vast chamber of my memory. For there are near me heaven, earth, sea, and whatever I can think upon in them, besides those which I have forgotten. There also do I meet with myself, and recall myself—that, when, or where I did a thing, and how I was affected when I did it. There are all which I remember, either by personal experience or on the faith of others. Out of the same supply do I myself with the past construct now this, now that likeness of things, which either I have experienced, or, from having experienced, have believed; and thence again future actions, events, and hopes, and upon all these again do I meditate as if they were present.

Defining the memory as one of the parts of the mind implies that it must have a specific physical space. The location and working of this element of the human body was studied by Costa ben Luca (Constabulus), an author writing between the ninth and tenth centuries who was widely repeated in later centuries when his texts were confused with those by Aristotle. He imagined the memory as a corpuscle—"like a worm" (similis vermin)—deposited in a specific hole in the head, which had to be physically stimulated to find the memories through the movement of one's head or eyes:

That happens to whoever wishes to recall something, that moving the head vigorously and inclining it, while keeping the eyes looking up, facilitates that, in this position or figure the corpuscle similar to a worm can come out through this mentioned type of hole in the head and go upwards.
Constabulus also mentions the *pithacium* as support for recall and memory.\(^62\) In a very generalized way, different authors situated the hole or space that the human body reserves for the memory in the occiput, or rear of the head, as Ramon Llull defined it in the thirteenth century: “It is in the back, in the occiput of men, because it is an instrument with which to remember.”\(^63\) At around the same time, Gilbert de Tournai followed his contemporaries but provided greater detail on this:

The sensitive memory is an energy situated in a cell behind the brain, established for the conservation of the impressions from the attention placed on the sensitive things, that the estimative faculty, that lacks organ and time, has perceived for each of the senses.\(^64\)

Indeed, memory was considered throughout the Middle Ages as one of the three powers of the human being, equivalent to the trinitary model for God: “In heaven God is three people: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and in the head are three powers: intelligence, reason, and memory.”\(^65\) This is the tri-functional hypothesis broadly understood and accepted. Ramon Llull explains the purpose of each: “Our Lady has memory, intelligence, and will; for the memory she has the custom of remembering, and for intelligence thinking, and for the will, loving.”\(^66\) The prominent position of the memory explains its vital function while also conditioning reason, because the latter cannot function separately from the memory, according to Gilbert de Tournai: “Certainly in ourselves, memory cannot recall without reason, nor can reason without memory, [though] we can to some extent discern or judge.”\(^67\)

These functions survive death,\(^68\) because when death arrives and separates the flesh from the soul, the three powers continue with renewed energy, as Dante explains:

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\(^{64}\) “Memoria vero sensibilis est virtus sita in posteriori cellula cerebri, ordinata ad conservationem impressionum provenientium ex intentionibus in sensibilibus quas virtus aestimativa accepit ex singulis sensibus idigen organo et tempore.” Cited from Gilbert de Tournai, *De modo addiscendi (Sobre el modo de aprender)*, ed. Javier Vergara and Virgilio Rodríguez (Madrid, 2014), 314.

\(^{65}\) “In celo Deus sunt tres persone, pater, filius, Sancte Spiritus et in capite tres potentie, intellectus, ratio et memoria.” From New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Library, MS 189, fol. 10v.


\(^{67}\) “Nec certe in nobis memoria recordari potest sine ratione nec ratio sine memoria potest aliquatdens discernere sive iudicare.” Cited from Gilbert de Tournai, *De modo addiscendi*, 372.

Whenever Lachesis has no more thread,  
It separates from the flesh, and virtually  
Bears with itself the human and divine;  
The other faculties are voiceless all;  
The memory, the intelligence, and the will  
In action far more vigorous than before.  

It was a trilogy inherent in existence. Consequently, as Llull continues, in his duality as God and man, Jesus Christ can also be explained in the same way: “as the divine will and human will are reflected in love, and the divine and human intellect are reflected in thought, and the eternity of God and the memory of our lord Jesus Christ are reflected in remembering.”

In the fourteenth century, when Opicinus de Canistris depicted the human being within a comprehensive worldview, below divinity and above the world, he characterized humans with five concepts in descending order: “reason, memory, intelligence, will, sentiment.” Memory is indissolubly linked to the human body and participates in a cosmic order. The conquest of historical time by the Church provided a continuous narrative from Creation to the Second Coming of Christ (parousia) in which the human being was central. In the context of salvation, and the dogmas of faith required to achieve salvation, memory had a role in human fate; so as not to fall from the path of righteousness, one has to remember one’s Christian duties. Christian life was one of constant remembering. Many medieval authors pointed this out, including Henry Suso in the fourteenth century: “Jesus is mentioned and Mary is remembered.” Religious faith consists of recalling, not only for humans but, to enjoy the divine vision, it was also important for angels to ensure their memory was not affected by forgetfulness, as Gilbert de Tournai remarked in the thirteenth century:

The created memory, which is part of his image, is an intellectual power in the angels, not co-eternal with the eternal, but rather part of his eternity, mutable by nature but that exceeds by contemplation and beatitude all mutability of time and without any lapse since it was made; God being inherent to it, it overcomes all the variable changes of times.

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70 “Sicut voluntas diuina et uluntas humana quae se respiciunt in amare et intellectus diuinus et humanus qui se respiciunt in intelligere et aeternitas Dei et memoria domini nostril Iesu Christi, quae se respiciunt in recolere.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientie, 2: 586–87.

71 “Ratio, memoria, intellectus, voluntas, sensus.” From Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. lat. 1993 (the image was included in the exhibition “Pen and Parchment. Drawing in the Middle Ages,” at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2009, but unfortunately was not included in the catalogue).

72 “Yhesu nominatur et Maria memoratur.” From New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Library, MS 130, fol. 3r.

73 “Memoria autem creata quae est pars imaginis est in angelis vis intellectualis non coaeterna
Boncompagno da Signa, very influential in the early thirteenth century, situated memory between heaven and hell while he reused the classical image linking the memory of the past with the demands of the present and the hopes of the future. Memory was a glorious and wonderful gift of nature, by which we recall the past, comprehend the present, and contemplate the future through its similarities with the past.

Boncompagno also noted that memory was not only necessary for rhetoric but also in the arts and professions, as he explained in his Rethorica novissima, a work with great impact in university circles in Bologna and other intellectual centres. In fact, while early medieval authors like Alcuin continued dealing with memory within rhetoric, citing Cicero, the thirteenth-century scholastics, like the emblematic Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, moved it towards ethics, granting it a much wider significance. Certainly, the introduction of Aristotelian thought facilitated the abandoning of Platonic memory as an instrument that facilitates knowledge through memory and, instead, developed a more empirical approach closely linked to the sensations. The reconstruction and re-elaboration of the past was thus interpreted as arising from the association of ideas supplied by sensory experience, which facilitated the perception of various types of memory: the sensory, which, in a general sense, can be perceived as common to humans and animals; the imaginative, which extracted the formal image from the sensations, and is also perceived in humans and animals; and the rational, that allowed forms and images disconnected from the sensations to be elaborated, which, thanks to the memory, provided the raw material for the understanding to generate ideas or universal concepts. From a physiological point of view, these complex requirements occupy all the brain, according to Gilbert de Tournai: “It is necessary that the
imagination is in the frontal part of the brain, then the thinking part is in the middle, and then that of recording and conserving in the back.” In any case, the process makes clear, as Gilbert emphasizes, that only through memory can one advance towards knowledge, and that is the radical difference between what is recalled by an irrational animal and what a human recalls:

Remembering refers to what one knew before in the past, and that is common to all animals that have imagination; but to investigate using the memory or recollection is only for humans, because this involves voluntary inquiry of such an idea and makes it present after its absence.

Ramon Llull interpreted memory as necessary and essential for the human condition, functioning as a bridge between the body and soul, a kind of third position: “memory is situated in the third number, because man is made up of soul and body, and this third number is in transit between one and the other, because it is neither soul nor body.” Without memory there would be no science: “thanks to remembering man has the habit of science, which is good, and privation of it is bad.” Moreover, “it is a matter of greatness to remember things of the past and the absent sensations.” Memory serves knowledge and will: “the memory has, for wisdom, the natural instinct to remember and it has, for the will, the natural appetite to remember.” Accordingly, memory can have positive or negative effects depending on the sensation derived from what is recalled: “if man recalls something disagreeable that another man has done to him, he will be filled with rage by natural instinct and by the appetite of the memory.” Conversely, “memory is of glory, in other words, of pleasure, just as nature has on feeling delight and pleasure.” Memory, either way, always has consequences: “quia memoria est de uirtute, facit opera uirtuosa.” Thus, it can be said that memory is the base for everything which is important; without it, nothing would be sustained, either in humans or animals:

80 “Necesse est ut imaginans sit in anteriori parte cerebri, deinde cogitans in medio, deinde memorans et conservants in posteriori.” Cited from Gilbert de Tournai, De modo addiscendi, 320.

81 “Unde memoria est eius quod prius sciebatur in praeterito, et hoc est commune omnibus animalibus habentibus imaginationem, sed investigare per memoriam aut rememorationem est in solis hominibus, quia hoc est voluntarie inquerire de huìusmodi intentione et facere eam praesentari post absentiam.” Cited from Gilbert de Tournai, De modo addiscendi, 316.

82 “Ipsa est posita in numero tertio, quoniam sicut homo est, ex anima et corpore, et in numerum tertium transit, in tantum quod non est anima neque corpum.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:201.

83 “Per quod recolere homo habet habitum scientiae, qui bonus est, et eius priuatio essent mala.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:201.

84 “Qui magnum quid est recolere res praeteritas et sensibus absentes.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:202.

85 “Habet per sapientiam instinctum naturalem ad recolendum, et habet per uloluntatem appetitum naturalem ad recolendum.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:202.

86 “Si homo recolat aliquit displicitum quod aliquo homine recepit, quoniam tunc se mouet ad iram per instinctum naturalem et appetitum memoriae.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:202.

87 “Est de gloria, uidelicet de delectione, idcirco naturam habet in habendo delectionem et placitum.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:203.
The memory is for great and important things, in being a substantial part of the soul. Certainly, if it is accidental, it is not disposed to recall much nor possess a great capacity for remembering, and in contrast it is so disposed when it has to recall things with greater substance than just simpler accidental things. The same happens with kindness, and also with the will, virtue, truth, glory, duration, power, difference, concordance, the principal, the means, and the aim. Recollere (recall) is, in short, one of the three basic functions of human nature. Remembering who we are and where we are from is the only way to preserve identity (as shown by the oft-repeated example of the Knight of the Lion), to maintain oneself in the social group, and even to maintain one’s religious beliefs. Gilbert de Tournai clearly stated that life was not possible without memory, just as it wasn’t without food. In this sense, it can be said that the central position of memory does not lie so much in the capacity to store data as in the ability to recall it. Indeed, “the essential function of the memory is to remember or record.” Consequently, it is worth preserving and encouraging the power of the memory. Care must be taken to increase its functions, a concern that grew stronger during this period.

Memory Maintained and Promoted

The Retorica ad Herensium, a classical text that was influential throughout the Middle Ages when it was believed to have been written by Cicero, defined two types of memory: the natural and the artificial. The former referred to past events, while the latter was stimulated precisely to avoid forgetting the former. It was a crucial distinction, because the so-called artificial memory opened the door to all kinds of mnemonic devices:

There are, then, two kinds of memory: one natural, and the other the product of art. The natural memory is that memory which is imbedded in our minds, born simultaneously with thought. The artificial memory is that memory which is strengthened by a kind of training and system of discipline. But just as in everything else the merit of natural excellence often rivals acquired learning, and art, in its turn, reinforces and develops the natural advantages, so does it happen in this instance.

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88 “Memoria est de maioritate, ut sit pars substantialis animae, quia, si esset accidentalis, disposita non esset ad memorandum magna nec habere posset magnum recolere, cum ita sit, quod magnitudo maiores habeat concordantiam cum substantia quam cum accidente; et bonitas similiter; et idem est de voluntate, uirtute, gloria, duratione, potestate, differentia, concordantia, principio, medio et fine.” Cited from Lullus, Arbor Scientiae, 1:204–05.

89 Chrétien de Troyes, Le chevalier au lion, MS H, vv. 2822–34.


91 “Essentialis autem operatiu memoriae memorari sive recordari.” Cited from Gilbert de Tournai, De modo addiscendi, 316.

92 “Sunt igitur duae memoriae: una naturalis, altera artificiosa. Naturalis est ea quae nostris animis insita est et simul cum cogitatione nata; artificiosa est ea quam confirmat inductio quaedam et ratio praecpectionis. Sed qua via in ceteris rebus ingenii bonitas imitatur saepe doctrinam, ars porno naturae commoda confirmat et auger, item fit in hac re ut nonnumquam naturalis memoria,
The natural memory depends on the capacity of each person, although it can always be reinforced by discipline and exercises:

The natural memory, if a person is endowed with an exceptional one, is often like this artificial memory, and this artificial memory, in its turn, retains and develops the natural advantages by a method of discipline. Thus the natural memory must be strengthened by discipline so as to become exceptional.93

The artificial memory reproduces evocative places and images ("backgrounds and images"),94 can be helped with writing and reading, and includes mnemonic exercises based on images and series of records. Equally, in the effort to increase rote retention, the setting and context must be taken into account to avoid distractions: “it will be more advantageous to obtain backgrounds in a deserted than in a populous region, because the crowding and passing to and fro of people confuse and weaken the impress of the images, while solitude keeps their outlines sharp.”95

In the seventh century, while defining the seven liberal arts, Martianus Capella included a specific chapter, De memoria, on rhetoric in which he reproduced the explanation about the two memories, insisting on the importance of rote exercise, the use of letters and images, and adding practical advice like silence at the moment of memorizing or adequate lighting to retain good images.96

Retaining and improving one’s memory became the main concern: in the Dialogus de rhetorica et virtutibus by Alcuin of York at the end of the eighth century, most of the short chapter dedicated to De memoria focused on how to increase one’s memory, based on a question asked supposedly by Charlemagne:

Charles: Is there any formula or recipe that is used to increase one’s memory?

Alcuin: There is no other than recommending the exercise of the memory, of using the writing and practising studying. Drunkenness should be avoided, as it greatly harms all good study, because not only does it damage one’s health but also spoils the integrity of the mind.97

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93 “Naturalis memoria praeceptione confirmanda est ut sit egregia, et haec quae doctrina datur indiget ingenii. Nec hoc magis aut monus in hac re quam in ceteris artibus fit, ut ingenio doctrina, praeceptione natura nitescat. Quare et illis qui natura memores sunt utilis haec erit institutio.” From [Cicero], Ad C. Herennium, 208.

94 “Constat igitur artificiosa memoria ex locis et imaginis.” From [Cicero], Ad C. Herennium, 208.

95 “Commodius est in derelicta quam in celebri regione locos comparare, propter quod frequentia et obambulatio hominum conturbat et infirmat imaginum notas, solitudo conservat integras simulacrorum figures.” From [Cicero], Ad C. Herennium, 209–10.

96 Martiani Minei Felicis Capellae, De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercuri et de septem Artibus liberalibus. Libre novem (Frankfurt, 1836), 460–61.

97 “Car. Suntte alique ejus praecptea, quomodo vel illa adhibenda vel augenda sit? – Alb. Non habemus ejus alia praecptea, nici dicendi exercitationem et scribendi usum, et cogitandi studium; et ebrietatem cavendum, quae omnibus bonis studiis nocet maxime; quae non solum corporis
Alcuin’s response is based on the practice following the classical model of exercise, writing and study. The addition of drunkenness became one of the reiterated references throughout the Middle Ages. Given the importance of remembering, one of the main criticisms of drunkenness was usually that it erased the memory. Elsewhere, drunkenness is condemned because it affects three areas of knowledge: “drunkenness erases memory, dissipates the senses, confuses the intellect.”

Between the third and seventeenth centuries the Galenic medical model gained widespread acceptance in the West, duly reinforced by Muslim thinkers like Avicenna and Averroes who adapted Aristotle’s natural philosophy, particularly the notion of the four humours and their associated qualities and temperaments, elements, and organs. This model saw memory as part of the body. One could deduce, as Albertus Magnus did, that those who have a better power to remember have a melancholic nature, because their dry and cold condition facilitates them retaining the impression of images more clearly. That would explain, for Gilbert de Tournai, why people with the worst memories are “small children, the elderly, and quick-witted adults” (infantes et senes et nimis veloci ingenii): in all of them, excessive humidity dominates. In any case, the humours and qualities must be kept in a necessary balance, because the other group of humans with poor memory are those who take a long time to understand things (nimis tardi); they are too dry, which is why images have difficulty remaining fixed with them.

Knowing that humidity and coldness harm memory, one can strengthen it by avoiding food and circumstances associated with cold and wet. By the thirteenth century advice and explicit aphorisms—Amphorismi (or Canones) memoria (or for the conservatione memoria)—taken from Arabized Galenism now spread into Latin, through authors like Arnau de Vilanova, to maintain or improve the memory, even to strengthen and restore memory (confortant memoriam et restaurant). Such guidance began with a set of general advice: always try to avoid excessive cold and strong heat; do moderate exercise before every meal and remain standing or stroll gently after having eaten; moderate the consumption of food and drinks of a cold or humid complexion, like raw fruit and vegetables, avoid strong meats and opt for tender ones, especially chicken or partridge and, even more, the brains of these fowl; balance waking and sleeping, without excess in either; and avoid siestas; evacuate all the superfluities adequately from all the conduits (“through the intestines, through the urine, through the holes in the nose, through the palate, through the mouth, through the ears, through friction of the head

aufert sanitatem, sed etiam mentis adimigit integritatem.” Cited from Alcuin (al. Flaccus Albinus), Dialogus de rhetorica et virtutibus, 101: col. 919

98 New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Library, Marston MS 140, fol. 268v–69r.

99 “Eebrietas aufert memoriam, dissipat sensum, confundit intellectum.” From New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Library, S 482.113, fol. 1r.

100 Luis García Ballester, La búsqueda de la salud. Sanadores y enfermos en la España medieval (Barcelona, 2001), 129–32.

101 Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, Sexualidad y saber médico en la edad media (Barcelona, 1989), 45–47.

with a comb” [per intestina, per urinam, per nares, per palatum, per os, per aures et per fricationem capitis cum pectine]], especially after sleep or exercise; maintain a good mood, with soft joy and honest delight. Other specific items similar to common advice for all health systems were added aimed especially at counteracting the fumositats; in other words, avoiding the damage from the rising of fumes produced during gastric digestion, according to how people then understood the digestive process. That implied avoiding food that generated gases, like pulses, cheeses, garlic, leeks or onions; not drinking cold water or wine while digesting; not going to sleep before digestion was complete; and helping close the mouth of the stomach to avoid fumes escaping with preparations of coriander or fruit with astringents. It was also worth avoiding fumes that rose from one’s feet, so they should be washed frequently with infusions of aromatic herbs and by sleeping barefoot or, at least, without shoes. Using the same logic, other measures were proposed that helped the memory: washing one’s hair every ten days (every four in other recipes) with a bleach in which medicinal plants had been macerated, or chewing mastic with ginger and other chewing gums prepared from musk, cashew, or coriander. Finally, memory was also increased by recalling everything one had seen and heard that one wanted to record: “taking care for what has been seen and heard by means of frequent recording corroborates and confirms the memory.”

The fact that memory occupied the occipital part of the skull inspired efforts to improve the memory by stimulating this specific area. An adaptation of the abovementioned aphorisms by Arnau de Vilanova written in Catalan in the fifteenth century details this practice:

Should you wish to do something to improve the memory, use a lotion that is called “pliris cum musto,” and another lotion called “from cashew,” and confections of cherry plum. With these products rub the memory, which is at the back of the head, with moonshine: they much improve the memory and restore it. The moonshine must be made from red wine, in which some sprigs of lemon balm, sage, and rosemary must have been placed. That must be put with a bandage made from linen cloth over the memory and it is a great secret.

Other recipes seek the same objective: the De bonitate memorie, a late re-elaboration from the text by Arnau de Vilanova, added a confection of animal fat and honey, administered with an infusion of various plants. Beyond these formulae, during the thir-
teenth and fourteenth centuries, various authors repeated ancient advice regarding trying to find surroundings without distractions from too many people or too much light and notably, encouraging mnemonic techniques, as the Franciscan Gilbert de Tournai does extensively when he explains that “if one’s memory is bad it can be helped by technique and training it with the practice of rules. Four factors are necessary: time, activity, place, and method.” From here, he stresses that the right place for memorising must be found (better at night with silence) and, beginning with the invocation of classical authors, he discusses writing moderately, reading and meditating and, notably, linking the images one wished to remember to places and objects, as well as mentally fragmenting and distributing what one wishes to retain.

Gilbert de Tournai’s recommendations on memory are framed by a concern to teach and retain knowledge, and this is why the work is entitled On Ways of Learning (De modo addiscendi). The link between memory and teaching was deeply rooted. Monastic teaching already influenced memorization: “they had to learn immediately by heart the 150 psalms of the psalter, an anthology from the Old and New Testaments, notably the life of Jesus.” Late-medieval grammar schools catering for burghers who wanted their sons to read and write also resorted to rote learning. Memorization, as an individual exercise by the student, was also indispensable in university teaching, especially if we consider the practical difficulties of accessing the texts and textbooks.

It was expected that the holders of certain offices, such as jurists and lawyers, should retain concepts and key definitions in their memory. For some officials this was even an obligation: in 1330, the chapters of the Catalan maritime consulate in Bruges ordered:

The consols need to remember the chapters so that they have a better memory and cannot claim ignorance, and they also promised to pay the stipulated fines for this in case they did it badly, in line with the oath taken.

In a more generalized way, clergy were expected to retain a wide set of concepts and prayers. In fact, the concern with memorizing particularly applied to late-medieval

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106 “Per artem nihilominus adiuvare et praeceptorum exercitacione formari; sunt ego quatuor necessaria: tempus, actus, locus, modus.” Cited from Gilbert de Tournai, De modo addiscendi, 352.
107 Gilbert de Tournai, De modo addiscendi, 352–70.
111 “Los consols los sien tenguts de recordar los capítols per tall que n’agen mills memòria e que no y puxen alleguar ignorància, e més prometen de pagar les penes qui posades hi són en cas que fallissien, sots virtut del sagrament.” Cited from Antonio Paz y Meliá, Series de los más importantes documentos del Archivo y Biblioteca del Exmo. Señor Duque de Medinaceli, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1915–22), 2:457.
urban preachers. Contemporary conceptual, civic, and formal tendencies led at that period to the Church and the people finding a notable confluence in preaching, such that Francis Rapp proclaimed: “Perhaps never did so many men link their prestige to the seduction of the verb!” The preachers became true professionals of the word, which is why they took such great care of their discourses and the forms they used to present them. The search for efficacy justified theatricality, affecting urban location and all aspects of their delivery, given that the preacher had to master both gestures and diction, as well as having the speech well-prepared.

In this context, in the fourteenth century, Francesc Eiximenis wrote a manual aimed at preachers with the explicit title of The Art of Preaching to the People (Art de predicació al poble) organized into three chapters: “the ultimate aim of preaching” (la causa final de la predicació), which was to instruct the people in the faith; “the efficient cause of preaching” (la causa eficient de la predicació), about the moral qualities of the preacher; and the form of preaching. The latter is the longest, structured into seven subchapters: “brevity of the sermon” (la brevetat del sermó), “speaking with fervour” (parlar amb fervor), “speaking slowly” (parlar pausadament), “preaching with devotion” (predicar amb devoció), “speaking morally” (parlar moralment), “preaching with prudence” (predicar amb prudència) and, finally, “orderly preaching” (predicar ordenadament). This orderliness occupied almost half the book, thus showing that to preach well, it was crucial to structure the sermon well. In this section, Eiximenis first recommends carefully choosing the theme and its elements and, then, focusing on an order that helps the memory, clearly understanding that one cannot be a good preacher without counting on mnemonic strategies. He recommended the use of analogies rather than just words:

If what you want is to remember words, the memory has no easy task, because it has to create a similitude or a figure to remember a single word. In contrast, when we have to recall events, then a single similitude or figure can serve to remember a long story.
However, Eiximenis continued, “the memory suffers from real difficulty when it has to retain a large multitude of things” (la memòria ho té realment difícil quan ha de retenir una gran multitud de coses). That is why this teacher of preachers resorted to tricks from (pseudo)-Cicero—in the Retorica ad Herennium—and justified their contemporary use by making clear that other preachers were using it. The strategy is based on listing references: “Nowadays, this rule is used to remember names: if you have to remember a long list of words, arrange them placing the words along a long path with the help of an appropriate similitude.” This enables you to retain a list of the apostles in order by linking in the memory images that evoked each one. Similarly, places and numbers can be used, so that “if you are asked where such and such a name is placed, by remembering the place you put it, the number assigned to that place will come to mind,” which “eventually gives excellent results as, without a big effort, it is possible to retain many names and the numbers associated with them in the memory.” Eiximenis gave more examples of *linies rectes* (“straight lines”) where he added evocative references, like imagining a straight line between the firmament and earth, which places the stars, the sun, the moon, and the parts of the earth: “From the furthest heavens and descending in an orderly way for the intermediate spheres until the centre of the earth is reached”; a line between “cities, houses, and land”; and then one within “the human body beginning from the feet to the head and in reverse.” He then explains how you can do the same using a route, so you could imagine going from Rome to Santiago de Compostela all the while imagining putting references in each city according to its characteristics. Then he gives an example where you should imagine a great church:

First, the most notable places and the chapels following their location; their headstones; their paintings; and the distance that separates each place from the others; and then with the support of similitudes and images, fit all you have into memorizing it.

He summarizes various options, recommending you follow the easiest thread for retaining the information:

Everyone can easily remember evocative events through words if one always keeps in mind that the things you wish to recall must be arranged in an order that expresses well the relation that there is between the images and the things that have to be memorized.

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119 “Modernament es dóna aquesta regla per recordar noms; si has de recordar una llarga llista de paraules, ordena-la col·locant les paraules al llarg d’una extensa via amb l’ajuda d’una similitud escaient.” Cited from Eiximenis, *Art de predicació*, 42.

120 “Si se’t demana en quin lloc està posat tal nom, tot recordant el lloc on el vas col·locar, et vindrà a la memòria el número assignat a aquell lloc”; “a la llarga dóna uns resultats excel·lents, ja que sense gens d’esforç, és possible de retenir a la memòria molt de noms i els numeros que hi estan associats.” Cited from Eiximenis, *Art de predicació*, 43.

121 “Del cel empiri i es pot anar baixant ordenament per les esferes intermèdies fin a arribar al centre de la terra”; “ciutats, cases i finques”; “cos humà, començant pels peus fins al cap i a l’interès.” Cited from Eiximenis, *Art de predicació*, 44–47.

122 “Una gran església imaginant-te tot primer els llocs i les capelles més notables d’acord amb la seva situació, les seves làpides, les seves pintures i la distància que separa cada lloc dels altres, i després amb el suport de similituds i imatges, encabeix-hi tot el que hagis de memoritzar.” Cited from Eiximenis, *Art de predicació*, 46.
You must know that we can find orders of this type in many things. Firstly, long and famous routes; secondly, a series of things arranged clearly and adequately; thirdly, enormous, luxurious, large houses; fourthly, through the disposition of parts of the human body; fifthly, taking one of your books where you had to study various subjects; sixthly, through a careful, well adjusted mix of the previous points; seventhly, through the conjunction of the syllables of certain words and terms; and, finally, when the end of one section of the discourse links with the start of the next and so on successively.\textsuperscript{123}

Eiximenis also showed that books were used for reference and consulted repeatedly. He referred to the practice of his own predecessors and contemporaries who wrote on and marked up reference works:

Memory can be strengthened by recording the order of subjects on which one had to preach in the book where the discourse has been prepared. The ancients used this method a lot, and nowadays there are also many people who use it, because in the books where they studied their sermons, or the subject they had to remember, they always put a straight line where the important sentence or passage that had to be recalled ended; and later they made another clearly visible mark in purple ink beside other important passages, so that these signs and these passages became firmly recorded in their memory and, thus, when they referred to them during the sermon, they talked as if they were reading from the book where they had put the signs that enabled them to recall it so clearly.\textsuperscript{124}

The concern with mnemonics, in a context so marked by the need for teachers and especially preachers to remember specific things, soon culminated in a fifteenth-century genre called the \textit{Ars memorativa}; in other words, works directly aimed at finding the best way to memorize and retain knowledge.\textsuperscript{125} Some scholars have seen this as a forerunner of the humanistic revival of the Renaissance.\textsuperscript{126} However, as Kim Rivers has pointed out,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} “Tothom pot recordar fàcilment fets evocats a través de paraules si sempre té present que ha de saber ordenar les coses que vol recordar en un ordre que expressi bé la relació que hi ha d’haver entre les imatges i les coses que s’han de memoritzar. Cal saber que podem trobar fàcilment ordres d’aquesta mena en moltes coses. En primer lloc, en camins llargs i famosos; en segon lloc, en sèries de coses ordenades d’una manera clara i adequada; en tercer lloc, en cases enormes, luxoses i amplies; en quart lloc, a través de la disposició dels membres del cos humà; en cinquè lloc, en un llibre teu on hagis d’estudiar diverses matèries; en sisè lloc, mitjançant una correcta i ben travada barreja dels punts anteriors; en setè lloc, a través de la conjunció de les síl·labes d’unes paraules i d’uns termes determinats; i, en últim lloc, quan el final d’una branca del discurs enllaça amb el principi de la següent i així successivament.” Cited from Eiximenis, \textit{Art de predicació}, 44.
\item \textsuperscript{124} “La memòria es pot potenciar tot recordant l’ordre de les matèries sobre les quals s’havia de predicar en el llibre on s’ha preparat el discurs. Els antics van fer servir molt aquest àmbit, i avui també hi ha molta gent que l’usa, perquè en els llibres on estudiaven els seus sermons, o la matèria que haguessin de recordar, sempre posaven una línia recta on s’acabava la sentència o el passatge important que calia recordar; i després feien una altra marca clarament visible de tinta de color porpora al marge d’altres passatges importants, de manera que aquells signes i aquells passatges quedaven fermament gravats e la seva memòria i, per tant, quan hi feien referència durant el sermó, en parlaven com si estiguessin llegint el llibre on havien posat els signes que els permetien de recordar amb tanta nitidesa.” Cited from Eiximenis, \textit{Art de predicació}, 44.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Yates, \textit{The Art of Memory}, 114–34.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Sabine Heimann-Seebach, \textit{Ars und scientia: Genese, Überlieferung und Funktionen der mnemo-
this was no novelty, but rather a culmination of a practice developed by the mendicant friars, both Dominicans and Franciscans, since the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{127}

At the same time, this late medieval practice required the concepts and dogmas of the faith in the memory to be retained not only by the preachers but also those hearing the sermon. In truth, the recipients of sermons also needed a careful memory, in order for it to properly guide their understanding and experience of faith. Memory became a useful strategy for the mendicants whose mission was to take religion to lay people. First of all, given that the dogmas of the faith are intangible, images were needed for the memory to retain, fix, and translate these images. This process of recording appears in works of devotion like the vernacular writings of Bartolomeo de San Concordio and Matteo de Corsini in the fourteenth century. Corsini appealed to the mortis memoria, because to live an adequately Christian life “we must always think about death” (dobbiamo sempre pensare della morte), referring back to Seneca to invoke the permanent record of the past that influenced the present and the future: “if your soul is prudent, it should be organized in three periods: [...] organize the present, foresee the future, and remember the past.”\textsuperscript{128} Christian symbolism was widely expanded, not only concerning saints, but also the virtues and vices, and adapted (often from classical images) into new forms and memorable drawings from this same mendicant milieu.\textsuperscript{129} Popular mnemonics linked to the symbolism used in art, generating coherent and repeated images to fill the memory and retain the very dogmas of the faith being preached by the clergy.\textsuperscript{130}

Memory was not just about a capacity to retain past events or hold the path of righteousness. Habits of behaviour were reinforced by the memory. There was only one thing that had to be erased from the memory: the record of sin (“the memory of sinners in darkness”).\textsuperscript{131} Ramon Llull talked about two possible habits: “those who have or will have the holiness of glory and those others who have and will have the condemnation of sadness.”\textsuperscript{132} Memory sets the respective behaviours. Thus, holiness is recognized under the habit of kindness, glory, and charity (intelligit sub habitu bonitatis, gloriae et caritatis); the second, which featured the sinners, repeated negative characteristics, including the corresponding record:

\begin{quote}
	\textit{Si prudens est animus tuus, tribus dispensetur temporibus”; “praesentia ordinata, futura provide et praeterita recordare.”} Cited from Matteo de’ Corsini, \textit{Rosario della vita} (Florence, 1845), 37–39.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{127} Kimberly A. Rivers, \textit{Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice: Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages} (Turnhout, 2010), 4.

\textsuperscript{128} “Si prudens est animus tuus, tribus dispensetur temporibus”; “praesentia ordinata, futura provide et praeterita recordare.” Cited from Matteo de’ Corsini, \textit{Rosario della vita} (Florence, 1845), 37–39.

\textsuperscript{129} Rivers, \textit{Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice}, 149–333.

\textsuperscript{130} Miguel Larrañaga, \textit{Palabra, Imagen, Poder: Enseñar el Orden en la Edad Media} (Segovia, 2015), 410–11.

\textsuperscript{131} “Tenebre peccatorum memoria eorum.” From New Haven, Yale University Beinecke Library, Marston MS 140, fol. 52v.

\textsuperscript{132} “Quos habent et habebunt sancti de gloria, et alii sunt, quos habent et habebunt damnati de tristitia.” Cited from Lullus, \textit{ Arbor Scientiae}, 2:549.
First one needs to understand why Judas, who has a contrary habit for all his eternity, understanding intellectually the intelligible eternity in terms of punishment for evil and hate. Then comes the cloak of remembering. And these cloaks are the instruments with which the saints have eternal glory, while the damned have suffering. Judas has a cloak of conscience and despair with the cloak of sadness and the cloak of eternal intelligence, like a memory, because all these cloaks are those for eternity.  

In this sense, memory could be a memory of evil. In the eighth century, when John of Damascus talked of cholera, he saw three types: bile, rage, and mania. The latter became the permanent memory of evil: “The mania is the permanent bile, in other words, the memory of evil, and it is called mania because it persists and remains recorded in the memory.” Memory is the link with the entire vital journey of the human being, constantly loading the memory with everything good and everything bad. If you were to start again, you would need to lose your memory, as Dante explains when to drink from the river of forgetfulness:

What are you thinking?  
Answer me; that the water [from the river of forgetfulness] has yet to erase your sad memory.

Memory is a life force. Everything is memory: the words and texts that surround us, and the images. All the power of depiction that religion can master, filling cloisters and churches with reliefs and sculptures, is nothing other than the expression of a particular memory, showing why monastic buildings can be described as an “architectural mnemonic in monastic rhetoric.”

Let us return to Frances Yates when she discusses “memory as the converting power, the bridge between the abstraction and the image.” Memory is an action activated by agents who wish to transmit a certain social behaviour. It has a versatile capacity, used not only by the Church, but also holders of power when they wished to influence society. We can now see how memory served at the mercy of power, and proponents of the powerful attempted to manipulate the past through its memory.

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133 “Et idem est de intelligere Iudae, quod in contrarium habituatum est in aeuiternitate sua, intellectuiitate intelligente intelligibilitatem aeuiternitatem sub ratione malitiae poenae et odibilitatis. Et idem sequitur de habitu memoriae. Et isti habitus sunt instrumenta per quae sancti havent gloriam aeuernaliter et damnati poenam. Iudas habet habitum conscientiae et desperantiae cum habitu tristitiae et cum habitu intelligentiae aeuernae et memoriae similiter in tantum quod omnes habitus erunt ita appropriati aeuiternitati.” Cited from Lullus, *Arbor Scientiae*, 2:549–50.


135 “Che pense? / Rispondi a me: ché le memorie triste / in te non sono ancor da l’acqua offense.” Cited from Dante, *Divina Commedia*, 10–12, Purgatorio, XXXI.


Memory as a Strategy

The medieval conception of the world as a continuous path from Creation to the Second Coming, in which the history of the world and the history of salvation were entwined, encompasses the meaning of being human and the impact of one’s actions. The present was justified both by the inescapable destiny of one’s path forward whilst being deeply rooted on the path from whence we came. Power in the present thus required a justification in the past, and that link was the memory.

This is underlined by the two terms used in Mary Carruthers’ magisterial work, Memory and Authority. The basis for authority was rooted in memory. For instance, Eginhard supported Charlemagne, primarily due to his lineage, since all his predecessors had shown their worth before Pepin was anointed king, by continuously occupying the position of Mayor of the Palace:

Pepin the Short, father of King Charles, exercised this post as if it were already hereditary.
In fact, Pepin’s father, Charles Martel, worthily occupied the same position, having, in turn, received it from his father, Pepin of Herstal.

After recalling the success of Charles Martel in battle against the Muslims, the same chronicler adds: “The people did not tend to grant such an honourable post to anyone except those who stood out for their enlightened lineage and abundant riches.”

Eginhard thus links wealth, continuity in the retention of power, and recognition of the lineage to popular acceptance.

In reality, in early medieval dynastic affairs, a historical justificatory narrative contributed powerfully to popular cohesion around sovereigns, as Rosamond McKitterick concluded for the Carolingians: “A sense of the past was deeply integrated into the sense of identity possessed by the audiences for history in the Carolingian world. The Franks defined themselves in terms of their history.”

Great churchmen in the ninth century defined, managed, and consolidated power through accurate control of the past, particularly the gesta, as Constance Bouchard writes: “The creation of this genre grew from a need to make a strange and distant past more comprehensible and to prepare a hortatory ‘mirror’ for the authors’ contemporaries; it thus demonstrates vividly the historical process of remembering and forgetting.”

139 “Este cargo lo ejercía, como si ya fuera hereditario, Pipino (el Breve), el padre del rey Carlos. De hecho el padre de Pipino, Carlos (Martel), ocupó dignamente este mismo puesto que, a su vez, le había sido legado por su propio padre Pipino (de Heristal).” Cited from Eginhard, Vida de Carlomagno, ed. Alejandra de Riquer (Madrid, 1999), 59.
141 “El pueblo no solía conceder este cargo tan honorable más que a aquellos que sobresalían por su esclarecido linaje y sus copiosas riquezas.” Cited from Eginhard, Vida de Carlomagno, 60.
142 Rosamond McKitterick, History and Memory in the Carolingian World (Cambridge, 2004), 282–323.
Charlemagne consolidated his power in agreement with aristocratic kinship groups, who wove a memory to reinforce the respective aristocratic groups, their monastic links, and their connection to imperial power, as summarized by Régine Le Jan:

The reciprocal system of the 'memoria' contributed the integration of aristocratic group into the overall monastic structures of the Frankish Empire. Even if the Carolingian aristocracy still founded its legitimacy in itself, it was integrated into the structures of the Frankish and Christian ‘imperium’.

In reality, the aristocratic system operating between the seventh and tenth centuries, based on cousinage, wove mutual, horizontal relations that helped to link dispersed kinships closely related to royalty under the invocation of common mythical ancestors, like Priam, king of Troy, to sustain the Merovingian dynasty. The consolidation of each aristocratic lineage meant consolidating a specific memory visualized in locations of family memory. These were rooted in ceremonies and places of burial, which were often within private churches founded on their own domains and, especially in the Merovingian era, in particular monasteries. This maintained the link between the living and the dead, with the former adapting the record of the lineage in accordance with the political context in a new Carolingian environment.

Once the power of Charlemagne had become entrenched, supposed kinship links to the emperor and his descendents justified many lineages. In the early generations, Charlemagne’s time became a place of idealized memory, as Matthew Gabriele has written: “In the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, telling stories about Charlemagne meant telling stories about a (lost) Golden Age whose contours shifted across time and space.” It was still, in reality, a way to create (literally invent) a new evocative memory; again, Gabriele says: “Each scribe who recorded the great one’s deeds or narrated the events of that Golden Age added a layer, pressing his particular memories and preoccupations into the fabric of the Charlemagne legend.”

The biographical construction of the Carolingian sovereign created a model image, both of its time and one projected towards posterity in idealized form. Rulers over almost all of Western Europe invoked supposed links to the Carolingian environment; in some cases this continued even into the nineteenth century.

147 Le Jan, Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc, 45–57.
148 Matthew Gabriele, An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade (Oxford, 2011), 1.
Elsewhere we see similar behaviour: King St. Stephen was held up as the source of rights and freedoms in medieval Hungary, a tradition that has continued almost to the present day.  

Feudalism imposed a new family structure, duly sanctioned by the Church, based on monogamous, indissoluble, and exogamic marriage. This created lineages that were maintained with the support of what Ruiz Domenec called the “memory of the feudal lords” (memoria de los feudales). This would typically include the justification of a specific genealogical path, attesting kinship ties, and providing eulogistic references. Later on, the genealogical narratives further stabilized written records and established commemorative actions.

Such written records required management and this was commonly performed by a monastic community that was closely linked with the lineage. In the Ribagorça, a former Carolingian county south of the Pyrenees, between the eleventh and twelfth centuries up to three versions of the history of the county’s lineage were written, the last explicitly known as the Memoria renovata. These Ribagorçan chronicles contain clear historical errors, even in the identification of the Frankish kings, as historians have noted. It is almost commonplace to excuse errors in such primitive historical works. But research by Gener Gonzalvo shows that the errors were not down to ignorance by the monks who wrote them but rather were intentional, aimed at manipulating dates and genealogies, as the purpose of their work was to glorify the county’s lineage for purposes of legitimation and ostentation, whilst splicing together the imperial lineage of Charlemagne, the heroic deeds of the counts, and their relation to the French royal house. More specifically, the narrative aimed at consolidating specific issues, such as the patrimony, possessions, and jurisdictions, which were then in dispute, and to reinforce the patrilineal family model. This one example illustrates the function of the written memory, not to transmit historical narratives, but to generate them at the service of strategies of power. Even the liveliness of the story was adapted to the aims of the memory. For example, in thirteenth-century Castile, Countess Urraca, wife of Count Álvaro Núñez de Lara, drew on the monastery of Cañas, where she took vows after being widowed and became abbess: the story of her memory, in both written and monumental forms, was enriched in life and after her death, as circumstances required.

153 Flocel Sabaté, La feudalización de la sociedad catalana (Granada, 2007), 171–91.
154 José Enrique Ruiz Domenec, La memoria de los feudales (Barcelona, 1994).
Monasteries in their turn concerned themselves particularly with ingraining the memory of certain saints associated with them, reinforcing those stories that supported devotional imagery. The aim was to attract the faithful. Significantly, attempts to increase the memory of certain saints tended to coincide with problems and tensions within the monastery about its incomes or jurisdictions.\footnote{Javier Pérez-Embí, 
*Hagiología y sociedad en la España medieval. Castilla y León (siglos xi-xiii)* (Huelva, 2002), 92–95.} The same monastic scriptoria that catered for the memory of the religious house, and especially its donors, also manipulated, sometimes inextricably, the monastery’s heritage.\footnote{Leticia Agúndez San Miguel, “Memoria y cultura en la documentación del monasterio de Sahagún: la respuesta de la fórmulas ‘inútiles’ (904–1230),” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 40, no. 2 (2010): 847–88.} Monasteries paid strong attention to these writings, if need be by resorting to forgeries,\footnote{Flocel Sabaté, *La feudalización de la sociedad catalana* (Granada, 2007), 195–200.} in order to maintain their sources of revenue or to triumph in lawsuits in which they were involved.\footnote{Leticia Agúndez, “Escritura, memoria y conflicto entre el monasterio e Sahagún y la catedral de León: nuevas perspectivas para el aprovechamiento de los falsos documentales (siglos x a xii),” *Medievalismo* 19 (2009): 261–85.}

At the same time, reinforcing the lineage meant not only emphasizing a certain historically-based story but also visualizing and displaying it. Memory took advantage of the corresponding *signum* or *figura* to remain indelible in the shared knowledge of a society so familiar with symbolism.\footnote{Michel Pastoureau, *Une histoire symbolique du Moyen Âge occidental* (Paris, 2004), 11.} For instance, heraldry on military equipment from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries offered a memorable emblem for each lineage.\footnote{Michel Pastoureau, *Traité d’heraldique* (Paris, 2003), 24–36.} Locations or buildings associated with lineages offered other locales for the memory, and heraldry often took on these references. Heraldry, lineage, and memory became interwove within strategies of family consolidation. All levels of the nobility participated in this game and adapted their arms. In many cases, as in Castile, these were enriched with references to the origins and success of the family. By the fourteenth century, in the words of Faustino Menéndez Pidal, it reached “The definitive fixing and codifying of the coats of arms gave them a marked character of remembrance of the ancestors and their deeds, constituting the spiritual heritage of the lineage.”\footnote{Faustino Menéndez Pidal de Navascués, “El linaje y sus signos de identidad,” in *Estudios de Genealogía, Heráldica y Nobiliaria*, ed. Miguel Ángel Ladero (Madrid, 2006), 12–28 at 23.}
All noble lineages told a tale of a long, unbroken, vigorous history, “the importance of being ancient (la importancia de ser antiguo),” showing a real “hunger of lineage (hambre de linaje).” The wealth and distinction of the lineage justified its identity, legitimated in the various conflicts it was involved in, reflected by the social relations of each noble, and the focus for continuing economic and social ascent. Accordingly, many lineages link to mythological, biblical, or classical origins. There was no lack of fantastic origins: the Anjou, Berry, and Lusignac families claimed descent from the fairy Melusina, as Jean d’Arras wrote in the fourteenth century, following a request from the Duke of Berry. Likewise, the Haros, in the Iberian Peninsula, drew on fantastic origins around the Goat-footed Lady (“Dama del Pie de Cabra”). Alternatively, a memorial story could be based on a dark past, justified simply because “there was no argument against it from human memory (Que memoria de omnes no es en contrario),” as stated by the Basque nobility, showing how memory could be manipulated by those of preeminent status. The strengthening of the agnatic lineages in the late Middle Ages, with the preoccupation both to conserve and extend the family heritage and play the game of matrimonial strategies, always tended to be accompanied by the search for, and invocation of, genealogical stories; more than a few times a single family could find itself with various origins, thus reinforcing its antiquity and contacts. The view was to the past and the future, which is why the stories were duly continued, as with the Castilian Libro del linaje de los señores de Ayala.

These memorial stories were also used for lesser lineages when they could not produce an ancient chronology. Whether middling or lower nobles, they all resorted to such origins. A Castilian knight, Sancho de Paredes, who had been chamberlain to Queen Isabel the Catholic, flaunted his position by erecting a palace in his home city of Cáceres, including a specific Arms or Lineage Room. The decoration of the room was finished

167 Miquel Ángel Ladero, Poder político y sociedad en Castilla. Siglos xiii al xv (Madrid, 2013), 393.
168 Jean d’Arras, Melusina o la noble historia de Lusignan, ed. and trans. Carlos Alvar (Madrid, 1982).
169 Luis Krus, “Una variante peninsular del mito de Melusina: el origen de los Hara en el ‘Livro de Linhagens’ del Conde de Barcelos” and Krus “La muerte de las hadas: la leyenda genealógica de la Dama del Pie de Cabra,” in La conciencia de los antepasados, 17–42 and 43–86 respectively. However, see the work of Isabel Beceiro, “La legitimación del linaje a través de los ancestros,” in Memoria e historia, 91–93.
170 Cited from Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, Clio’s Laws on History and Language (Austin, 2019), 47.
171 Isabel Beceiro, “La memoria y el discurso de la nobleza en los relatos genealógicos castellanos (1370–1540),” in La conciencia de los antepasados, 122–43.
173 Arsenio Dacosta, El ‘Libro del linaje de los señores de Ayala’ y otros textos genealógicos. Materiales para el estudio de la conciencia del linaje en la Baja Edad Media (Bilbao, 2007).
during the sixteenth century, but, at the building’s conception, at the start of the century, elements proclaiming his lineage were introduced. We see his family arms accompanied by portraits of his ancestors, although there are only eight of them and they only date back to the fourteenth century. They are accompanied by the heraldic shields of the respective spouses’ families, showing the role of matrimonial links not only financially but in glorifying the lineage. A text in Castilian crowns the room:

This work was commissioned by the honourable knight Sancho de Paredes, son of the most honourable knight Alonso Holguín and chamberlain to the most powerful and most Catholic Queen Isabel, our lady. Beginning with Pero Domingo Golfín, over two hundred years ago, who was a neighbour of this town and whose wife is not remembered and others whose wives’ arms are presented. The said Pero Domingo had a son Alonso Pérez Golfín whose son was Pero Alonso and whose son was Alonso Golfín, and of Alonso Golfín, Alonso Holguín and whose son was Sancho de Paredes and whose son was Ferna Pérez Golfín. Finished in the year 1508.¹⁷⁴

We can see here a portrait of an heir looking assuredly to the future while the ostentatious decoration displays his present wealth, but all rooted in the memory of the lineage, displayed with pride, though he is simply a rich knight keen to show off his prestige and the power he gained through service to the crown.

At the time, medical understanding of procreation argued that bodily fluids transmitted not only physiological traits but also moral virtues or defects.¹⁷⁵ The son of a king might inherit his authoritarian traits,¹⁷⁶ or the son of a Jew might have a characteristic such as fearfulness.¹⁷⁷ That is why St. Bernard received virtues through his mother’s milk,¹⁷⁸ just as the Castilian writer, don Juan Manuel, traced bad character traits to the milk of a bad wet-nurse.¹⁷⁹ Such views reinforced the importance of lineage. It was common in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in discourses praising barons and nobles, which is why texts had to adopt “the theme of unknown youth prepared to make his name as a knight and to establish a position in society on the basis of his own exploits, without the help

¹⁷⁴ "Esta ovra mandó facer el onrado cavallero Sancho de Paredes, hijo del mui onrado cavallero Alonso Holguín i camarero de la mui poderosa e mui católica reina dona Isabel nuestra señora. Comiença de Pero Domingo Golfín, que puede aver docientos años, que fue vecino d’esta villa i d’él no ai memoria quien fue su muger y de los otros se ponen las armas que tovieron sus mujeres. Del dicho Pero Domingo fue hijo Alonso Pérez Golfín i d’él fue hijo Pero Alonso i d’él fue hijo Alonso Golfín, i de Alonso Golfín, Alonso Holguín i d’él fue hijo Sancho de Paredes i d’él fue hijo Ferna Pérez Golfín. Acabose año de Mdviii." Cited from “Sala de Armas o de linajes” in Pilar Mogollón, Guía del Palacio de los Golfines de Abajo (Cáceres, 2015), 50–51.

¹⁷⁵ Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, Sexualidad y saber médico en la Edad Media (Barcelona, 1989), 55–57.


of a known and well-established family reputation,” whilst keeping “a strong emphasis on heredity.” Three things were necessary to judge a knight, the prime one being lineage, as stated in the mid-fourteenth century at the Aragonese court: “This knowledge is obtained in three ways. The first, which lineage they are descended from; the second, what manners and customs they have; the third what exploits they have achieved.”

So, dynastic continuity, displaying one’s roots, and continuing success, became central to the claims to power by lords, and especially sovereigns. What was important was the dynasty, more so even than any individual monarch. By the fourteenth century, this meant hiding the monarch and focusing on the royal lineage: “the invisibility of the king and the visibility of the dynasty (L’invisibilità del re e la visibilità della dinastia).”

Portraying continuity of succession from the beginning was crucial, whilst enumerating all the members of the dynasty from its origins, observed in the royal palaces of Castile, France, and Aragon between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Royal speeches, chancery documents, chronicles, the overall care of archives and libraries, all show this same memorial policy. Memory was deeply embedded in strategies for promoting late-medieval monarchies. Assuming one could present longevity in the transmission of values and successes, genealogical and dynastic memory became essential for the legitimacy of power. This was explicit in the kingdom of Leon, where “the memory of the ancestors acquires a fundamental role in the process of creating the image of the king and his power.”

Sometimes...
There was legitimate doubt, allowing room for ambiguity, such as with Crown of Aragon and Peter the Great, who died in 1285 in dispute with the Holy See and excommunicated.\textsuperscript{187} We have seen how memorialistic narratives could link to powerful or mythical origins\textsuperscript{188} but were adapted to each case.\textsuperscript{189} By the Late Middle Ages chronicles subsumed these dynastic narratives into what has accurately become known as the "memory of the kings (memòria dels reis)."\textsuperscript{190} It was no accident that this all took shape with the ongoing development of centralized administrations\textsuperscript{191} that generated and looked after corresponding royal or governmental archives.\textsuperscript{192} The memory of the dynasty consolidated sovereign power.

Royal pantheons were also part of this strategy. In the mid-fourteenth century in the Crown of Aragon, King Peter the Ceremonious began a policy of locating and dignifying the tombs of all his predecessors. He respected the place chosen for burial by each of his predecessors but wanted those around him and successors to share one royal pantheon in the Cistercian monastery of Poblet. This reflected a belief that they would resurrect together on the day of judgement: "we and our sons, who in a similar way have chosen our tombs, so that, on judgement day, we will be resurrected together with the said kings, our predecessors."\textsuperscript{193} The choice of monasteries called on to host royal pantheons had to demonstrate they were capable of developing adequate liturgical ceremonies for eternal salvation and, at the same time, serve as a bridge between legitimizing the past, presenting current glories, and projecting the future. We see just this at the start of the twelfth century when Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile adopted the Cluniac monastery of Sahagun as a royal pantheon.\textsuperscript{194}

Noble families showed the same concerns as royal lineages; first, the concern to depict a complete course from the family's origins through to eternal salvation. Resurrection held a central position in late-medieval religion,\textsuperscript{195} and was well represented in


\textsuperscript{188} Luís Krus, \textit{A construção do passado medieval} (Lisbon, 2011), 182–83.


\textsuperscript{190} Stefano Maria Cingolani, \textit{La memòria dels reis. Les quatre grans Cròniques} (Barcelona, 2007).

\textsuperscript{191} Bernard Guenée, \textit{Occidente durante los siglos XIV y XV. Los Estados} (Barcelona, 1973), 103–217.


\textsuperscript{193} "Nos e nostres fills qui semblament hi havem elegides nostres sepultures, per ço que ensemps resucitem ab los dits reys nostres predecessors al dia del juhí." Cited from Antoni Rubió y Lluch, \textit{Documents per l’historia de la cultura catalana mig-evil}, 2 vols. (Barcelona, 1908), 1:300.

\textsuperscript{194} José Luis Senra, "En torno a un espacio de evocación: las ‘Res gesta domini Adefonsi’ y la iglesia monástica de Sahagúin," in \textit{La construcción medieval de la memoria regia}, 243–92 at 287–89.

churches, in particular with the image of the tomb-covers opening following the call of the Lord (such as at the expressive west front of Saint-Seurin’s monastery in Bordeaux). In the Catalan parish church of Sant Salvador de Vilanova de Meià, the Gothic relief reproduces this very image, explicitly, with the heraldic signs of the resurrected showing they were the members of the local seigneurial family.

The connections between noble lineages and religious centres became fixed by the late Middle Ages, reinforced by the prevailing feudal structure. A religious centre would provide the scriptorium where the story of the memory of the lineage could be assembled, the monks would guarantee the fate of the deceased from the lineage for all time, and display, as the deceased awaited resurrection, how the family’s wealth grew through the increasing wealth of the tombs. Indeed, the term memory acquired a specific meaning in monasteries in the central part of the Middle Ages, when the Gregorian Reform from the 1080s required a different relationship with patrons. Memory was dedicated to recording prayers, masses, and various forms of commemoration of the donors.

In 1382, the aforementioned King Peter the Ceremonious of Aragon commented that the same monastery where he expected all the deceased of the royal family to be gathered was wanted for the same purpose by lineages elsewhere: "there are also queens and the dukes, our daughter in law and sons, our grandsons, counts and barons, knights, citizens, and townspeople who have chosen their burial place here." In fact, the families establishing themselves as an urban oligarchy intertwined their own interests with those of the towns and cities where they had taken root since the twelfth century and we can observe similar strategies of consolidation. These families developed a comprehensive policy to gain representative functions and hold local political power, while strengthening their positions through marriage alliances.

Bourgeois families also appealed to their origins, but often through the invention of a family past. They invoked ancient origins but foregrounded their successes, both professional and familial. From the fifteenth century, they often put this in writing, generating a specific family memory in which they intentionally mixed economic affairs

198 “Aytambé de reynes e de la duquessa nostra nora e fills, néts nostres, comtes e barons, cavallers, ciutadans e homens de viles qui han aquí eletes lurs sepultures.” Cited from Rubió y Lluç, Documents per l’historia de la cultura catalana, 1:300.
with more emotive family traits,\textsuperscript{202} often beginning narratives that were then continued by later members of the same family.\textsuperscript{203} The writings show an interest in preserving surprising facts or those considered curious or transcendental,\textsuperscript{204} mixed with the desire to provide solid, deep roots showing the sustained ascent of the family. This often required manipulation of documents and historical re-creation. It is worth mentioning the case of the late-medieval Bell-lloc bourgeois family in Girona. They had no qualms about hiding their humble origins as furriers by manipulating parchments that referred to this and starting a narrative linking the origins of the family with the founders of the country, thus moving it closer to alleged Carolingian origins.\textsuperscript{205}

Taking due care of the memory also applied to the institutions the bourgeois families promoted. As municipal governments grew in statute they would create their own archives where they stored the memory of the rights they had acquired\textsuperscript{206} and so build their own identities.\textsuperscript{207} All municipal officers were involved in these games of power and took care to create and preserve their archives.\textsuperscript{208} How did they justify their status? In many cases, by invoking founding laws or charters, and using their own civic legal system to generate a communal memory.\textsuperscript{209} This created social cohesion and a sense of collective solidarity shared by the members of one entity, visible in shared activities and actions.\textsuperscript{210}

Collective acts made visible the shared urban identity. We see display of heraldic symbolism, which, in many cases, included references to historic origins.\textsuperscript{211} Towns and cities adopted narratives that involved a memory of an identity born in characters from classical and biblical mythology. Noah appears frequently, and even more so Troy, which provided a wished-for continuity back to Greece and Rome.\textsuperscript{212} The historical discourse

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{202} El llibre de la Baronia d’Eramprunyà, ed. Elena Cantarell, Mireia Comas, and Carme Muntaner (Lleida, 2011).
  \item \textsuperscript{203} Duccio Balestraci, La zappa e la retorica. Memorie familiari di un contadino toscano del Quattrocento (Florence, 1984), 155–79.
  \item \textsuperscript{205} Josep Fernández i Trabal, Una família catalana medieval. Els Bell-lloc de Girona 1267–1533 (Barcelona, 1995), 32–33.
  \item \textsuperscript{206} Pascual Martínez Sopena, “Los concejos, la tradición foral y la memoria regia en Castilla y León,” in La construcción medieval de la memoria regia, 135–68 at 158–65.
  \item \textsuperscript{207} Thérèse de Hemptinne, “Des sources pour une histoire des villes compare? Essai de typologie thématique,” in La ville médiévale en débat, ed. Amélia Aguiar Andrade and Adelaide Millán da Costa (Lisbon, 2013), 27.
  \item \textsuperscript{208} Maria Teresa Iranzo, “Memoria cívica: el archivo medieval del concejo de Huesca,” Aragón en la Edad Media 19 (2006): 259–72.
  \item \textsuperscript{209} Paolo Miceli, Derecho consuetudinario y memoria. Práctica jurídica y costumbre en Castilla y León (siglos xi–xiv) (Madrid, 2012), 178–80.
  \item \textsuperscript{210} Flocel Sabaté, El sometent a la Catalunya medieval (Barcelona, 2007), 9–25.
  \item \textsuperscript{212} Colette Beaune, “L’utilisation politique du mythe des origines troyennes en France à la fin du
of each city, incorporating its list of successes, was fundamental in creating and maintaining an awareness of identity among rising communal powers like the Italians\(^{213}\) or the Flemish.\(^{214}\) The case of the *Annales Ianuenses* is well known and illustrative. They were first written by Caffarus in the mid-twelfth century to provide an official memory for Genoa as it grew into an international power.\(^{215}\)

Collective municipal self-expression used the same philosophical and theological approaches that justified the recognition and participation of the *populus* as a legitimate power at the end of the twelfth century.\(^{216}\) A sense of nation could be built around collective identities and specific cultural traits, traced from the classical epoch into the Early and Late Middle Ages.\(^{217}\) From the thirteenth century on, legal, philosophical, and theological support grew across Europe for the concept of nations of people, identified as units with common cultural traits, especially a shared language. Naturally, there was no shortage of elites who wanted to claim to be its embodiment or representative, and sovereigns who wanted to subsume this entity.\(^{218}\) In all cases, a popular sense of a nation and its political embodiment meant establishing a specific memory also linked to founding myths.\(^{219}\)

It was not only a question of generating a self-supporting memory of one’s own origins or a memory storehouse with various elements well organized in order to be able to defend rights and incomes when and where needed. Supposedly representative entities, like municipalities or even permanent parliamentary delegations like the General Deputation of Catalonia, conspicuously fed a public memory through narratives and diaries often backed by a notary who certified the news as “kept by the witness of the present for future memory (Per memòria en esdevenidor presents per testimoni).”\(^{220}\) In Lleida, the book was headed with a classical reference to justify the need to collect the events for the common memory of the city:

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\(^{220}\) Lleida, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida A–700, fol. 1v.
In line with the sentence by Seneca and all the other moralists, all wise and prudent people should not only organize and run current affairs and provide for the future ones, but also memorize and record those of the past. Mainly those that for their rarity or singularity are worthy of record. That is why the same Seneca says that he who does not recall things from the past loses his life. And so doctors and other men of science in whose faculties knowing that the memory of mortals is fragile and expires, have wished, through important study, to arrange the knowledge of the past and put it into writing so that the things of the past do not fall into oblivion but instead, in contrast, their successors should have an assiduous record and memory.221

The record of events worthy of remembrance and lessons for current behaviour have to be extracted from the past. The municipal authorities in Lleida echoed these arguments, while noting the lack of written registers (“it would not have been possible to find in the said books or registers records of behaviour in severe cases”) and the lack of recall among younger legislators: “the said honourable councillors, who are in the prime of youth, have no memory of such deeds because they have never seen them.”222 Memory had to be living, constantly fed and fattened. So, the same people who took the decision to create a specific memorial book for the city of Lleida also demanded that their future successors continue this work for ever:

We earnestly pray and exhort all the successors in this office, when new cases happen, which are unique and worthy of memory, to include them in this book started and devoted to such things. It must be written by whoever is then secretary, because those who will succeed in government can better and more quickly manage and react to events.223

Other municipal governments, such as Barcelona, wanted the collection of the civic memory to be constantly maintained by an external body.224 In general, much of what is

221 “De les persones sàvies e prudents se pertany segons sentència de Sèneca e de tots los altres morals no solament ordenar e dispondre les coses presents e provehir a les esdevenidores, mas encara memorar e recordar-se de les passades. Maiorment d’aquelles que per llur raritat o singularitat són dignes de recordació. E per ço diu el mateix Sèneca que aquell qui no cogite res del passat pert la vida. E axí los doctors e altres homens de sciencia en quiscunes facultats sabents la memòria dels mortals esser fràgil e caduca, han volgut ab sobiran studi ordonar moltes coses ja passades e aquelles posar e redigir en scrits per ço que no fossen en oblició posades mas los llurs successors haguessin aquelles en assídua recordació e memòria.” From Lleida, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida, A–700, fol. 37r.

222 “No és estat cercat que en los dits libres o registres no s’ès trobat que per al cas urgent exemplar poguéus esfer tret”; “los dits honorables pahers qui són en la flor de llur joventut constituits no havien memòria de semblants actes com non haguessin may vista.” From Lleida, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida A–700, fol. 37r.

223 “Pregants encara e exortants afectuosament tots los qui succehiran a ells en lo dit ofici que si s’esdevindran algunes coses noves, singulars e dignes de memòria vullen aquelles fer continuar en lo present libre principiat e dedicat per a tales coses per lo qui lladonchs serà scriva per forma e manera que los qui succehiran en lo regiment mills e pus promptament puxen ordenar e expedir les occorrents e procegir en aquelles.” From Lleida, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida A–700, fol. 37v.

224 Besides the “Crònica del racional de la ciutat de Barcelona (1334–1417)” (Recull de Documents i Estudis, 1 no. 2 (1921): 113–92), in Barcelona the Manual de Novells Ardits, a diary of the municipal council, has been published in 28 vols: Manual de Novells Ardits, vulgarment apellat Dietari Antich Consell barceloni (Barcelona, 1892–1975).
gathered in this type of book has been neglected by historians and taken as merely anecdotal. On the contrary, they reflect what really mattered for groups, like municipalities, and what was considered worthy of entering into memory. They tend to reflect jurisdictional tensions with other powers and neighbours, thus showing the relative power of towns and cities in their regional context; ordinations and internal agreements, showing the importance of aligning the interests of the different communities and cultural minorities like the Jews; and, notably, celebrations involving the sovereign ruler usually always appear in great detail. This was done with the intention of appearing to show a confluence of interests when negotiating, at the appropriate time: “the city and our will which will always be joined to everything that will be of service to your Excellence.”

There was no shortage of comments on surprising phenomena linked to nature, particularly when they affected harvests, or showed the vulnerability of the natural landscape, allied to the fact that all such phenomena were still viewed as messages to be interpreted. Thus, capturing what they considered surprising is significant. Conflating these aspects, they tried to configure a civic memory, with the purpose of generating internal cohesion in political management; we observe this in many large municipalities at the end of the Middle Ages.

We have seen in all these examples, at all levels of society, the importance of invoking an origin consistent with one’s present interests. Rather than some ongoing narrative, memory serves to supply origins that serve as a basis from which to confront struggles for power in the present. Consequently, conflicting memories can exist in the same place and at the same time. That is why there has been talk of “memories of the classes.” Fifteenth-century Catalonia furnishes a good example, because the king and the baronial and municipal estates were each seeking preeminence, each invoking a different story about the origins of the country: the former mentions an initial concession by the Carolingian sovereign to the Count of Barcelona; the barons extolled the knights of yore, whilst linking them to the leading lineages of the day, which founded the country, expelled the Muslim invader, and prepared the way for Charlemagne; and people invoked an alleged initial pact between these knights and the native population.

225 “La ciutat y nostra voluntat la qual estarà sempre aparellada a tot lo que serà del servye de vostra Excellència.’ From Lleida, Arxiu Municipal de Lleida, A–700. fol. 153r.

226 On June 1, 1458, the diary of the General Deputation of Catalonia noted: “Thursday, first day of June, Corpus Christi day. Whale. This day, stranded on the sea-shore beyond the mouth of the Llobregat, a whale as long as a 22-oar galley. Many people thought that a great prince would soon die and, in fact, at the end of the same month, the king Alfonso of Aragon died” (Dijous, primer dies de juny. Corpus Christi. Balena. Aquest die donà a travers en lo ribatge de la mar d’allà lo cap de Llobregat una balena del llarch de una galiota de xxii banchs. Molts presumiren que no·s trigaria a gayre que morria algún gran príncipe e, de fet, a la fi d’aquest mes, morí lo rey Alfonso d’Aragó). Cited from Dietari de la Generaltiat de Catalunya, ed. Josep Maria Sans Travé, 5 vols. (Barcelona, 1994), 1:142.

prefiguring the agreement between barons and burghers. All the participants in the struggle for late-medieval power were backed by their own memory.

At Sardinia, during a period of calm in the second half of the fifteenth century, each political level wrote its own historical narrative, generating contemporary histories of the island from different standpoints, royal, baronial, and municipal. So, we can talk about a clash of memories. When Patrizia Sardina analyzed power conflicts in the Sicilian city of Agrigento between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, she asserted that it was a "maze of memory" (labirinto della memoria). A confrontation can try to eliminate the opponent’s memory directly: the Castilian royal chronicler Diego Enríquez del Castillo explained that the rebels not only imprisoned him, but also seized his writings, with the clear intention of damaging the royal memory:

> Despite guarantees, I was imprisoned in the city of Segovia when it fell, through treason, in the hands of disloyal knights. They stole my things and the registers, with everything I had written in them, given that memory, due to human weakness, tends to forgetfulness than recollection.

On other occasions, when a struggle for power sought agreement rather than confrontation, the memories also came into play, combining the different historical tales and memory. As David Nogales has pointed out, iconographic series of the late-medieval Castilian–Leonese monarchy did not always arise from a simple wish to exalt the royal dynasty: the royal series in cathedrals arose from an ecclesiastical desire to curry royal favour for religious interests, sometimes to generate finances needed to build a cathedral.

In another case, that of late-medieval Portugal, legitimation articulated around the memory of the noble lineages generated an "Old Book of Lineages" (Livro Velho de Linhagens) for the leading families before the end of the thirteenth century. At that moment, the monarchy was incapable of constructing a memory of the kingdom around itself for at least another century. When the Portuguese monarchy did achieve this, it was not at the expense of the old narrative of the nobles, but was adapted “in the image

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229 Anna Maria Oliva, “‘Rahó es que la Magestat nostra sapia’. La Memoria del sindaco de Cagliari Andrea Suner al sovrano,” Bullettnino dell’Istituto Italiano per il Medio Evo 105 (2003): 297–300.

230 Patrizia Sardina, Il labirinto della memoria. Clan familiari, potere regio e amministrazione cittadina ad Agrigento tra Duecento e Quattrocento (Caltanissetta, 2011).

231 "Fui preso sobre seguro en la cibdad de Segovia quando fue dada por trayción a los caballeros desleales; donde me robaron no solamente lo mio, mas los Registros con lo procesado que tenia scripto de ella, visto que la memoria, según la flaqueza humana, tiene mayor parte de la olvidanza, que sobra de la recordación." Cited from Diego Enríquez del Castillo, “Crónica del Rey Don Enrique el Cuarto,” in Crónicas de los Reyes de Castilla, ed. Cayetano Rosell, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1953), 3:100.


233 Luí­s Krus, A construção do passado medieval (Lisbon, 2011), 172–79.
and the model of noble heroes and their respective linguistic references,” as a way of adapting the historical events to the memorial necessity of each individual and group.

Thus, memory is not some superficial dressing but is deeply embedded in tensions generated as various groups assert their hold on or claim to power. Indeed, events converted into memory largely reflect present conflicts. Moreover, the memories of one’s lineage guide decision-making, so they serve as worthy, successful precedents to sustain the dynasty or lineage going forward, in a clear adaptation of the classical “imitation of the customs of the ancestors” (imitatio morum parentum).

In 1357, King Peter the Ceremonious explained to his uncle, Prince Peter, how, facing the Castilian invasion, he brought to mind numerous actions by his predecessors, remarking that in the present, decisions should be based on lessons from the past:

Firstly, starting with King Peter, you know he often placed himself in danger, and that is why he was feared and defended himself from his enemies. Then, you know about King Alfonso, who with few armed companies prepared to fight the king of Castile, who had invaded his kingdom, and then the king of Mallorca, who with three others had invaded his kingdom. Then King James, your father, you know that when he was in Murcia, which had been seized from the king of Castile, and he went there and he had to organize in all his kingdom so that everyone went, at the same time as he communicated to the Castilian king that he had surprised him and that he did not count on his people, but that if he waited for him, he would take up the fight. Also you should know that the king our father, when the Moors went to Guardamar, and another time went to Elche, he did not wait at all and went to fight them. You know also the advice you gave us when James of Mallorca came to Conflent: that we did not allow any king to oppress our land because we could properly prevent it.
The sovereign knew the history of his own dynasty, and took decisions influenced by his recollection of the dynastic past. You could say that history was master, with royal libraries taking care to stock history books, and sovereigns like that of the Aragonese flaunting their reading and knowledge.\textsuperscript{239} It was a question of remembering past events to act correctly in the present and not repeat errors. It had been precisely Cicero’s intention when he addressed the Roman citizens, reminding them of the evils of past history, while appealing for these to be retained in the memory: “surely you have them in the memory (nam profecto memoria tenetis).”\textsuperscript{240}

\textbf{The Guided Memory}

Recording was accepted by everyone as a necessary means of formulating lessons from the past to guide the future. Anyone in power in medieval society had reasons to retain and invoke the memory, either to brandish it in specific disputes or to display a glory that should help in future struggles. It forms a written tradition on which to base both the invocation of a past with which one is supposedly linked and convert successes in the present into guidelines for the future. A duty not to forget was in fact a stipulation for the future. The Benedictine Pierre Boutier, accompanying the Frenchmen Jean de Béthencourt and Gadifer de La Salle on their expedition to the Canary Islands in 1402–1404, experienced this intensely. While accepting the duty to memorize, he wrote it all down, as in this explanation for why he wrote \textit{Le Canarien}:

\begin{quote}
Because in the past it was customary to write down the military exploits that princes and conquerors used to perform, as found in old tales, we want to mention here the deeds undertaken by Gadifer de La Salle and Béthencourt, knights who are native of the kingdom and France.\textsuperscript{241}
\end{quote}

The memory of ancestors never has a simple anecdotal function; it always serves a purpose for the present and has a desired effect for future generations. The Florentine ambassador, Francesco Guicciardini, indicated this in the words with which he began his \textit{Memorie di famiglia}:

\begin{quote}
Having news of one’s elders, especially if they have been brave, good, and honourable citizens, is not only useful for descendants but also a continuous stimulus to behave in a way that these praises are not a reproach. For this reason I prepared to write a memory about the qualities of our progenitors, not only for my own records but also for these who have yet to come, and, doing so not for pomp but its utility, telling the truth of what we are coming to know, including failures and errors, so that he who reads it is encouraged not only to imitate the virtue, which do exist, but also to know to shun the vices.\textsuperscript{242}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{239} Sabaté, “L’invisibilità del re e la visibilità della dinastia,” 44–50.
\textsuperscript{240} Cited from Cic. Catil. 3.19 (Cicero, \textit{Cataline Orations 3 / Oratio in Catilinam Tertia ad Populum}, 19).
\textsuperscript{241} “Porque antaño se acostumbraba poner por escrito las hazañas militares que los príncipes y los conquistadores solían realizar, tal como se encuentra en las antiguas historias, nosotros queremos referir aquí la empresa que han acometido Gadifer de La Salle y Béthencourt, caballeros naturales del reino e Francia.” Cited from Eduardo Aznar, Dolores Corbella, Berta Pico and Antonio Tejera, \textit{Le Canarien. Retratos de dos mundos}, 2 vols. (La Laguna, 2007), 1:79.
\textsuperscript{242} “L’avere notizia de’ maggiori suoi e massime quando e’ sono stati valenti, buoni ed onorati
We see a society surrounded by historical references that appealed to different memories, but all part of a common social destiny. It was not very different from what occurred in the Roman era, as we can see from Cicero’s testimony. He shows Roman citizens surrounded by a portrayal of both divine references—“simulation of the gods” (simulacra deorum)—and earlier civic models—“statues of ancient people” (statuae veterum hominum)—without forgetting their origins: “he who founded this city, Romulus, who we can contemplate in the Capitol when he was a boy and suckling from teats of the nature of the wolf.”

The permanent presence of the memory means sharing not only remembered facts but also their interpretation: in other words, a shared political and cultural community. References to deceased members of the royal family always include their clare memoriae or eximie memorie. This is not mere protocol: if the sovereign fell into disgrace after death, his memory would no longer be invoked in the most respectful and highest tones. For example, we find this in Aragon in royal documentation referring to James III after he ceased to be king of Mallorca or, in the fifteenth century, about Peter “IV” when he failed in his attempt at the throne during the Catalan Civil War. The record that would remain became negative, as Peter the Ceremonious wrote about his son-in-law and opponent on Mallorca: “James of Mallorca did many evil and treacherous things against us, so many that I cannot mention them all.” The memory, always alive, adapted to changing political circumstance. The same happened in Portugal with the narrative around King Sancho II, finally removed from power as a “rex inutilis.”

In short, memory is guided. It can be directed and, so, manipulated, even created. Ramon Llull recognized this: the memory is composed of what is gathered from the surroundings and, so, can accept as truth ideas that have not been duly checked or confirmed:

Memory is truth, in other words, it records real events, and when it cannot recall events of truth it enters into a contrariety, one that affects the three basic branches: the vegeta-

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243 "Ille qui hanc urbem condidit, Romulus, quem inauratum in Capitolio parvum atque lactentem uberibus lupinus inhiantem fuisse." Cited from Cic. Catil. 3.19.


tive, the sensitive and the imaginative, all of which affect the memory, and so sometimes it believes it recalls the truth and in reality it is the contrary.\textsuperscript{247}

We have seen in this introduction how memory is essential to humanity and provides the necessary building blocks for both individual and collective identity. A close link also exists between memory and power in various aspects. Memory, the root of discourses of personal affirmation, social cohesion, and political reference, can be exposed to the weaknesses of the physical memory, political interests, and the wider environment. But memory can easily obfuscate and bear greater or lesser self-awareness, through fiction\textsuperscript{248} or, at least, carry a bias, given that memory, in contrast with history, is not based so much on knowledge of the past as a specific selection or even reworking of this past.\textsuperscript{249}

Memory plays a central position in the construction of identity, inspiring us to explore the ideology that aims to guide memory.

\textsuperscript{247} “Memoria est de ueritate, idcirco recolit uera, et cum uera recolere non potest, contrariatur et contrarietas, quae est inter brancas elementatuae, vegetatuae, sensitiuae et imaginatiae, cum quibus ipsa memoria participat; eti ideo saepius credit uera recolere, et recolit in contrarium.” Cited from Lullus, \textit{Arbor Scientiae}, 1:203.

\textsuperscript{248} Néstor A. Braunstein, \textit{La memoria, la inventora} (Mexico City, 2008), 208–09; Peter A. Levine, \textit{Trauma and Memory. Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past} (Berkeley, 2015), 15–50.