

Death and the Fraternity. A Short Study on the Dead in Late Medieval Confraternities¹

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Since the publication of Philippe Ariès' ground-breaking *The Hour of our Death*,² historians of confraternities have largely followed his lead and treated confraternities as a "guarantee of eternity." Later studies of confraternities echo Ariès' words: "Of all the work of mercy, the service for the dead became the main purpose of the confraternities ... the confraternities ... provided assurance regarding the afterlife. The dead were assured of the prayers of their confreres ... after burial, the confraternity continued the services and prayers that the church council or monasteries were suspected of neglecting or forgetting."³ We see Ariès' influence in Coulet's "the union between living and dead that the confraternity built and preserved is evident in the great change in religious sensibility found in the later Middle Ages,"⁴ and again in Jacques Chiffolleau's "the statutes show that the confraternity functioned as a family. And because the confraternity was a substitute family, it played a very important role in the preparation for death, funerary rituals and suffrages for the dead ... Rejection for non-observance of the statutes was the only form of confraternal exclusion, since death itself could not have untied the links that bound confreres ... in the mind of medieval men, the imaginary family assembled the dead and the living of each lineage, and confraternities considered that they (the dead) would always be part of the association."⁵ Thus, be it based on a study of confraternal statutes or individual wills, historians have often defined confraternities as extended surrogate families, regrouping the living and the dead under their parentage. According to these scholars, death never unbound confraternal ties. Synthesizing most of the research on French medieval confraternities, Catherine Vincent in her recent *Les*

1 This short essay is part of a larger study entitled "Forever After. The Dead in the Avignonese Confraternity of Notre Dame la Majour (1329–1381)."

2 Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death* (New York: Knopf, 1981). Originally published as *L'homme devant la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).

3 Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, 185.

4 N. Coulet, "Le mouvement confraternel en Provence et dans le Comtat Venaissin au Moyen Age" in *Le mouvement confraternel au Moyen Age. France, Italie, Suisse* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1987), 108, my translation.

5 Jacques Chiffolleau, "Les confréries, la mort et la religion en Comtat Venaissin à la fin du moyen age," *MEFRM* 91 (1979): 811, 814, my translation. Chiffolleau discusses at length the roles of southern French medieval confraternities in "Entre le religieux et le politique: les confréries du Saint-Esprit en Provence et en Comtat Venaissin à la fin du moyen age" in *Le mouvement confraternel au Moyen Age. France, Italie, Suisse* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1987), 9-40 and *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la region d'Avignon à la fin du moyen age (vers 1320-vers 1480)* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1980), 266–287.

confréries médiévales dans le royaume de France locates the training and supervision (*l'encadrement*) of death as the essential confraternal charitable activity.⁶

The aim of this short essay is to investigate the remembrance and commemoration of the dead in European confraternities during the late Middle Ages. I will use the Avignonesse confraternity of Notre Dame la Majour as a case study.⁷ Joining Notre Dame la Majour offered full benefits, especially after death. Composed of some thirty chapters, the association's statutes concern themselves with the dead on six occasions: (1) On the first Sunday of each month the association celebrated a high mass in honour of the Virgin; the following day a mass honoured the dead. All brothers had to participate and recite thirteen "Our Fathers" and thirteen "Hail Marys." (2) The confraternity owned six torches to be used as follows: four were lit at mass during the elevation of the host and during the funeral of a brother (in this instance the corpse was wrapped in a new confraternal shroud). The two other torches were lit at mass during the taking of the host and during the funeral of a brother's relative (in this case, the corpse was wrapped in an old confraternal shroud). (3) When a brother died in Avignon, masters and brothers carried four lit torches in procession from the deceased's house to his church. There followed the celebration of a High Mass for the Dead. Each brother subsequently ordered the celebration of additional masses for the dead (the timing of these masses is not specified) and recited thirteen "Our Fathers" and thirteen "Hail Marys." After the funeral all brothers were to leave the church and return to the deceased's house. (4) When a brother died outside Avignon and the administrators were aware of his death, the association followed similar liturgical rituals. (5) The confraternity's image of the "Virgin with Angels" was put on the altar when a brother was buried in the Augustine convent. (6) The association paid for the celebration of two daily masses, one in honour of the Virgin and one for the soul of deceased brothers. Each brother had to recite three "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" daily.⁸

The association nevertheless set limits to its benefits. The living would ritually remember the dead only when their dues had been paid within the three years (for those living in Avignon) or five years (for those living abroad) prior to their death. If a member's payments lapsed for more than five years, the confraternity eschewed all responsibility for the departed soul. And, to symbolize the

6 Catherine Vincent, *Les confréries médiévales dans le royaume de France* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1994), 77–78.

7 This confraternity is discussed by P. Pansier in "Les confréries d'Avignon au XIV^e siècle," *Annales d'Avignon et du Comtat Venaissin* 20 (1934), 34–43; B. Guillemain, *La cour pontificale d'Avignon (1309–1376). Etude d'une société* (Paris: Editions E. De Boccard, 1966), 596–605; Joëlle Rollo-Koster, "The People of Curial Avignon. A Critical Edition of the *Liber Divisionis* and the lists of Matriculation of the Confraternity of Notre Dame la Majour" (Ph.D. Dissertation: SUNY Binghamton, 1992), 102–186.

8 Chapters 4, 15, 16, 17, 20, and 21 of the Statutes in Pansier, "Les confréries d'Avignon," 37, 39–40.

exclusion from the confraternal family, the association erased his name from the book of matriculants (*abradatur libro nominum confratrum*).⁹

It was not unknown for various confraternities to expel the living, or the dead, from their ranks. Nicholas Terpstra's research on Bologna for the fifteenth and sixteenth century shows expulsion rates ranging from 16% to 53% over a time span ranging from 30 to over 100 years. For comparison, Terpstra cites the research of John Henderson on a Trecento company in Florence that annually expelled 16% of its members.¹⁰ Ronald Weissman's study on Florentine confraternities shows a yearly loss of membership close to 6%.¹¹ James Banker's research on the confraternities of the Italian town of San Sepolcro indicates that over a 40-year period nearly half of those who had entered the confraternity of San Bartolomeo died without commemoration.¹²

John Henderson's research on Florentine flagellants, most specifically on the company Gesù Pellegrino in the years 1334–1369, yields an expulsion rate of which 56% had no reason offered. In 4.8% of the cases mortal sins resulted in expulsion, and various offenses against the company counted for another 39% of the cases. Most importantly, non-payment of subscription dues, listed as one of the offenses against the company, never led to expulsion from the association but, in 5% of the cases between 1365 and 1369, to punishments.¹³

In general, these Italian confraternities expelled members who had violated their statutes through non-attendance and insubordination, those who had committed moral lapses, those who were negligent, and, in some cases, for no clear reason.¹⁴ None seems to have eliminated from their ranks members who had died in good standing vis à vis the association.

The removal of debtors from confraternal registers was not peculiar to Avignon. A confraternity in Càceres eliminated members who did not pay their

9 Among the statutes of the confraternity is a specific paragraph entitled *Quod in confraternitate sint tres libri* that sheds some light on the purpose of such books of matriculants: "Statutum est quod in dicta confraternitate sint tres libri: quorum unum teneat notarius, secundum librum teneat camerarius; in quibus duobus libris scribantur introitus et expense confraternitatis: tertius vero liber sit de pergamenio in quo scripta omnia nomina confratrum vivorum et mortuorum," op. cit., 38.

10 Nicholas Terpstra, "Death and Dying in Renaissance Confraternities," in *Crossing the Boundaries. Christian Piety and Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, ed. K. Eisenbichler (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991), 185, 194.

11 Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 126.

12 James Banker, *Death in the Community. Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), 64.

13 John S. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 136.

14 Terpstra, "Death and Dying," 185, 198 n. 16; Banker, *Death in the Community*, 64; Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 126, 128.

finer; the confraternity of Saint Denis withdrew from its ranks the names of all delinquents until their penance; in Paris, the confraternity of stevedores at the church of Saint Eustache expelled debtors; closer in spirit to Notre Dame la Majour, the confraternity of the merchants *d'outre mer* of Vitré expelled debtors after three consecutive years of non-payments.¹⁵ The elimination of a delinquent member's name from a company's books also appears in Renaissance Bologna, and in two seventeenth-century confraternities in Marseilles.¹⁶

As previously seen, Notre Dame la Majour symbolized banishment from its corporate body by erasing the names from the matriculation list. This evidence supports the suggestion that writing the names of the living and the dead, and sometimes erasing them, was part of the administrative if not liturgical duties of a confraternity. It is also essential to question the extent to which lay confraternities wrote down the names of their dead. The question is difficult to answer. The authoritative works of J.L. Lemaître and N. Huyghebaert establish a nomenclature of these lists of the names of the dead. Huyghebaert distinguishes between a necrology (a liturgical book) and an obituary (a non-liturgical book). For Lemaître, these distinctions are too formal. For one, the terms obituary and necrology are not medieval words. The Middle Ages used words like *regula* (confraternities were, after all, of monastic origins), *martyrologium*, or *liber*, to describe a calendar-type book in which one inscribed the names of the dead. For Lemaître the mode of inscription, and not liturgical usage, separates the two types of book. A necrology records, on the known day of their death, members of the community who had been admitted to the fraternity of prayers (usually after an important gift). An obituary records the date of celebration of an anniversary paid by a bequest. Both books require three elements: a calendar, names of the dead, and anniversary foundations.¹⁷

Huyghebaert assigns to the various *libri* (*vitae*, *memoriales*, *confraternitatum*) and necrologies a purely liturgical dimension. During the Carolingian period, a *liber vitae* registered the names of the living and the dead remembered during mass. The names were read by priests or deacons during the offertory or during the first *memento* (the first of two prayers, one for the living and one for the dead, in the canon of the mass). In that case, "reading" could simply take the form of setting the book on the altar.¹⁸ By the end of the tenth century necrologies

15 Vincent, *Les confréries médiévales*, 139, 143, 151.

16 Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 111 n. 42; R. Allier, *La compagnie du Très-Saint-Sacrement de l'autel à Marseille* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1909), 20; Andrew Barnes, *The Social Dimension of Piety. Associative Life and Devotional Change in the Penitent Confraternities of Marseilles (1499-1792)* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 131 (pénitents Carmélins).

17 J.L. Lemaître, *Les documents nécrologiques* (Turnhout: Brépols, 1985), 11, 35 (this volume updated by Lemaître was originally published by Huyghebaert); J.L. Lemaître, *Répertoire des documents nécrologiques français* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1980), 1:5-25.

18 Lemaître, *Les documents nécrologiques*, 13-14. The order of the canon of the mass is

replaced the various *libri* (note that Lemaître refutes this idea). Even though Huyghebaert allocates different functions to necrologies (liturgical, for they were read during mass) and obituaries (a reminder to the officiant to celebrate an anniversary), he insists on their imminent role in the commemoration of the dead (granting that the terminology can be tricky).¹⁹

Megan McLaughlin's study on prayers for the dead in early medieval France discusses at length the ritual use of the various medieval liturgical name-lists and their significance in the commemoration of the dead. Regardless of the semantic and historical differences between, for example, a *liber memorialis* and a necrology, their main purpose remained unchanged, that is, they linked the dead with the living. Naming a dead person was tantamount to bringing him or her to the presence of the namer, in most cases the person offering suffrages.²⁰

It should be noted that, in general, confraternal devotions show a growing concern for the souls in Purgatory.²¹ The belief in Purgatory created a dialogue between the souls of the dead expiating their faults and the living now praying to hasten the departed souls' expiation time. One can envision that, just like a monastic *liber memorialis* or a necrology, a confraternal "book of names" was placed on the altar during mass "to serve as concrete symbol of the liturgical community on earth and ... in heaven."²² Thus, the list of members could be described as the "memory" of the brotherhood, linking past with present affiliates in an endless association.

found in Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for the Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 90.

19 Lemaître, *Les documents nécrologiques*, 33-34. J. Avril, "La paroisse médiévale et la prière pour les morts" in *L'église et la mémoire des morts dans la France médiévale*, ed. J.L. Lemaître, (Paris: Etude Augustiniennes, 1986), 60, discusses the pre-mortem admission of lay people into monastic orders (*professio ad succurrendum*). Entering the monastic fraternity of prayers permitted those newly admitted members to be inscribed in a necrology. Avril speculates that the necrology was read daily, during the chapter office. In a fascinating discussion at the end of the volume Dom Jacques Dubois questions the procedure of inscribing names in necrologies knowing full well that they would not be recited on the days of their anniversaries. Various scholars agree with Dubois on the quick removal from circulation of the monastic rolls of the dead. Lemaître points out that while the ones funding anniversaries did so for spiritual benefit (to shorten their stay in purgatory), the religious institutions involved in officiating those bequests were more interested in the measures of wine they would bring to their house than in the effectiveness of their prayers for a layman they did not know. *Ibid.*, 119, 124-125.

20 M. McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayers for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 90-101. McLaughlin relies on the work of German historians focusing on *memoria*, for example, Karl Schmid, Joachim Wollasch, and Otto Gerhard Oexle.

21 See for example, Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 105; Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 155, 163-164.

22 According to McLaughlin "the living and the dead were present among the group gathered around the altar." McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 92, 100.

Memorialization has been studied in European confraternities without clearly establishing the means of remembrance. Statutes, for example, are largely used to illustrate the fraternity between the living and the dead.²³ In some instances a "book of the dead" may increase our knowledge of the mechanics of remembrance. Usually, a lay confraternity remembered its dead on paper when the association was bound to and overseen by an ecclesiastical institution, be it a parish church, monastery, or convent.²⁴ The confraternity of the Rosary in Colmar offers a fitting example. Founded by the city's Dominicans in 1484, it assembled a large portion of the city's and the neighbouring population. Only an anniversary bequest permitted the entry of a layperson's name on the obituary of the Colmar Dominicans. The association did not keep a separate book of the dead.²⁵

The significance of name-lists did not escape the laity of the later Middle Ages. For example, fourteenth-century Avignonesse testators, lay persons for the most part, wished to benefit from the added consolation offered by the inscription of their names in monastic or cathedral *matriculae*. Most often, those testators demanded the inscription of their name on a church, monastery or convent's *matriculae* for anniversary masses in exchange for a donation.²⁶

23 For example, James Banker, *Death in the Community. Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the late Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1988); Virginia Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside. Social and Religious Changes in Cambridgeshire (1350-1558)* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1996); Andrew Barnes, *The Social Dimension of Piety. Associative Life and Devotional Change in the Penitent Confraternities of Marseilles (1499-1792)* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994); Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity. Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain (1400-1700)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Gilles Gerard Meersseman, *Ordo Fraternitatis* (Rome: Herder, 1977), 3 vols.; and, Ludovica Sebgondi, *Tre confraternite fiorentine* (Florence: Salimbeni, 1991). Vincent, *Les confréries médiévales*, 192-203, gives a "list of cited confraternities" that catalogs some 120 confraternities. The overwhelming majority uses confraternal statutes as primary sources.

24 Few lay confraternities maintained corporate "books of the dead." For example, J.L. Lemaître, *Répertoire des documents nécrologiques français* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1980), 2 vols., indicates only a few confraternal obituaries or necrologies. All had ties with an ecclesiastical establishment in order to benefit from an inscription in a chapter, monastic or conventual roll; *ibid.*, N. 612, 1348, 1395-1399, 1833, 1836, 2016, 2212, 2213, 2790, 3034-3035, 3064, 3189, 3200.

25 J.C. Schmitt, "Apostolat mendiant et société: une confrérie dominicaine à la vieille de la réforme," *Annales* 26 (1971), 83, 93, 97, 103.

26 For example, when Agnes de Beaufort in her testament bequests a house and garden to the church of Saint Didier and requests in exchange that a perpetual anniversary mass be celebrated in that church, she adds "et volo etiam et ordino quod dictum capitulum et canonici ejusdem ecclesie teneatur et promettant facere dicti anniversaria annis singulis et perpetuis temporibus ac scribere in eorum matricula," *Archives départementales de Vaucluse*, 10G14 (18 Jan. 1386). A transcription of her testament appears in L. Duhamel, "L'habitation, la famille et la sépulture de Pierre Obreri, architecte du palais des papes

Such name-lists also existed at the corporate level, as demonstrated by the presence of a "book of the living and the dead" in the confraternity of Notre Dame la Majour. But it seems that the confraternal books differed from monastic lists in their liturgical usage. Huyghebaert insists that most of the time, what is called a confraternal necrology was not read during the liturgical office but was placed instead at the beginning of the confraternal banquet, before the *miserere* or the *de profundis*.²⁷ The detailed liturgical use of the list is even more difficult to interpret when only one text (the *coutume de l'abbaye de Farfa*, third penning of Cluny customs) describes the actual reading of the name-lists, and historians are still debating if and when necrologies were read.²⁸ In any case, studies of confraternal statutes point out that the names of the dead were read during liturgical functions, for example, during the service for the dead at Lent, the weekly office of the dead, at masses (plain, commemorative and requiem), and at feasts.²⁹

Confraternal books of the dead show other original aspects, and they do not fit neatly in the categories proposed by Huyghebaert and Lemaître. In an unpublished paper presented in 1994, entitled "Variety of Account Books from the Florentine Confraternities," Ludovica Sebreondi described the lack of distinction between account books and other confraternal books.³⁰ This mixing of intentions and procedures may be applied to the books of the dead. Examples

d'Avignon," *Mémoires de l'academie de Vaucluse*, 3 (1884), 1-14. Other examples appear in various testaments: Angelus Melioris left several bequests to the church of Saint Agricola in exchange for anniversary masses with the condition that "domini canonici faciant et teneatur facere poni nomen meum in mortologio eiusdem ecclesie," *Archives départementales de Vaucluse*, 8G10 (20 Aug. 1374); Delphina Menduella went a step further than other testators: she left donations to the convent Saint Catherine in Avignon, the Franciscan, Augustinian and Carmelite monasteries of Avignon, the monastery of Fonte in Nîmes and the chapter of Notre Dame des Doms, all with the stipulation "teneant ponere nomen meum in eorum matricula"; *Archives départementales de Vaucluse*, 8G9 (7 Dec. 1399).

27 Lemaître, *Les documents nécrologiques*, 24.

28 Lemaître, *Répertoire*, 16. Regarding the debate concerning the reading of necrologies see *L'église et la mémoire des morts dans la France médiévale*, ed. J.L. Lemaître (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1986), 125-126.

29 In Italian confraternities of the sixteenth century the names of all dead brothers would be read out during the service for the dead at Lent; Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 105. In Bologna during the Renaissance "with the *libro delle morti*, members of all social conditions were sure that at least annually the living members would remember all their deceased spiritual kin by name in a special requiem mass and feast"; Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities*, 112. In 1384 Wisbech (England), the guild of St. John the Baptist ordered that the priest of the fraternity should record the names of the living and the dead "so that he might pray for both at mass and his prayers"; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 84. In Renaissance Florence the names of the deceased were recalled frequently in any commemorative mass or at the office of the dead; Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 165-166.

30 Ludovica Sebreondi, "Variety of Account Books from the Florentine Confraternities," paper presented at the International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1994.

abound. For instance, the published necrology of the *jongleurs* and *bourgeois* of Arras, entitled a necrology by its editor, does not in fact resemble a necrology. Names are listed by date along with records of payment. The editor goes as far as to question its aims. The 11,000-name list could be a membership roll, a record of bequests, or a necrology. Internal evidence demonstrates that the names represent the confraternal dead, inscribed on the year of their death.³¹ External evidence, like the marking of certain names with a cross, or the use of red ink to embellish a capital letter, corroborates this conclusion.³² Conversely, Huyghebaert treats the document as, above all, a financial register.³³ Sometimes a confraternal necrology contains the names of the living and the dead, as does, for example, the fifteenth-century confraternity of Saint Nicolas at Bapaume.³⁴ Most often, obituaries and necrologies are closer to matriculation lists than to "books of the dead." The White Brotherhood of Montfort-sur-Mer, for example, kept an obituary that lists the names of the dead but lacks dates and commemorative services.³⁵ The confraternity of Floreffe maintained a list of members onto which crosses were added. Of 156 names, 54 are marked by a cross. For Genicot, the symbol marks the confraternal dead. The membership list further adds anniversary bequests founded by certain dead members.³⁶ Given that this association insisted on prayers for the dead and paid for weekly requiem masses, it is easy to re-define its matriculae as a necrology/obituary.

Various associations combined their membership lists with a pseudo book of the dead. The *Compagnie du Très-Saint-Sacrement* in Marseilles added the word "dead" to its list of members.³⁷ Terpstra notes that in Renaissance Bologna "while confraternities' statutes required the company to maintain a *libro delle morti* separate from the running matriculation list ... most company secretaries simply annotated the existing matriculation lists using either the symbol '+' or a phrase such as 'mortus est.'"³⁸ In a society where record-keeping was tedious, a simple list of members could take the attributes of a sacred document. In medieval England, Bainbridge notes that "entry into the fellowship of gild or other society might entitle new brethren to have their names registered on a bede roll. These

31 R. Berger, *Le nécrologe de la confrérie des jongleurs et des bourgeois d'Arras (1194-1361)* (Arras: Mémoire de la commission départementale des monuments historiques du Pas-de-Calais, 1963), 30, 34–37, 47.

32 Ibid., 28.

33 Lemaître, *Les documents nécrologiques*, 24. For Huyghebaert the external aspect of confraternal "necrologies" is linked to their liturgical use, or rather their lack thereof. Since they are non-liturgical they do not need a precise calendar, thus their usual inscription of a name (in the order of death) without a date.

34 Lemaître, *Répertoire*, N. 1833.

35 J.L. Lemaître, *Répertoire des documents nécrologiques français, supplément* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1987), 33, identifies it as a kind of matriculation list.

36 L. Genicot, "Une paroisse namuroise à la fin du moyen-âge: Floreffe," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 80 (1985), 703, 705, 707, 726–730.

37 Allier, *La compagnie*, 29.

38 Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities*, 112.

documents, sometimes inadequately described as membership lists, were not drawn up primarily for administrative convenience, but so that those named would receive the prayers of their parent institutions.”³⁹ These examples leave no doubt that non-liturgical documents could still have liturgical use.

In Avignon, the “book of the living and the dead” of Notre Dame la Majour evolved as a book of living and paying members only. As in testamentary practice, where bequests assured memorialization, confraternities also functioned on a system of gift-exchange. Participation in all confraternal activities, including payments of dues, guaranteed some form of memorialization. James Banker finds a similar trend among Florentine confraternities during the fourteenth century, starting with San Frediano, which recorded the dues of those paying in the 1330s. Further, Florentine confraternities developed the habit of recording those who did not pay. For Banker this practice testifies to the growing reliance on dues as the source of finances for the confraternities; “after a period of probation, the derelict member would be expelled from the confraternity, thereby losing all his confraternal benefits.”⁴⁰

Historians of confraternities have often emphasized the role lay confraternities played in memorialization without taking into account that the means of memorialization, the various necrologies or books of the dead, might not always preserve the memory of all the dead. Further, if, as McLaughlin indicates, calling aloud the name of a deceased inscribed on a list made a person “present” at the ritual, did it mean that the disappearance of a name from a list pushed the memory of that person away? Jean-Claude Schmitt’s discussion of *memoria* in his recent *Les revenants* offers an interesting twist to McLaughlin’s argument. He sees in the *liber memorialis* and its aim—to shorten the span of time spent in purgatory—a social practice of collective memory as well as a social technique of oblivion. That is, the inscription of a name on such a list allowed one to put the dead in their place (of death) in order for the living to remember them, if by chance they did, without fear or passion.⁴¹ If we follow Schmitt and consider the various name-lists as means of social oblivion, it is probable that many confraternal books of the dead served to obliterate the memory of their members.

Confraternities performed a multiplicity of functions that were not mutually exclusive. Memberships in an “international” brotherhood was recommended to medieval businessmen. In his *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, Weissman cites the fourteenth-century Florentine Paolo da Certaldo counseling his sons that, when travelling in a foreign territory, one should always secure the friendship of the powerful of that region. This course of action provided protection and a means of integration.⁴² Further in his study Weissman, after considering the fact that exchanges with strangers were quite hazardous for Florentines,

39 Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 83.

40 Banker, *Death in the Community*, 71.

41 J.C. Schmitt, *Les revenants. Les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1994), 17–19.

42 Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 63.

defines Florentine confraternities as a vehicle for expanding personal networks and gaining access to patronage chains throughout the city.⁴³

The role confraternities played in social cohesion has long been noted, and nowhere more evidently than in late medieval England. M. Rubin describes English Corpus Christi fraternities as follows: "let us try to understand fraternities as providers of essential personal, familial, religious, economic and political services, as providing security in some essential areas of life; and let us see these activities as articulated most frequently in symbols from the language of religion."⁴⁴

Confraternities promoted an active piety which, as acts of mercy and charity (like the care of the dead) were dispensed, increased the spiritual merits of the associations and of their members. The dead were present in these associations as a symbol of things to come. The personal identification of the dead with, for example, the reading of individual names, is left unclear in many statutes and in the practice described by administrative documents. It appears, however, that this individualism is an anachronism in the definition of medieval confraternities' corporate identity.

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43 Ibid., 40, 80.

44 M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 233. Rubin emphasizes the social and political roles played by fraternities on pages 235, 239, 241; idem, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 250-259; and idem, "Religious Culture in Town and Country: Reflexions on a Great Divide" in *Church and City: 1000-1500. Essays in Honor of Christopher Brooke*, eds. D. Abulajia et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6. Examples abound of English guilds/fraternities' link to local politics and political aspirations, social cohesion, personal gain and commemoration. I am citing only a few scholars in a list that is far from exhaustive. G. Rosser, *Medieval Westminster: 1100-1540* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 281-314; idem, "Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in late Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 33 (October 1994), 430-447; idem, "Solidarités et changement social. Les fraternités urbaines anglaises à la fin du moyen-âge," *Annales E.S.C.* 5 (September-October 1993), 1127-1143; Ch. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 118-127; B.R. McRee, "Religious Gilds and Civic Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages," *Speculum* 67 (January 1992), 69-97, and "Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 32 (July 1993), 195-226.