

The Textual Self:
Autobiographical Self-Expression in
Augustine's *Confessiones*

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Linda Anne Dawn Olson
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DEAN

28 Sept 93

Dr K.Kerby-Fulton, Supervisor (Department of English)

Dr P.Smith, Supervisor (Department of Classics)

Dr L.Howard, Outside Member (Department of Hispanic and
Italian Studies)

Dr M.Vessey, External Examiner (U.B.C., Department of
English)

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University of Victoria

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Supervisors: Dr Kathryn Kerby-Fulton
Dr Peter Smith

Abstract

Augustine's *Confessiones* are a spiritual autobiography in which internal progression and self-expression are achieved through the engagement of highly textual conventions. The autobiographer records his spiritual development as an intellectual and meditative journey through various authoritative voices and texts, both true and false; his essential self is personally constructed from the building blocks provided by these texts. In expressing the individuality of the self so shaped, Augustine naturally engages the texts he has assimilated, creating an intertextual and allegorical, yet nonetheless deeply sincere means of self-expression. Augustine's *Confessiones* are an influential spiritual authority, yet they demand to be read in an intimate and meditative manner; thus Augustine's textual individuality informs both the meditative process of medieval monastic reading and writing, and the autobiographical writing which relates a similar spiritual ascension throughout the Middle Ages. This thesis traces Augustine's individual progression and intertextual expression in the *Confessiones* through the three critical stages of *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio*, and views Augustine's text as unified precisely by the expression of his textual individuality, by, that is, its intensely autobiographical vein. Engaging the monastic meditative triad and calling upon the responses inherent in medieval iconography, the thesis hopes to reveal a new perspective from which to view the learned conception of spiritual individuality generated by Augustine's *Confessiones* in the Middle Ages.

Examiners:

[REDACTED]
Dr K. Kerby-Fulton, Supervisor (Department of English)

[REDACTED]
Dr P. Smith, Supervisor (Department of Classics)

[REDACTED]
Dr L. Howard, Outside Member (Department of Hispanic and Italian Studies)

[REDACTED]
Dr M. Vessey, External Examiner (U.B.C., Department of English)

Table of Contents

Title.	i
Abstract.	ii
Table of Contents.	iii
List of Figures.	iv
Acknowledgements.	vi
Dedication	vii
Introduction:	
The Textuality of Augustine's <i>Confessiones</i> and Medieval Monastic Reading.	1
Chapter One:	
<i>Lectio</i> : Early Education and the Penetration of Textuality.	36
Chapter Two:	
<i>Meditatio</i> : Ambrose, Spiritual Reading and Self-Knowledge.	73
Chapter Three:	
<i>Compositio</i> : Personal Reading and Textual Conversion.	111
Conclusion:	
The Personal Engagement of Spiritual Textuality.	151
Bibliography.	166
Appendix I.	175

List of Figures

- Figure 1:** "Historiated 'M' of the Two Augustines" from the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 253 *Confessiones*, eleventh century, folio 1^r. (From Courcelle, *Recherches*, Plate 16.)
- Figure 2:** "Augustine Meditating by Himself" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 28. (From Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 71.)
- Figure 3:** "Augustine Discovers Himself in the *Regio Dissimilitudinis*" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 29. (From Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 73.)
- Figure 4:** "Augustine's Conversion and Disclosure to Alypius" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 33. (From Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 81.)
- Figure 5:** "Monnica's Prayer and Prophetic Dream" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 14. (From Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 51.)
- Figure 6:** "Monnica Prays and Readmits Augustine to her Table and Conversation" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 13. (From Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 49.)
- Figure 7:** "Augustine's Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion" from a relief on the tomb of Saint Augustine, circa 1380. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 5.)
- Figure 8:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting, circa 1380. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 6.)
- Figure 9:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting by Fra Angelico, circa 1425-1430. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 8.)

- Figure 10:** "Augustine's Experience with Ambrose, Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion" from a miniature, circa 1433. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 9.)
- Figure 11:** "Augustine's Conversion and Toothache" from a drawing by Benozzo Gozzoli, circa 1460. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 12.)
- Figure 12:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli, 1464-1465. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 13.)
- Figure 13:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a miniature, end of the fifteenth century. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 16.)
- Figure 14:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting, circa 1490. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 19.)
- Figure 15:** "Augustine in the *Regio Dissimilitudinis*" from a miniature, fifteenth century. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 8^{bis}.)
- Figure 16:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a stained glass window, circa 1300-1310. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 2.)
- Figure 17:** "Augustine's Experience with Ambrose, Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion" from a fresco by Guariento, 1338. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 3.)
- Figure 18:** "Augustine's Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion" from a fresco by Ottaviano Nelli, circa 1400. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 7.)
- Figure 19:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a miniature by Zanobi Strozzi, middle of the fifteenth century. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 10.)
- Figure 20:** "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting, circa 1460. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 11.)
- Figure 21:** "Augustine and Alypius in the Garden Meditating on Hermits" from a panel painting, circa 1490. (From Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Plate 18.)

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For Bob

*nam ego sentio animam meam
et animam illius
unam esse animam in duobus corporibus*

Introduction:
The Textuality of Augustine's *Confessiones*
and Medieval Monastic Reading

As they await their sailing to Africa, the newly baptized Augustine and his faithful mother "lean" (*incumbere*) upon a window sill overlooking a "garden" ("hortus") in Ostia and engage in an intimate conversation of spiritual ascension, seeking to experience the eternal life enjoyed by the saints.¹ Their "discourse" ("sermo") leads them "step by step" ("gradatim") through corporeal reality,

and still we were ascending by reflecting more inwardly and by speaking and by wondering at your works, and we came into our own minds and we transcended them, so that we might touch the region of unfailing abundance, from where you feed Israel into eternity with truth [as] food.
(IX.10)²

Linguistic rumination of God's eternal nourishment is achieved by Augustine and Monica for the briefest moment of time, a moment of spiritual penetration held static by the immediacy of the present tense, which nonetheless slides quickly into past narrative:

while we speak and gape after that [eternal wisdom], we touch it moderately with the whole effort of the heart; and we sighed and we left the first-fruits of the spirit fastened there and we returned to the noise of our mouth, where a word is both begun and ended. And what [is]

¹ Aurelius Augustinus, *Confessiones* IX.10. All citations from the *Confessiones* are from Lucas Verheijen, ed., *Sancti Augustini: Confessionum Libri XIII*, Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina, vol. 27 (Turnhout: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1981); I have unfortunately not been able to benefit from the new Oxford University Press edition of the *Confessiones* edited by J.J.O'Donnell. Direct citations from Augustine's Latin in the *Confessiones* and other works are indicated with quotation marks (italics and parentheses within these Latin citations are the editor's; square brackets enclose my own additions); references to Augustine's Latin which are not direct citations are italicized and are not enclosed in quotation marks; translations of Augustine's and indeed all Latin texts are my own, unless otherwise indicated, and are enclosed in quotation marks.

² "Et adhuc ascendebamus interius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua et uenimus in mentes nostras et transcendimus eas, ut attingeremus regionem ubertatis indeficientis, ubi pascis Israel in aeternum ueritate pabulo."

similar to your word, our Lord, in itself remaining without age and renewing all things? (IX.10)³

It is undoubtedly through their reflective conversation that Augustine and Monnica achieve this brief glimpse of the eternal Word, yet it is also because of the necessarily temporal and limited nature of their human speech that they attain only a short glimpse and return immediately to the past tense of temporal reality. They conclude that they would permanently experience the eternal "joy" ("gaudium") of God toward which they strive only when all the many voices which exist in creation, when "every tongue and every sign" ("omnis lingua et omne signum"), are silenced. Only when all the texts which, as we shall see, have gradually led Augustine to a spiritual knowledge of God and self are silenced, may God

himself speak alone, not through them, but through himself, so that we may hear his Word, not through the tongue of flesh and not through the voice of an angel and not through the sound of a cloud and not through the riddle of a similitude, but himself. (IX.10)⁴

Thus, to achieve eternal union with God, even the converted Christian individual must be beyond human textuality⁵ and necessarily beyond life in this linguistic world.

Augustine's notions of the worldly limitations of both spoken and written language have led some scholars to emphasize the inadequacies of language and the way in which the human need for textuality hinders rather than assists his

³ "Dum loquimur et inhiamus illi, attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis; et suspirauimus et reliquimus ibi religatas primitias spiritus et remeauimus ad strepitum oris nostri, ubi uerbum et incipitur et finitur. Et quid simile uerbo tuo, domino nostro, in se permanenti sine uetustate atque innouanti omnia?"

⁴ "Loquatur ipse solus non per ea, sed per se ipsum, ut audiamus uerbum eius, non per linguam carnis neque per uocem angeli nec per sonitum nubis nec per aenigma similitudinis, sed ipsum."

⁵ As will become clear in the course of this Introduction, the concept of textuality as it is here used refers in a general sense to thoughts woven most often in a linguistic medium, and includes both spoken and written discourse; it may also include thoughts communicated through images and actions.

spiritual progression.⁶ Margaret Ferguson, for instance, while acknowledging the role of the Incarnation in uniting God's Word and human words, discusses Augustine's perspective of language primarily in relation to the "region of dissimilitude" (*regio dissimilitudinis*), which she sees as a metaphor for linguistic human existence exiled in time from the eternal Word of God.⁷ This is indeed true for Augustine as a youth, and the *Confessiones* passage she quotes in support of "the inadequacy of all temporal utterance"⁸ undoubtedly emphasizes the difference between words and the Word:

the outer ear announced these words of yours made for time to the prudent mind, whose inner ear is stationed at your eternal Word. But that [inner ear] compared these temporally sounding words with your eternal Word in silence and said: "It is far different, far, far different. These words are far beneath me, and are not, because they flee and pass by: but the Word of my God remains above me forever. (XI.6)⁹

It also emphasizes, however, the way in which worldly words properly used can lead to a greater understanding of the eternal Word, a positive textual process exemplified by the meditative conversation of Augustine and Monnica, and alluded

⁶ Such an emphasis tends to bring about misleading statements like that of Eugene Vance, "Augustine's *Confessions* and the Grammar of Selfhood," *Genre* 6 (1973):23, who claims that "this famous vision takes the form of a silent, interior dialogue with God;" see also Vance, "Augustine's *Confessions* and the Poetics of the Law," in *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages*, by Vance (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 24. Augustine's language, however, ("conloquebamur," "sermo," "loquendo," "loquimur," "dicebamus," etc.) clearly indicates that the ascent he experiences at least begins in the intimate though external speech he shares with his mother, and continues to engage words suggestive of literal speech even after the process might be said to have moved within.

⁷ Margaret Ferguson, "Saint Augustine's Region of Unlikeness: The Crossing of Exile and Language," *Georgia Review* 29B (1975):842-864.

⁸ Ferguson, "Crossing of Exile and Language," 861.

⁹ "Haec ad tempus facta uerba tua nuntiauit auris exterior menti prudenti, cuius auris interior posita est ad aeternum uerbum tuum. At illa comparauit haec uerba temporaliter sonantia cum aeterno in silentio uerbo tuo et dixit: 'Aliud est longe, longe aliud est. Haec longe infra me sunt nec sunt, quia fugiunt et praetereunt: uerbum autem dei mei supra me manet in aeternum.'" Augustine is discussing the words of acknowledgement and praise spoken by God about his Son in Matthew 3:17 and 17:5.

to by Augustine when he admits that he is one of those "who write by progressing, and progress by writing."¹⁰ For Augustine, in both the linguistic exile of the young rhetorician and the textual harmony of the mature autobiographer, it is the way in which words and the texts woven from them are used which determines the value and function of language "as a medium of truth,"¹¹ and makes language as limited or as limitless as the intellectual, affective and spiritual dimensions of the individual who receives or employs it. In the Augustinian ideal represented by the Ostia experience, "it is through words that we move from verbal to transverbal knowledge of God;"¹² little wonder, then, that it is through the written words of his *Confessiones*,¹³ employed both literally and metaphorically, and often through words borrowed from the most authoritative physical manifestation of God's eternal Word in the world, the Holy Scriptures,¹⁴ that Augustine expresses not only his

¹⁰ *Epistola* 143: "qui proficiendo scribunt, et scribendo proficiunt." The citation is taken from D.A.B.Caillau, ed., *Sancti Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi: Opera Omnia*, vol. 40 (Paris: Paul Mellier, 1842).

¹¹ Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, rev. edn. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 25.

¹² Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 34.

¹³ While mentioning the particularly textual nature of the talent through which Augustine communicates with his own and future generations, it is worth recalling that those who would argue the inadequacy of language in Augustine's spiritual philosophy based upon the testimony of his written texts work from a foundation somewhat undermined by their own argument.

¹⁴ For example, in the few brief passages which I have quoted from the narrative regarding the conversation at Ostia, Augustine cites or alludes to seven different Biblical texts: Ezekiel 34:14, Psalm 79:2, Romans 8:23, Wisdom 7:27, Psalm 76:18, I Corinthians 13:12 and Genesis 1:26. All references to the Bible are to the *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969); direct citations from the Latin are indicated with quotation marks; references to the words of the Vulgate which are not direct citations are italicized and are not enclosed in quotation marks; my translations are enclosed in quotation marks. My discussions of Augustine's citations and allusions, both Biblical and classical, make extensive use of the thorough system of references found in the extensive notes of Verheijen, *Confessiones*; if I have employed an additional source, I indicate this in my notes, but the reader should always turn to the Verheijen edition first.

striking ascension through language at Ostia, but also his more gradual progress through linguistic life as rhetorician and bishop.

In the end, then, it is a matter of how one reads, or uses, Augustine's words, since words, for the rhetorician turned bishop writing the *Confessiones*, are essentially "signs for things that we think:" "written words," it is generally assumed, "are signs for spoken words, and spoken words are signs for things that we think."¹⁵ Spoken words are thus sometimes seen as a more immediate and powerful means of linguistic communication for Augustine, as when Eugene Vance writes that "enunciation [in the *Confessiones*]...is the mode of moral and prophetic truth, of *auctoritas*; the 'writing' of the Scriptures is only ulterior mediation, merely a supplement."¹⁶ The fact that the spoken word carries in the *Confessiones* an emotional immediacy, an ability to express and penetrate the inner being and thus initiate important spiritual changes in the young Augustine, makes Vance's statement particularly intriguing; yet it seems reductive to dismiss or depreciate the "authority" of the written word, and particularly of that ultimate spiritual authority, God's Scriptures, when discussing the texts of Augustine. For "there is...reason to believe that Augustine also thought of written words as signs for" the things that we think,¹⁷ and indeed, throughout the *Confessiones*, Augustine demonstrates an

¹⁵ Bruce Bubacz, *St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge: A Contemporary Analysis*, Texts and Studies in Religion 11 (New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1981), 186.

¹⁶ Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood", 8. Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982):367-414, discusses the predominantly oral/aural nature of late classical and early medieval culture. On the topic of the written and spoken word, see also Franz Bäuml, "Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Speculum* 55 (1980):237-265; M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979); and Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹⁷ Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 202-203 n.43.

intimate and deepening relationship with the written word, a relationship clearly indicated by Reason's warning regarding the personal exploration and self-knowledge of the *Soliloquia* Augustine wrote immediately after his conversion: "those things of yours should not be dictated; for they long for complete solitude,"¹⁸ and should thus be written down.

Both spoken and written words, then, have particular strengths and functions, but both are signs which pale in significance beside the thoughts themselves which are "the real words,"¹⁹ the meanings prior to and at the foundation of both the spoken and the written word, the intelligible essences of words which, Augustine asserts, exist "naked" ("nuda") in the "seat of the heart" (*cubile cordis*).²⁰ Augustine's theories of language and knowledge and the self who acquires and uses them are dominated by his preoccupation with interiority, with the "inner-man, inner-sight, inner-speech and inner-hearing."²¹ In *De Magistro*, a relatively early dialogue²² which addresses the role of speech and texts in the acquisition of knowledge, Augustine asserts that it is not words, the signs of intelligible truths, which teach those

¹⁸ *Soliloquia* I.1: "nec ista dictari debent; nam solitudinem meram desiderant." All citations from the *Soliloquia*, an internal dialogue between Augustine and Reason, are from Gerard Watson, ed. and trans., *Saint Augustine: Soliloquies and Immortality of the Soul* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1990). Saenger, "Silent Reading," 383 n.84, cites this passage as an example of Augustine's sense of privacy regarding "the knowledge of one's real self," and elsewhere acknowledges that Augustine "regularly used secretaries to record his sermons, letters, and biblical exegesis" (373), works which Augustine obviously considered less personal.

¹⁹ Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 186.

²⁰ Augustinus, *Sermo* 187.3; cited in Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 199 n.25.

²¹ Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 8.

²² *De Magistro*, a dialogue between Augustine and his young son, was written in 389, three years after Augustine's conversion. For extremely useful chronological tables of Augustine's life and works, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 16, 74-77, 184-187, 282-285, and 378-379.

truths--"by means of words...we learn nothing but words;"²³ rather, Christ within is the true universal teacher:

concerning all those things which we understand, we do not consult the one speaking, who resounds without, but the truth within presiding over the mind itself; perhaps by words we are admonished to consult [that truth]. But he who is consulted teaches, Christ who is said to dwell in the inner man, that is the unchangeable power of God and the everlasting wisdom, which every rational soul indeed consults, but to each [individual] is extended only so much as he (or she) is able to grasp on account of his (or her) own will, whether evil or good.²⁴

Learning is internal and personal, taking place under the "interior light of truth" (*interior lux veritatis*),²⁵ which both emanates from and illuminates the intelligible truths (all parts of the Truth which is Christian Wisdom) already present within the mind so that they may be consciously recognized and understood by the individual.

Augustine's metaphorical conception of knowledge acquisition as a kind of internal illumination may be compared to a physical lamp shedding light upon a written text, allowing for its perception and comprehension. The analogy is an appropriate one, for the linguistic terminology used by Augustine to describe the abstract internal aspects of learning are as striking and pervasive as his concentration upon interiority. Augustine refers throughout his written

²³ Augustinus, *De Magistro* I.11: "uerbis...nisi uerba non discimus." All citations from *De Magistro* are from W.M.Green and K.D.Daur, eds., *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: Contra Academicos, De Beata Vita, De Ordine, De Magistro, De Libero Arbitrio*, Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina, vol.29 (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1970). There is, of course, as with the argument regarding the inadequacies of language, a certain irony inherent in the negation of the epistemological value of words in the written text of a dialogue on learning which immediately addresses the role of language and in fact singles out words as particularly useful to the acquisition of knowledge.

²⁴ *De Magistro* I.11: "de uniuersis autem, quae intelligimus, non loquentem, qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus ueritatem, uerbis fortasse ut consulamus admoniti. Ille autem, qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, id est incommutabilis dei uirtus atque sempiterna sapientia, quam quidem omnis rationalis anima consulit, sed tantum cuique panditur, quantum capere propter propriam siue malam siue bonam uoluntatem potest."

²⁵ *De Magistro*, I.12.

works to the thoughts within the mind before speech is articulated or writing executed as internal words or speeches (*verbum cordis, verbum in corde, locutiones cordis, etc.*).²⁶ These "inner-words"²⁷ should be thought of "sheerly as meaning,"²⁸ for they are not truly linguistic, "not the words of any natural language;"²⁹ they exist "before all diversity of languages."³⁰ His metaphor is itself an excellent example of the proper use of words as complex signs, functioning meaningfully on both the literal and figurative level, as props for the acquisition of knowledge, in this case, of the abstract, internal self. "Things are learned through signs," Augustine asserts in *De Doctrina Christiana*, and words are the ultimate signs, "for no one uses words except for the purpose of signifying something."³¹ Even amidst the criticisms of *De Magistro*, Adeodatus learns from his father's discourse that

²⁶ See the extensive discussion in Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 174-191, and the accompanying notes. The fact that Augustine understands and discusses the intelligible concepts beyond and prior to words as words reveals the linguistic and metaphorical habits of mind characteristic of both the rhetorician and the bishop. It also adds a meaningful twist to Augustine's statement in *De Magistro* that "by means of words...we learn nothing but words" (I.11).

²⁷ Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 174.

²⁸ R.A. Markus, "St. Augustine on Signs," in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Markus (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 80. Augustine's preoccupation with the meaning behind words provides an interesting contrast to the claim in Saenger, "Silent Reading," 370-371: "since in ancient books verbal concepts were not represented by recognizable images, the Romans developed no clear conception of the word as a unit of meaning."

²⁹ Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 175.

³⁰ Augustinus, *Sermo* 187.3: "ante omnem linguarum diversitatem"; cited in Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 199 n.24.

³¹ *De Doctrina Christiana*, I.2: "res per signa discuntur"; and "nemo enim utitur verbis, nisi aliquid significandi gratia". All citations from *De Doctrina Christiana* are from J.P. Migne, ed., *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi: Opera Omnia*, Patrologiae Latinae 34 (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.). The early books of *De Doctrina Christiana* were written very close in time to the *Confessiones*; see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 184.

words can be used to prompt or admonish a person to learn,³² and Augustine admits that the "utility of words" (*utilitas verborum*) is certainly not insignificant ("non parua est");³³ but the word "utility" is central here. Words should be used as a means of obtaining those things, such as God and salvation, which can properly be enjoyed,³⁴ for by words, as by all things which are to be used, "we are supported in striving toward blessedness, and as it were, propped up, so that we may reach those things which make us blessed, and cling to them."³⁵ Correctly used words, as concrete and expansive signs for the perception and expression of spiritual and intelligible realities, provide an allegorical ladder, like that Augustine and Monnica climb, upon which the individual soul may ascend.

To use words well, then, is to read or hear within the heart the spiritual and intelligible truths upon which they are woven, to express in words woven with pen or tongue those truths sincerely from the heart, to understand and expand those "inner-words" through the most immediately effective manifestation of "outer-words." Thus, in Augustine's metaphorical "inner-man," the material distinctions between the spoken and the written word are fused and transcended:

because we say that thoughts are speeches of the heart, it does not follow that they are not also visions arisen from the visions of knowledge, when they are true. For when these are done through the body without, speech is one thing, vision another; but when we think within, both are one...In the mind it is not one thing to see and

³² Adeodatus announces to his father "truly I learned from the admonition of your words nothing other than that man is admonished by words so that he may learn" ("ego uero didici admonitione uerborum tuorum nihil aliud uerbis quam admoneri hominem, ut discat." *De Magistro* I.14).

³³ *De Magistro*, I.14.

³⁴ The terminology (*uti* and *frui*) is Augustine's own: see *De Doctrina Christiana*, particularly I.3-5.

³⁵ *De Doctrina Christiana* I.3: "istis quibus utendum est, tendentes ad beatitudinem adjuvamus, et quasi adminiculamur, ut ad illas quae nos beatos faciunt, pervenire, atque his inhaerere possimus."

another to hear.³⁶

Hearing and reading, speaking and writing, it is implied, are one and the same on an abstract, internal level where true knowledge is acquired and Augustine's metaphorical words of instruction bear intertwining literal and figurative meanings. Intellectual synthesis such as is seen in this metaphorical description of the mind's internal functions is, in fact, the essence of Augustine's own use of words, his own textuality. One of the most original and influential "synthesizers of Christianity and classical culture,"³⁷ Augustine "fused a classical conception of words, both literal and figurative, as the authentic, sensible signs of knowable realities, with the Christian belief that language, redeemed through the Incarnation, was both a necessary and an inadequate means to the knowledge of God."³⁸ Linguistically, stylistically, metaphorically and formally, synthesis, a weaving together of various traditions, experiences and concepts is the trademark of Augustine's textuality, which, like the dialogue at Ostia, always stretches to transcend the inadequacies of the material world and touch the spiritual realm.

Synthesis is clearly the essence of the written

³⁶ Augustinus, *De Trinitate* 15.10, 18: "quia dicimus locutiones cordis esse cogitationes, ideo non sunt etiam visiones exortae de notitiae visionibus, quando verae sunt. Foris enim cum per corpus haec fiunt, aliud est locutio, aliud visio: intus autem cum cogitamus, utrumque unum est...in animo autem non est aliud atque aliud videre et audire;" cited in Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 198 n.21. Although Augustine is clearly aware of the differences between the spoken and the written word, his internal synthesis of the two transcends material distinctions, such as that in Bäuml, "Varieties and Consequences," 247-248: "the spoken word is heard, and, as sound, it is ephemeral. It therefore is limited to two modes of existence: its utterance and its remembrance...Conversely, the written word is fixed: *verba volant, scripta manent*. The written word, therefore, exists independently of the writing writer and the reading reader; all or any part of a written text is available in any sequence to anyone with access to it; [unlike the necessarily temporal "narrative sequence" of oral utterances,] its arrangement is spacial."

³⁷ B.Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Markus, 137.

³⁸ Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 54; see also Ferguson, "Crossing of Exile and Language."

autobiographical text which records the spoken prayer narrating Augustine's spiritual development to God;³⁹ indeed, synthesis must be the essence of the personal *Confessiones* in which "one constantly senses the tension between the 'then' of the young man and the 'now' of the bishop."⁴⁰ The wandering way of the young rhetorician, the spontaneous prayer of the new bishop, the written words of the learned author, the providential Word of the eternal God--all are self-consciously woven together with textual twines both literal and metaphorical in Augustine's personal text. Certainly this is the reading suggested by the historiated initial opening the eleventh-century *Confessiones* of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 253 (see Figure 1).⁴¹ The "M" of *Magnus* depicts two Augustines, differentiated by their clothing as the wandering pilgrim and the converted bishop, offering to Christ the text of the *Confessiones* on a scroll which twists, folding slightly back upon itself, midpoint between them. The illustration suggests that the medieval audience reading and writing this manuscript clearly understood matters of persona, perspective, conversion, authorship, voice, textuality and autobiography with an intellectual sophistication rarely acknowledged in modern scholarship. I would like to draw attention to this particularly literary and linguistic network of concepts by concentrating upon not only the written word, but also words and their meanings woven into any physically manifest medium,

³⁹ Robert McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of the Confessions* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1989), xii and throughout his argument, points out that Augustine's "text presents itself as the written record of an *oral* prayer," a formal consideration of great significance to McMahon's illuminating discussion of the design and structure of the *Confessiones*.

⁴⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 164. Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 4, makes the same observation in more modern terms: "the self-as-subject oscillates with the self-as-object reified in the materiality of the text."

⁴¹ See Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Éditions E. de Bocard, 1968) 509-510 and plate 16, and R.I. Page and G.H.S. Bushnell, *Matthew Parker's Legacy* (Cambridge: Corpus Christi College, 1975), 11 and plate 8.

and by transmitting a sense of the thematic and stylistic weaving which is characteristic of the synthesis at the heart of Augustinian individuality: the ability of the words "text," "textual" and "textuality," derived as they are from *texere* ("to weave"), to mean in expansive and associative ways within this complex synthesis determines their extensive use throughout this thesis.

Augustine's *Confessiones*, then, are a highly textual autobiography, and not simply because they are a written document, a text themselves, but also because they are a literally and metaphorically synthetic work which engages external textuality (that originating from other sources, such as the Bible or the pagan poets) as a central structural and compositional principle. Primarily, the past life of the writer is expressed in the *Confessiones* as a journey through various texts (written, spoken, enacted and imagined), a spiritual progression up a textual ladder, much like the "step by step" ascension of Augustine and Monnica, which results in the internal character of a particular individual. "Augustine represents the act of reading (or hearing) and interpreting centrally in every book,"⁴² and he "links his changing states of self-awareness and his comprehension of the outside world with his growing ability to learn through language and to express himself verbally."⁴³ Thus, it is only natural that the highly literate, reading and writing individual who composes this autobiography understands and expresses himself through the voices, texts and metaphors (cited, alluded to, integrated and altered) which have served as the structure for his self-

⁴² McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work: Augustine's Refiguring of Genesis 3 and Ovid's 'Narcissus' in His Conversion Account," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989):339.

⁴³ Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 17. Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 17, writes that "the events of Augustine's life [in the *Confessiones*] are chosen, in the main, to illustrate his life in language;" and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "Conversion and the Language of Autobiography," in *Studies in Autobiography*, ed. James Olney (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42-50, sees the reading of exemplary texts (both spoken and written) as central to Augustine's development and conversion.

progression. Thus the autobiographical text which expresses the life and self of the individual who was Augustine seems to distant eyes to adopt the voices and words, the images, ideas and events of borrowed textuality, to be, therefore, predominantly conventional and allegorical, and to lack, therefore, historical validity and personal individuality.⁴⁴

In an influential article on Middle English poetry, John Burrow has pointed out the dangers of falling into this

⁴⁴ Questions regarding the historical validity and personal individuality of Augustine's *Confessiones*--questions which interpenetrate and address the status of Augustine's text as autobiography--are central to much of the historical, philosophical and literary scholarship the *Confessiones* have generated. Throughout his immense scholarship, Pierre Courcelle has been the most powerful proponent for the historical validity of the *Confessiones*; he presents his argument, including both spiritual and physical reality, in *Recherches*, 29-40, and concludes: "nous avons bien affaire à une oeuvre historique de valeur, et non pas seulement au développement d'une thèse théologique" (40). See also Courcelle, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la Tradition Littéraire: Antécédents et Postérité* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1963). Many scholars have agreed with Courcelle's claims, for example, John J.O'Meara, "Arripui, aperui, et legi," *Augustinus Magister: Congrès International Augustinien: Paris, 21-24 Septembre 1954*, vol. 1 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954), 65, who concludes his comparison of Augustine's use of similar ideas and phrases to describe his conversion in both the early Cassiciacum dialogues and the later *Confessiones* with the assertion that "the continuing recollection of a real event is a more likely explanation than the continuing recollection of a fiction;" and Andrew Fichter, *Poets Historical: Dynastic Epic in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 45, who argues that there is evidence for viewing the *Confessiones* accounts of events in Augustine's life as factual. Indeed, as Colin Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of the Confessions I-IX* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), xiv, asserts, the work of scholars like Courcelle has largely "vindicated the historical truth of Augustine's account;" Starnes provides a useful summary and bibliography of the historicity problem in his Appendix: "An Essay on the Historicity Debate," 277-289. In many ways, my discussion and the work of several recent scholars transcends the problem by concentrating upon Augustine's own preoccupation with internal or spiritual reality (as Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 45, writes, "truth, for Augustine, does not reside at the level of historical accident"); this approach, however, is productive only if the spiritual emphasis which opens the door to the "universal significance" (Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, xii) and application of Augustine's text is not seen as a negation of his individuality and its self-expression. For such a negation results in limiting comments like that of Robert B. Downs, *Books that Changed the World*, 2nd edn. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1978), 153: "the *Confessions*... is the best source for the life of the author, but strictly speaking it is not an autobiography at all." "What is most personal is most general," Carl Rogers claimed (*On Becoming a Person* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961], 26; cited in Lonnie D. Kliever, "Confessions of Unbelief: In Quest of the Vital Lie," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 [1986]:111), and it is important to remember this when reading Augustine's autobiography. Brown's biographical discussion in *Augustine of Hippo* maintains a particularly brilliant balance between the personal and the general, the internal and the external realities of Augustine. The interrelated issue of personal individuality is taken up throughout this thesis.

"conventional fallacy,"⁴⁵ which he defines as the mistaken tendency to disbelieve conventional notions and utterances simply because they are conventional. He argues that the so-called "conventions" of cultures establish and alter the ways in which individuals within those cultures perceive and express themselves, and thus determine the very nature of human personality and the individual self.⁴⁶ The weak argument that "the conventional character of a text *proves* that it has no autobiographical content" fades utterly when it is asserted that, "insofar as life and literature do indeed share the same conventional character, the distinction between them ceases to be of any interest to criticism and can be ignored."⁴⁷ The "conventions" which established and encompassed Augustine's life and personality as both trained rhetorician and faithful bishop were highly textual;⁴⁸ indeed, we have already seen just how "textual" Augustine's thinking about intellectual and spiritual matters was. In his life as history has recorded it, as in the *Confessiones*, texts and textualization are central to both Augustine's self-progression and self-expression: many of Augustine's extant works, for instance, can be seen as responses to various external texts (most notably those of a

⁴⁵ J.A.Burrow, "Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve," Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (1982):394.

⁴⁶ Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "'Who Has Written this Book?': Visionary Autobiography in Langland's C Text," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, vol. 5, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 108, in discussing the conventional name of Will's wife in *Piers Plowman*, points out that that which is conventional and therefore common has an even greater likelihood of being true. McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 339, observes that our "historical distance" from Augustine "estranges us from the [conventional] 'models of self'" he engages and thus allows us to see "more clearly" and objectively in the *Confessiones* what is in fact a reality of all self-expression and autobiography.

⁴⁷ Burrow, "Autobiographical Poetry," 394.

⁴⁸ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), emphasizes the detailed attention paid to the written (and indeed spoken) word in the traditional grammatical education of antiquity in his seventh chapter entitled "Liberal Studies", 139-184, and Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 329, writes that "later ancient grammar and logic...had an inherently textual bias." Christianity, as a religion of the Word and the Book, has its own strikingly textual traditions.

heretical nature), responses which often involve Augustine in reforming and transforming his own intellectual and spiritual theories.⁴⁹

Thus the autobiography which tells of the individual who grows in spiritual knowledge of self and God through reading progressively, actively gathering the tidbits of truth scattered throughout the textuality of this world, meditating self-reflectively upon them, and responding with the compositional expression of his "own language"⁵⁰ (a language necessarily pervaded by the texts which have shaped the self as it came to know and express itself), lacks neither historical validity nor the original stamp of personal individuality. Indeed, the intense individuality of Augustine's self-expression, the "intense autobiographical vein" of his *Confessiones*, set his autobiography "apart from the intellectual tradition [the late classical conventions] to which [he] belonged,"⁵¹ and established it as an authoritative text at the heart of medieval individuality and spirituality. Autobiographical self-expression was "almost unknown in the ancient world," and the *Confessiones* "deserve to be called the first autobiography, if by that word we understand an account of the author's life written to illuminate the development of his beliefs and character."⁵² The *Confessiones* "lay at the root of a good deal of medieval autobiography," establishing "the sense of the importance of each individual's experiences

⁴⁹ The *Confessiones*, which clearly reassess and rewrite Augustine's own past, can themselves be read as a response to Manichaeism, and, accordingly, as an appeal to Manichees encouraging them to a Christian conversion along the lines of Augustine's own.

⁵⁰ Harpham, "Language of Autobiography," 44.

⁵¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 169.

⁵² Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 19 (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 79.

within the purposes of God;"⁵³ they "encouraged religious writings of self-exploration...[and] the development of the old idea of 'nosce te ipsum' ['know yourself'] in moral and mystical writing."⁵⁴ The author of the *Confessiones* was regarded by medieval audiences not only as the "greatest instructor of the churches after the apostles,"⁵⁵ but also, particularly in the later Middle Ages, as "a primarily personal, devotional writer;"⁵⁶ the *Confessiones* themselves present "a developing meditation on language that penetrates more and more deeply beneath the wordly surfaces of language to reach fundamental questions"⁵⁷ of a spiritual, intellectual and strikingly linguistic nature, and do so through a metaphorical textualization process which expresses and enhances personal introspection and spiritual progression. Thus Augustine's autobiography certainly parallels, and perhaps profoundly influenced, the medieval monastic tradition of achieving individual spiritual development through the personal and actively self-reflective reading of texts.

Augustine's important influence on the monasticism of the later Middle Ages has been emphasized by Jean Leclercq in his

⁵³ Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual*, 17.

⁵⁴ Douglas Gray, "Saint Augustine and Medieval Literature: Part I," in *Saint Augustine and His Influence in the Middle Ages*, Sewanee Mediaeval Studies 3, ed. Edward B. King and Jacqueline T. Schaefer (Sewanee, Tennessee: The Press of the University of the South, 1988), 29.

⁵⁵ Peter the Venerable, *Epistola 17 ad Bernardum*: "maximus post Apostolos ecclesiarum instructor;" cited in Sandro Sticca, "The Augustinian Tradition in the Middle Ages", *Mediaevalia* 4 (1978):2.

⁵⁶ Robert S. Sturges, "A Middle English Version of the Pseudo-Augustinian *Soliloquies*," *Manuscripta* 29 (1985):73. Sturges attributes this view of Augustine to the popularity of the *Soliloquia* and various pseudo-Augustinian works of a personal nature, as well as to vernacular translations and versions of these introspective works. Gray, "Augustine and Medieval Literature: I," 21, also asserts that "the existence of a large body of 'pseudo-Augustinian' works is, as in the case of the Pseudo-Bede, the Pseudo-Anselm, and the Pseudo-Bernard, an excellent indicator of popularity and influence."

⁵⁷ Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 17.

pioneering study of monastic spirituality and culture.⁵⁸ Western monasticism, Leclercq explains, is a continuation of patristic culture, and not only through the "copying, reading and explaining" of patristic texts, but "also through *living* by what these books contained."⁵⁹ For medieval monasteries were ideal examples of what Brian Stock calls "textual communities," groups whose "organizational principles...were clearly based on texts, which played a predominant role in the internal and external relationships of the members," and which, most importantly, were "mastered" by an individual who then used them "for reforming a group's thought and action."⁶⁰ Augustine's *Confessiones*, I would argue, were among the profoundly influential texts which shaped medieval monasticism, and other particularly learned, spiritual and introspective medieval "communities," and they did so in an especially internal and "textual" manner.⁶¹ Leclercq notes how Augustine's *Confessiones* were the primary influential text in "the formation of the 'monastic style'" based upon his "model of artistic prose in which all the procedures used in ancient

⁵⁸ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*.

⁵⁹ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 135. Leclercq emphasizes the particular importance to medieval monks of ancient Eastern monasticism (111-113), especially that of Anthony, whom Leclercq calls "the Father of monks" (125); Anthony and his conversion to monastic Christianity (as it is relayed through spoken and written texts) are of course central to Augustine's conversion. The parallel reveals, if not the influence of Augustine on Western monasticism, the fact that both fourth- and twelfth-century monks felt themselves to be living and writing within the same textual tradition.

⁶⁰ Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 90. Stock's concentration upon "heretical or reformist religious groups" (88) in his discussion of textual communities is particularly interesting in light of both the young Augustine's desire to reform himself and the autobiographer's desire to reform pagans and Manichees through the text of his *Confessiones*.

⁶¹ Within this textual model, Augustine's autobiography could be seen as not only a primary influential text, but also a *magister* (equivalent to the individual who masters and persuasively uses the text behind the community in Stock's model) of influential texts. For instance, to state a dramatic example, Augustine's conversion interprets, imitates and retextualizes the story of Anthony's conversion, a text received orally by Augustine in the *Confessiones*, so that Augustine's influential text teaches his reader how to read Anthony's text and achieve a spiritual conversion along the lines of the conversions experienced by both Anthony and Augustine.

rhythmical prose were put to the service of his Christian enthusiasm."⁶² This "monastic style" incorporates and synthesizes "the literary heritage of all of antiquity, secular and patristic"--a heritage apparent "in a certain resonance" of familiarity with ancient authors, literature and literary practices--while maintaining the "predominance" of Christianity.⁶³ The assimilative style inspired by Augustine's highly textual autobiography established "both a way of thinking and a way of expressing oneself,"⁶⁴ a new set of sophisticated conventions through which to read, understand and write not only external texts, but also the personal development of the learned, spiritual self.

Thus it is hardly surprising that the "active" or "divine reading" (*lectio divina*) which Leclercq claims is "one of the principal occupations of the monk" devoutly seeking God⁶⁵ and which engages the individual in three separate but interpenetrating activities--"reading" (*lectio*), "meditation" (*meditatio*) and "composition" (*compositio*)--is also central to the development and expression of both the past written and the present writing Augustine of the *Confessiones*. The young man engages in the *lectio* of a classical and rhetorical education; as he matures, he progresses gradually through the internal friction of *meditatio*; and in his act of conversion, he finally recognizes and engages his individual spiritual

⁶² Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 123; Leclercq clearly places Augustine within the ancient patristic tradition which influenced medieval monasticism, but also calls upon Augustine and his techniques as examples of monastic practices (see, for example, 90 and 92), as might be expected given his perceptive perspective of monasticism as a continuation of patristic culture (135 and above).

⁶³ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 183. This synthesis of two cultural and literary traditions does not take place without doubts, however, and the deep ambiguity inherent in both "the use of the classics" and the "distrust for them" which runs throughout the *Confessiones* is a recurrent theme in monastic literature and correspondence (see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 140). See also the discussion regarding the role and ambiguity of language above (particularly the comment by Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 54).

⁶⁴ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 183.

⁶⁵ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 89 and 16.

self through personal *compositio*. Tracing Augustine's textual progress in light of this monastic triad not only lends structure and clarity to the discussion of Augustine's complex autobiographical project, but also reveals the authoritative literary roots of the medieval monastic triad spreading out from the heart of Augustine's personal *Confessiones*. The perception of Augustine thus gained is akin to that his text inspired in its most sophisticated medieval readers, an intimate perception which focuses upon the personal internal aspects of Augustine's individual spiritual development through textuality. "All things considered," it has been written, "the only authentic Augustinianism is the one derived from a personal association,"⁶⁶ an association sometimes lost in modern philosophical and theological approaches to Augustine, but very much alive in the medieval iconography of Augustine's life. Even a quick glance at the fifteenth-century *Vita Sancti Augustini* (Boston Public Library MS 1483), in which the illustrations consistently emphasize both Augustine's personal spiritual progression and its strikingly textual nature, will confirm this medieval association.⁶⁷ The fascinating representations of Augustine reflecting upon the spiritual ramifications of his personal actions in the past, experiencing a shocking revelatory vision of his internal

⁶⁶ Sticca, "Augustinian Tradition," 6.

⁶⁷ Courcelle, ed., and Jeanne Courcelle-Ladmirant, comm., *Vita Sancti Augustini Imaginibus Adornata* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1964). This *Vita*, which Courcelle describes as "le document le plus complet de la vie de saint Augustin," particularly "au point de vue de l'iconographie augustinienne" (11), is studded with illustrations of the numerous textual encounters and events of Augustine's life, illustrations which reveal a concern with the personal progression through textuality of both the rhetorician and the bishop. See also Courcelle and Courcelle, "Scènes anciennes de l'iconographie augustinienne: I," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 10 (1964):51-71 and 24 plates, and "Scènes anciennes de l'iconographie augustinienne: II," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 4 (1966):37-47 and 12 plates, for several examples of medieval illustrations emphasizing the textuality of Augustine's works and life; and M.T.D'Alverney, "Manuscrits et estampes exposés à la Bibliothèque nationale à l'occasion du Congrès international augustinienn," *Augustinus Magister: Congrès International Augustinien: Paris 21-24 Septembre 1954*, 483-492, vol. 3 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954), which makes many references to medieval manuscripts illustrated with a central concern for the linguistic activities of Augustine's life.

self, and undergoing his dramatic spiritual conversion to Christianity are particularly revealing, for all represent the internal changes they illustrate through the textual symbols of books and scrolls (see Figures 2, 3 and 4).⁶⁸ This medieval concentration upon the internal textual progression and expression of Augustine suggests that the spiritual ascents of his life as he recorded them in the *Confessiones* established the basis for the textual ascension which was so central to the members of learned spiritual communities in the Middle Ages. In addition, the medieval perspective acts as a synthesizing factor, lending a structural, stylistic and thematic unity to the reading of Augustine's *Confessiones*, an internal unity which the learned bishop surely intended them to have.⁶⁹

Before pursuing this discussion further, however, a brief summary of the process and goals of medieval monastic reading is necessary. The first stage of monastic spiritual reading is the *lectio* or careful reading of every word on the written page. It may involve many different aspects of medieval study: "a master reading a text aloud to his students, responding to questions, elucidating hard passages, and, above all, 'establishing the text;'"⁷⁰ the training of "one's natural *ingenium* by the order and method ('ordo et modus') of exposition and analysis, including the disciplines of grammar

⁶⁸ Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 71, 73 and 81; these illustrations will be discussed further when I deal in detail with the *Confessiones* events they represent.

⁶⁹ This medieval textual approach to the *Confessiones* in fact deals productively with what Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), 3-4, calls "the three major problem-areas in Augustine's *Confessions*," those "bearing on its sources, its historicity (with special reference to the question of Augustine's conversion), and finally the sense and unity of the work."

⁷⁰ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 10 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 184.

and dialectic;⁷¹ and the reading of the written page "not as today, principally with the eyes, but with the lips, pronouncing what they saw, and with the ears, listening to the words pronounced, hearing what is called the 'voices of the pages.'"⁷² All have their basis in the classical education which involved the *magister* of language in explaining "each text, word by word, much as an art expert might pore over a painting with his magnifying-glass,"⁷³ an education firmly grounded in the concrete value of words, an education exactly like the rhetorical training Augustine received as a boy. *Lectio* both inspires and generates the active and penetrating reception necessary to establishing or illuminating information in the memory, and to, therefore, the complex process of medieval learning and the resulting progressive growth of the intellectual and moral character.⁷⁴

Meditatio, technically the second stage of the spiritual reading process, grows out of *lectio*, but

is bound by none of reading's rules or precepts. For it delights to range along open ground, where it fixes its free gaze upon the contemplation of truth, drawing together now these, now those causes of things, or now penetrating into profundities, leaving nothing doubtful, nothing obscure. The start of learning, thus, lies in reading, but its consummation lies in meditation; which, if any man will learn to love it very intimately and will desire to be engaged very frequently upon it, renders his life pleasant indeed, and provides the greatest

⁷¹ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 162, whose discussion is based upon Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* III.7-9.

⁷² LeClercq, *Love of Learning*, 19, where he also points out that "*legere* means at the same time *audire*," presenting an interesting parallel to Augustine's model of the "inner-man," where to see and to hear are the same thing.

⁷³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 36.

⁷⁴ According to Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 1, medieval people would not "have understood our separation of 'memory' from 'learning.'" In their understanding of the matter, it was memory that made knowledge into useful experience, and memory that combined these pieces of information-become-experience into what we call 'ideas,' what they were more likely to call 'judgments,'" which in turn determine one's intellectual and moral actions.

consolation to him in his trials. This especially it is which takes the soul away from the noise of earthly business and makes it have even in this life a kind of foretaste of the sweetness of the eternal quiet.⁷⁵

Meditatio is the reflective process whereby that which is read or heard in texts is gathered and assimilated into the mind. "To practice a thing by thinking of it, is to fix it in the memory, to learn it," and that learning has, as hinted at above, "an affinity with the practical or even moral order," for meditation "implies thinking of a thing with the intent to do it."⁷⁶ Thus, meditation is the activity through which textual learning becomes morally "profitable" to the "individual reader."⁷⁷ Like the light of Truth Augustine imagines progressively shining within each developing individual, meditative reading enables a person "to judge correctly" ("recte judicare").⁷⁸ In the words of Gregory the Great, "we ought to transform what we read into our very

⁷⁵ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, III.10: "meditatio principium sumit a lectione, nullis tamen stringitur regulis aut praeceptis lectionis. Delectatur enim quodam aperto decurrere spatio, ubi liberam contemplandae veritati aciem affigat, et nunc has, nunc illas rerum causas perstringere, nunc autem profunda quaeque penetrare, nihil anceps, nihil obscurum relinquere. Principium ergo doctrinae est in lectione, consummatio in meditatione, quam si quis familiarius amare didicerit eique saepius vacare voluerit, iucundam valde reddit vitam, et maximam in tribulatione praestat consolationem. Ea enim maxime est, quae animam a terrenorum actuum strepitu segregat, et in hac vita etiam aeternae quietis dulcedinem quodammodo praegustare facit." The Latin text is from Charles Henry Buttimer, ed., *Hugonis de Sancto Victore: Didascalicon: De Studio Legendi: A Critical Text* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939); the translation is from Jerome Taylor, trans., *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: a Medieval Guide to the Arts* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961).

⁷⁶ LeClercq, *Love of Learning*, 20.

⁷⁷ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 162.

⁷⁸ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XI.27; cited in Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 160 n.42. The parallel between Augustine's theory of illumination and monastic spiritual reading is strengthened by the fact that Augustine saw "the objects of inner-vision," which he frequently calls "inner-words," as capable of providing "their own illumination, . . . as though each eternal truth were a lamp" (Bubacz, *Theory of Knowledge*, 149). Briefly, Christ is the light of the mind, and Christ is the one Truth of which all the truths illuminated within are parts: the individual must recall, gather and organize the bits of truth--meditating upon texts is a viable way of doing this--to increase internal illumination and concurrently the ability to read, and eventually to find and reconstruct Christ both within the soul and in the external actions it initiates.

selves, so that when the soul arouses itself through what is heard, the life may concur by doing what was heard."⁷⁹ Thus, a superior memory in the Middle Ages was regarded "as a mark of superior moral character as well as intellect,"⁸⁰ and Augustine's intellectual progression through "texts" parallels and initiates his spiritual progression toward God.

Given the assimilative nature of meditative reading and the necessity of meditation to the growth of the moral character, it is hardly surprising that the metaphor of spiritual nutrition derived originally from the moving mouth of *lectio* and the murmuring thoughts of *meditatio*⁸¹ was commonly used in the Middle Ages to describe the meditative process by which texts--especially sacred, but also profane--read in a morally self-reflective way are intellectually and spiritually transformed into the constitution of the individual. The metaphorical rumination of texts allows the spiritual truths inherent behind their words to be released, recalled and consciously assimilated; as a result, the intelligible concepts which Augustine calls "inner-words" are inscribed "in the soul," nourishing the spiritually famished mind through the "mouth of the heart" (*os cordis*),⁸² becoming part of the reader's personal knowledge, ready for manifestation in an individual way within his or her life.⁸³

⁷⁹ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, I.33: "in nobismetipsis namque debemus transformare quod legimus; ut cum per auditum se animus excitat, ad operandum quod audierit vita concurrat;" cited in Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 327 n.32. Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 429, notices Bernard's similar desire "to proceed from a contemplation of the text to a state of readiness for action."

⁸⁰ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 1.

⁸¹ See Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 19 and 90; and Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 164.

⁸² Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 90.

⁸³ The metaphor of *ruminatio* nicely emphasizes not only the careful and repeated contemplation of spiritual concepts, but also the Augustinian notion of learning as a kind of recollection, for just as the concepts already present, if unconsciously, in the mind must be recalled and completely illuminated through meditative reading before they are truly known, the food already present in a ruminant's belly must be regurgitated and rechewed before it is properly digested resulting in the desired product.

The spiritual faculty within the individual which receives and processes textual and experiential information is described throughout the *Confessiones* by phrases and images within the same metaphorical tradition, such as the "insight of the heart" (*acies cordis*), the "eye of the mind" (*oculus mentis*), the "ears of the heart" (*auris cordis*), the "inner mouth of the soul" (*os intus animae*) and the "mouth of the heart" (*os cordis*).⁸⁴ The "memoria," which the rumination of meditation illuminates and fills and sorts, "is like the stomach of the mind" ("quasi uenter est animi:" X.14), and those who seek to understand the "shadowy secrets" written in God's Scriptures are "deer" roaming metaphorical forests, "walking and feeding, reclining and ruminating" (XI.2).⁸⁵

The effective rumination of texts actively internalizes and transforms the textuality encountered, allowing it to penetrate and be assimilated into the "great power of memory," which Augustine claims in the *Confessiones* is the "mind" and indeed the "self" (X.17).⁸⁶ Memory, "the faculty by which man may gain access to...immaterial essences, including that highest essence in terms of which a man's own image is to be perceived," is spiritually nourished through meditation,

⁸⁴ The *Confessiones* are incredibly rich in metaphors of this kind; Leo C. Ferrari, "The Food of Truth in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustinian Studies* 9 (1978):1, counts "one hundred and fifty different words connected with the acts of eating and drinking" alone. The striking metaphorical phrases which Augustine employs throughout the *Confessiones* to describe the internal or spiritual faculties of his self in physical terms must have had a profound effect on the medieval use of allegory for the expression of spiritual reality and development, and particularly on the later monastic allegory of reading as spiritual nutrition. Augustine creates a concrete, imaginative language through which to express both to himself and to the reader of his spiritual autobiography the abstract condition and gradual development of his internal self, development which must take place before its active result is manifested in the external moral life of the individual, and thus must somehow be expressed vividly to the reader of the *Confessiones*.

⁸⁵ "Neque enim frustra scribi uoluisti tot paginarum opaca secreta, aut non habent illae siluae ceruos suos recipientes se in eas et resumentes, ambulantes et pascentes, recumbentes et ruminantes." Ferrari, "Food of Truth," 1 n.1, notes this and three other instances of the ruminating metaphor in the *Confessiones*: III.6, VI.3 and X.14.

⁸⁶ "Magna uis est memoriae, nescio quid horrendum, deus meus, profunda et infinita multiplicitas; et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum."

illuminated, in Augustine's terminology, so that those immaterial "essences become intelligible to the mind's eye."⁸⁷ But the word "become" is perhaps a little misleading, for the process is in no way passive: "active reading" and the intellectual and spiritual ascension associated with it take place in a highly active and creative faculty. "When the senses and emotions are engaged, when imagination forms its images and cogitation responds affectively to them, memory and recollection can occur. And *only* when memory is active does reading become an ethical and properly intellectual activity."⁸⁸

Thus meditation necessarily engages the sensual, affective, imaginative and intellectual faculties of the individual, and these faculties leave the subjective print of that individual upon the assimilated texts, mediating and filtering, reordering and recombining, transforming and personalizing the truths recalled and gathered. Individual "perception...is an inevitable, necessary part of every" memory, and all memories "have an emotional component, acquired during the process of their formation."⁸⁹ Each complete memory, then, combines "the neutral form of the perception" (as much as this is possible) and the complex individual "response to it (*intentio*) concerning whether it is

⁸⁷ Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 10.

⁸⁸ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 186.

⁸⁹ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 54. Augustine, for whom every growthful textual encounter is an emotional experience, would have agreed with this statement; as Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 170, writes, "the emotional tone of the *Confessions* strikes any modern reader." What I am calling "memories," Carruthers calls "memory-images" in keeping with the Aristotelian faculty psychology she employs (see her section entitled "The Memory Image," 47-60); Augustine, with his linguistic habit of mind, might well have called what we are discussing "inner-words," particularly if those memories consisted of truthful information.

helpful or hurtful."⁹⁰ Meditation and the memory, therefore, play not only a "crucial role...in the shaping of moral judgment and excellence of character,"⁹¹ but also a crucial role in the formation of the individual personality as a subjective and independent entity. Medieval monastic reading and remembering--committing information to, illuminating it within and recalling it from the memory--is indeed an active and personal process, engaging and shaping the intellectual and the affective, the creative and the moral aspects of the individual, which in turn subjectively shape the texts read and assimilated, transforming them into the particular intellectual, spiritual and imaginative composite which constitutes the individual.

This individualizing assimilation of one's reading is the point at which the process of *meditatio* merges into the parallel and further step of *compositio*. For "composing," like meditating, is a "ruminative, 'digesting' process, the means by which reading is domesticated to ourselves;" "using our own talent and faculties, we blend" the texts assimilated "into one savour which, even if it is still apparent whence it was derived, will yet be something different from its source."⁹² Composition, like meditation, is the means by which the wisdom inherent in the texts engaged is assimilated into the self, literally becoming "part of our own abilities (*ingenium*),"⁹³ and therefore the final meditative stage of personal spiritual growth leading to individual moral action. "Reading without a

⁹⁰ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 68. Carruthers defines *intentio* as the "opinion about or reaction to something," adding that "it also means something less definite, related to the concept in rhetorical and literary theory of 'points of view'" (53-54). France A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 64, also emphasizes the presence of both "forms" and "*intentiones*" in the memory.

⁹¹ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 68.

⁹² Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 192; Carruthers is discussing Seneca's theories in the *Epistulae Morales* 84.

⁹³ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 192; citing Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 84.

pen [is] sleep," wrote Jerome,⁹⁴ but composition need not and indeed should not be thought of as only a physical process, for it takes place internally in the very process of meditation before its product is manifested externally in writing.⁹⁵ "Much of the process of literary composition was expected to occur mentally" as the "variously stored bits in memory" were brought together into a "'new' knowledge," "one's own composition and opinion."⁹⁶ Composition is successful meditation culminated creatively in the individual, whether written, spoken or simply, and most profoundly, internal. It aims, in the Christian ideal of Augustine and the medieval tradition of internal ascension, to understand and compose, progressively and internally, a spiritual self in keeping with the Word of God which created that self, to internalize many true words and illuminate the personal meaning of God's Word in a self individualized in approaching God. It is such a self that Augustine brings to light in the dramatic textual conversion of Book VIII, where, in response to a mysterious voice and a Pauline verse, Augustine's "heart" (*cor*) is infused with a "light of security" (*lux securitatis*: VIII.12) and his life is immediately rewritten.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Jerome, *Epistola 36*: "lectionem sine stilo somnum"; Jerome is writing to Pope Damasus about his own written works. His use of the concrete noun *stylus* (the writing instrument itself), which also carries the connotations of "writing," "composing" and "written composition," lends a metaphorical expansiveness to his words. The citation is from J.P. Migne, ed., *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi: Opera Omnia*, Patrologiae Latinae 22 (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.). The passage is cited in translation by Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 184.

⁹⁵ In an interesting parallel with Augustine's "inner-man" where written and spoken words are fused, Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 194, claims that "the terms 'oral' and 'written' are inadequate categories for describing what actually went on in traditional composition."

⁹⁶ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 194 and 199.

⁹⁷ The reader of the *Confessiones* will recall that Augustine's interpretation and expression of his conversion, and indeed of all of the most critical turning points in his own development, are associated in the *Confessiones* with the active reading of textuality (both spoken and written) and informed by his theory of internal illumination. As a further example, after reading the books of the Platonists in VII.10, Augustine perceives with the "eye of [his] soul" (*oculus animae meae*) an "unchangeable light" (*lux incommutabilis*) above his "mind" (*mens*).

The personal collection of assimilated texts which serves to shape one's intellectual, spiritual and moral life, ideally toward the love and knowledge of God, then, establishes, to a large degree, the internal nature and structure of the learned "medieval self or 'character,'" a "'self' constructed out of bits and pieces of great authors of the past."⁹⁸ Yet this internal composite called "self" lacks neither originality nor individuality; indeed, in many ways it is individuality. Internal meditation and composition have transformed the various voices and texts of experience into a new and original pattern, a synthesis individualized as much by the order and process of selection and internalization, as by the particular emotional and intellectual responses the mind creates and weaves into the memorial fabric of its experiences.⁹⁹ As Brown so succinctly puts it, "Augustine regarded a man's past as very much alive in his present: men were different from each other precisely because their wills were made different by the sum total of unique, past experiences."¹⁰⁰ And all experiences, even, and in many ways most profoundly, the conventional textual encounters of a challenging classical or medieval education, are as unique and expansive as the individual experiencing them.

As Augustine actively rereads the texts of his own experiences from the new Christian perspective of the bishop to find the pattern he followed both away from and back to

⁹⁸ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 180. Carruthers does not specify the self thereby constructed as "learned," and certainly all personalities are shaped by texts to a certain extent, but the pattern is particularly pertinent to the highly Latinate literate--the reading, meditating and writing--medieval self, to a learned individual like Augustine.

⁹⁹ I am in agreement with Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 180, that such an understanding of medieval character does not "exclude a conception of individuality, for every person had domesticated and familiarized these *communes loci*, these pieces of the public memory."

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 173-174.

God,¹⁰¹ he seeks to convert his textual individuality, his learned "life into textual self-representation."¹⁰² This occurs on two levels for Augustine: in his "heart" before God "in confession," and with his "pen" before "many witnesses" (X.1).¹⁰³ Augustine creates a self-reflective text--an intimate dialogue about himself with the Word he has assimilated--which personally and didactically speaks to the larger "public memory"¹⁰⁴ through the individualized though recognizable voices and texts shared with his learned audience, both Christian and pagan.¹⁰⁵ That is, Augustine quite naturally and spontaneously,¹⁰⁶ quite realistically and individually textualizes the internal reality of the learned self constructed through progressive reading in its own voice, his own and most intimate voice, the composite voice of the

¹⁰¹ Augustine wrote the *Confessiones* shortly after becoming Bishop of Hippo: see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 76 and 184, who claims that "the *Confessions* is very much the book of a man who had come to regard his past as a training for his present career" (162).

¹⁰² Harpham, "Language of Autobiography," 42.

¹⁰³ "In corde meo coram te in confessione, in stilo autem meo coram multis testibus". McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, emphasizes throughout his study a similar duality in the role of Augustine as both the speaker and writer of his *Confessiones*.

¹⁰⁴ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 180.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 37, clarifies the power of shared textuality to communicate both richly and concisely in his description of the kind of man the educated Augustine must have been: "such a man could communicate his message to an educated Latin at the other end of the Roman world, merely by mentioning a classical figure, by quoting half a line of a classical poet." Augustine freely merges classical with Christian literary allusions, thus bridging the classical and medieval worlds textually and creating a particular form of penetrating expression, the "monastic style" discussed above which exhibits similar powers of literary communication: as Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 67, writes, "the true worth of monastic language lies in its evocative powers."

¹⁰⁶ See Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 179-182, for a discussion of the strikingly natural and seemingly spontaneous nature of this kind of textual expression in her treatment of Heloise's utterance of Lucan's text as she takes up the veil of religious life. Harold G. Coward, "Memory and Scripture in the Conversion of Augustine," in *Grace, Politics and Desire: Essays on Augustine*, ed. Hugo A. Meynell (Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 1990), 24, also testifies to the potential for spontaneity in intertextual expression when he writes that "early memories engrave themselves deeply upon one's childhood consciousness and, like the poem learned in grade 4 or 5, remain with one for life always capable of bubbling up with meaning and power from the subconscious."

integrated textuality which the mature author now recognizes as essential to his individuality and incorporates as a central structural principle behind his spiritual autobiography. Such a self-expression not only does not lack individuality, sincerity and historical validity, but is in fact the most individual, original and historically valid way one could imagine for Augustine the rhetorician and bishop to compose the story of his life.

Thus I cannot believe that "self-expression is a meaningless term in a medieval context"¹⁰⁷ or that Augustine's conversion constitutes "the transgression of his identity by the word of another," a "death in language"¹⁰⁸ which is also "the death of the self as character and the resurrection of the self as author," an "authorial self without individuality."¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Harpham argues against the theory that Augustine's "conversion is marked by the transgression of his own identity, his own word, by the identity or word of another" simply by questioning the notion that any individual can ever attain a language void of the textual voices of one's experiences: "where does Augustine--where does anyone--ever use his 'own' language? Of what would such a paradisaal language consist?"¹¹⁰ Indeed, Harpham realizes that only through what Vance calls "transgression" can the growing "child acquire wishes and intentions at all; only through such transgression can anyone achieve a self."¹¹¹ Indeed, Augustine's identity and language are not

¹⁰⁷ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 182.

¹⁰⁸ Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 21.

¹⁰⁹ John Freccero, "Autobiography and Narrative," in *Reconstructing Individuality: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C. Heller, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 16-17 and 22.

¹¹⁰ Harpham, "Language of Autobiography," 47.

¹¹¹ Harpham, "Language and Autobiography," 48.

only as much his own after his conversion as before, but more so, for Augustine's mode of spiritual development and expression of textual individuality create the possibility of having one's own learned language within the textual conventions of one's culture, an autobiographical language woven from the assimilated texts and personal responses which constitute the self. Put succinctly, the "modes of Augustine's self-understanding and self-representation are as historically particular as his self,"¹¹² for they are his conception and expression of that self.

Augustine's "own language," his means of spontaneous textual self-expression, has aptly been named a "text-work," an "intertextuality" resulting from "the dynamic engagement of the writer with other works and literary traditions in the work-being-written."¹¹³ Augustine's personal "text-work," engaging secular and especially spiritual texts, is one of the most striking features of his prose. Augustine quotes from the Bible with an almost "dizzying frequency,"¹¹⁴ and initiates a "startling literary innovation: for the first time, a work of self-conscious literary art had incorporated (and most beautifully) the exotic jargon of the Christian communities."¹¹⁵ Augustine, however, not only couches his thoughts in the words of external textuality, he also individualizes those words, making them his own, blending "his own words...imperceptibly with those of Scripture,"

¹¹² McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 362.

¹¹³ Robert McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 338 and 337.

¹¹⁴ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 24.

¹¹⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 174. It is an innovation which becomes a commonplace of the learned in the later Middle Ages. Richard Fenn, "Magic in Language and Ritual: Notes on Augustine's *Confessions*," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1986), 91, suggests that "we owe to Augustine the dilemma inherent in seeking authority for our own conceptions by couching them in the words of previous generations," a statement which corresponds nicely with Leclercq's understanding of Augustine's creation of the assimilative "monastic style."

transforming the "language of revelation" into "the language of self-disclosure."¹¹⁶ As Peter Brown writes, "traditional forms of literary expression...flow into [the *Confessiones*] only to be transformed beyond recognition,"¹¹⁷ hardly a surprising reality given the personalizing "active reading" at the heart of the young man's spiritual development. Indeed, the depth and breadth of that reading is revealed in Augustine's engagement of both the letter and the spirit, both the literal and the allegorical meanings of assimilated textuality in his autobiography, an individual narrative which "both re-presents and transforms existing narratives,"¹¹⁸ creating an original and metaphorical text of the self which penetrates the minds and memories of its readers.

For Augustine's highly textualized narrative renders the pivotal events of his life "more like living parables than fading memories. They provoke the listener as they shocked the teller of autobiography into seeing their world in a new way and at a new depth."¹¹⁹ To achieve such a result, however, parables must be interpreted; thus, "interpreting [Augustine's] text-work is [indeed] crucial to understanding the self" he presents.¹²⁰ The "particular kind of self-

¹¹⁶ Fenn, "Magic in Language," 81 and 82.

¹¹⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 165. Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 149, acknowledges the same trend in the later monastic use of external textuality, particularly pagan literature, when he writes that "medieval men claimed for themselves the right to make the authors conform to usage, to the actual needs of a living culture."

¹¹⁸ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 338. McMahon's article illuminates the richness and complexity of Augustine's literal and allegorical "text-work" in its discussion of the intricate weaving of both a secular (Ovid's "Narcissus") and a Biblical (Genesis 3) text into Augustine's written account of his dramatic conversion.

¹¹⁹ Kliever, "Confessions of Unbelief," 107; citing Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 145-181.

¹²⁰ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 338.

understanding" Augustine achieves "in dialogue with texts"¹²¹ is, as we have seen, internal, an understanding of the abstract spiritual, intellectual and emotional dimensions of his own soul. It is only natural, therefore, that the metaphorical "text-work" resulting from this understanding is an expression of the internal language of Augustine's soul. That it is Augustine's "inner-man" who speaks and writes in his *Confessiones* is clearly stated by the autobiographer: "and I do not do it [confess] with the words and voices of the flesh, but with the words of the soul and the cry of thought, which your [God's] ear knows" (X.2).¹²² But it is through the intertextual words and voices of the flesh, personally textualized by Augustine, that that "inner-man," a textual self woven from those words and voices, must communicate with his audience, building a concrete yet metaphorical path for those readers whose "heart" might be stirred to follow the wisdom within his words.¹²³

Spiritual didacticism directed towards the other, however, is not the sole reason for Augustine's autobiographical writing, for Augustine himself, as he recollects and writes, is also a reader of both his external

¹²¹ Harpham, "Language of Autobiography," 44; he is citing Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Problem of Self-Understanding," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1977), 44-58, who insists "that textual self-understanding is the only kind there is; and, further, that all competent reading produces self-understanding" (Harpham, *Language of Autobiography*, 44).

¹²² "Neque id ago uerbis carnis et uocibus, sed uerbis animae et clamore cogitationis, quem nouit auris tua."

¹²³ That this is among Augustine's intentions in externally textualizing his *Confessiones* is stated at X.3: "for when the confessions of my past evils, which you have forgiven and covered, are read and heard, they excite the heart, so that it may not sleep in desperation and say 'I cannot,' but that it may wake up in the love of your mercy and in the sweetness of your grace" ("nam confessiones praeteritorum malorum meorum, quae remisisti et texisti, ut beares me in te, mutans animam meam fide et sacramento tuo, cum leguntur et audiuntur, excitant cor, ne dormiat in desperatione et dicat: 'Non possum', sed euigilet in amore misericordiae tuae et dulcedine gratiae tuae"). The possibility of a pun with the words *tego* ("to cover," "to conceal," "to shield") and *texo* ("to weave") makes the passage very intriguing, especially given the metaphor of internal sleep which runs throughout the *Confessiones* and which we have already seen associated with textual inactivity in Jerome.

life and internal self, and the *Confessiones* are more a personal work of the man than a didactic work of the *magister*. "The writing of the *Confessions* was an act of therapy;" "the note of urgency is unmistakable."¹²⁴ Augustine is writing for himself, sincerely and anxiously seeking the answers to his spiritual slumber, ascension and conversion, receiving illumination along with the young man through the incremental processes of self-reading, self-reflection and self-composition. As Augustine ruminates and writes the text of his self, obtaining the "self-understanding" which comes only by responding to voices and texts and experiences with one's "own language,"¹²⁵ he creates the genre of the Christian autobiography, the spiritually sincere tale of internal, textual progression which culminates, converts and continues in its own external textualization.¹²⁶ Fourth-century culture was in need of a new form of self-exploration and self-expression, for "the Church had settled down in Roman society. The Christian's worst enemies could no longer be placed outside him: they were inside, his sins and his doubts; and the climax of a man's life would not be martyrdom, but conversion from the [internal] perils of his own past."¹²⁷ In

¹²⁴ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 165 and 164.

¹²⁵ Harpham, "Language of Autobiography," 44; Harpham is once again discussing the theories of Gadamer, "Problem of Self-Understanding."

¹²⁶ As Kliever, "Confessions of Unbelief," 103, writes, "the *Confessions* pioneered the autobiographical tracking of emerging religious beliefs and practices through the unfolding stages and life-changing events of one's own life." "When he told his life story in terms of a conversion from paganism to Christianity, Augustine was at the same time establishing a literary genre, the confession, or narrative of the self," a "paradigm for all representations of the self in a retrospective literary structure" (Freccero, "Autobiography and Narrative," 17). As we have seen, Augustine's autobiography "is generally regarded as the first major autobiography" (Kliever, "Confessions of Unbelief," 105).

¹²⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 159. Kliever, "Confessions of Unbelief," 105, makes the interesting observation that "the impulse toward autobiography seems to have sprung from primitive Christianity itself, since the Christian movement began as a community of the uprooted and the disenfranchised who had broken with their religious and cultural heritage. As a missionary movement of those called out from every tribe and tongue, the autobiographical narrative was basic. With no deeply-rooted or commonly-held memories and hopes, their only means of social presentation and cohesion were the

this climate of increasing interiority, Augustine's autobiography provided a text "unique...for the extent of its self-revelation," a text which "set the tone, not merely for all introspective literature, but also for introspection as a scientific aid to psychology and philosophy,"¹²⁸ a text which changed the way in which learned humanity viewed and expressed individuality.

It is in its introspective, meditative "evolution of the 'heart'"¹²⁹ through textuality, its intellectual ascension of the individual "through the mind" ("per animum") and the "memory" (*memoria*) to God (X.17), that Augustine's spiritual autobiography established the psychology and philosophy behind monastic reading and spiritual ascension in the Middle Ages. By reading Augustine's most personal text in terms of the textual progression and progressive "text-work" central to the creation of both his self and his story, and informing that reading with the triadic structure of the later monastic process of *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio*, one uncovers in the *Confessiones* the complex and interwoven roots of that personal medieval process. In so doing, the modern reader may move a little closer to both Augustine and his medieval audience, and ideally attain a revealing glimpse of Augustine's internal experience and its sincere expression in words, an illuminating glimpse of the inherently textual landscape of the essential and progressive individual which Augustine and his personally engaged medieval audience considered "the real stuff of autobiography."¹³⁰

spiritual autobiographies that these strangers could share with one another--a recourse amply illustrated in the preaching and writing of St. Paul." I am reminded of the discussion of reformist textual communities in Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 88.

¹²⁸ Downs, *Books*, 154; citing J.W.C. Wand, Bishop of London.

¹²⁹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 28.

¹³⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 28.

Chapter One: *Lectio*

Early Education and the Penetration of Textuality

Textual encounters, then, are central to the intellectual and spiritual development of the learned internal self of Augustine's *Confessiones*, and thus to the narrative and stylistic structure of this profoundly self-conscious autobiographical text. On these internal textual stages Augustine's soul and mind linger and ascend, slip back, recollect and ascend again, each time with new emotions, freshly illuminated ideas and an altered spiritual and intellectual perspective, with a newly acquired ability to engage in the active reading of *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio*. The textual pattern of Augustine's life forms a spiritual staircase,¹ a concrete structure for the enactment and expression of the internal autobiographical journey from the speechlessness of infancy to the abundant lies of secular rhetoric and Manichaean fables, to Ambrose and spiritual rumination, to the Platonic books and spiritual vision, to the climactic textual conversion in the garden, and finally to the autobiographical writing of the *Confessiones* and the exegetical meditations of God's creative Word with which they close.

The central role of textuality not only to Augustine's spiritual progression, but also to his later autobiographical expression of that progression, is apparent immediately in the *Confessiones*. The opening words of the *Confessiones* (I.1), "you are great, Lord, and intensely praiseworthy,"² engage the

¹ In the fifteenth-century illustrated *Vita Sancti Augustini* (Boston Public Library MS 1483) the "regula lignea" (III.11) upon which Monnica sees Augustine in her prophetic dream is depicted as a staircase, with Monnica at the top and Augustine climbing a few steps beneath. See Figure 5, and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 51.

² "Magnus es, domine, et laudabilis ualde."

words of Psalm 47:2, but with an important twist: David's "dominus" has become the vocative "domine;" the indirect speech about God in the Psalms has become the direct speech to God in Augustine's autobiography. Augustine has both borrowed and individualized Biblical textuality, revealing at the very beginning of his text a compositional principle which remains central throughout his autobiographical project. The situation is similar, though engaging a different source of textual authority, with the treatment of infancy, the earliest stage of life for Augustine.³ *Infantia* is characterized by its lack of articulate textuality (the word *infans* means "without speech") and comprehensible memory (I.6); thus Augustine cannot gain self-knowledge of this period from himself and his own experience. Fortunately, however, God has given each person the ability "to conjecture about himself (or herself) by way of others" ("ex aliis de se conicere:" I.6), and the writing Augustine sees the discussion of his infancy as an excellent opportunity to establish this principle of personal development for his readers. Augustine learns of and must therefore necessarily express the nature of his infancy through the textual reports provided by other adults, and through carefully reading the physical "texts" provided by the actions of other infants (I.6). Thus Augustine establishes from the very beginning of his spiritual autobiography that self-knowledge of the internal individual can be acquired, even in retrospect and at a distance, by reflecting upon texts from external sources, whether spoken, written, imagined or enacted.

Yet Augustine's learned character, always wanting to know in as experiential manner as possible, does regard infancy with suspicion and almost disdain--"I omit that time: and of

³ Though he expresses curiosity regarding his origin and the nature of his life in the womb (I.6), Augustine has no memory of and is provided with no informative text through which to consider these primary stages of his life.

what interest to me now is that of which I recollect no traces at all?" (I.7).⁴ Thus, he turns quickly to the acquisition of language in childhood, an age distinguished from infancy by clearly delineated memories and the ability to speak:

For I was not an infant who did not speak, but I was now a speaking boy. And I remember this, and later I perceived from where I had learned to speak. (I.8)⁵

The acquisition of speech Augustine perceives and describes from his mature perspective is a very simple model of the technique of progressive meditative reading upon which his character and *Confessiones* are structured. Augustine learns the "words" ("uerba") and "signs" ("signa") for the various objects he perceives and desires through pondering and grasping in his young memory ("prensabam memoria")⁶ the images and ideas of those objects in association with the sounds of their words and aided by the text of motions, gestures, tones and expressions provided by his elders (I.8). Already displaying the characteristics of a thinking, linguistic being, he collects "words positioned in their places in various sentences," creates meaningful "inner-words" from them and his own responses to them in order to understand what the words of others signify for him, and weaves them together in new patterns within his mind in order to produce his own verbal signs and sentences--his simple yet already unique *compositio*--to communicate effectively within his environment (I.8).⁷ Thus the boy is able to express the thoughts and feelings he finds "within" ("intus") himself to those

⁴ "Omitto illud tempus: et quid mihi iam cum eo est, cuius nulla uestigia recolo?"

⁵ "Non enim eram infans, qui non farer, sed iam puer loquens eram. Et memini hoc, et unde loqui didiceram, post aduerti."

⁶ Many manuscripts, however, read "pensabam."

⁷ "Ita uerba in uariis sententiis locis suis posita et crebro audita quarum rerum signa essent paulatim conligebam measque iam uoluntates edomito in eis signis ore per haec enuntiabam." See the discussion of "inner-words" and their role in the acquisition of knowledge in the Introduction.

"outside" ("foris") that self (I.6), and the mature author is able to reveal the strategies and principles at the heart of his autobiography, while ostensibly telling the tale of his young self: having already demonstrated the usefulness of external textuality (the reports of others) in the record of his infancy, he now provides a simple model for the meditative reading of linguistic signs in the description of his own immersion in human language.

Synonymous with the acquisition of language is the advancement into the "tempestuous society of human life" (I.8):⁸ Augustine goes to "school" (*schola*), and is introduced to classical *lectio*, the close grammatical and literary reading of the written page in order to breed excellence in the "speech arts" (*linguosae artes*: I.9). The young Augustine is reluctant to learn and the schoolmaster's "blows" ("plagae:" I.9) frequently cultivate his soul⁹ not only with the skills of how "to read and to write and to count" ("legere et scribere et numerare:" I.13), but also with humility and the need to imitate the devotional example of other men praying to God:

For as a boy I began to pray to you, my aid and refuge,
and in your invocation I broke the knots of my tongue,
and little I prayed to you with not a little affection,
so that I would not be beaten in school. (I.9)¹⁰

Augustine thus creates a spontaneous, almost unconscious, spiritual composition which he is unable to equal again until

⁸ "Vitae humanae procellosam societatem."

⁹ The theme of discipline, as both the rod of correction and the course of studies followed, cultivates the whole of Augustine's autobiography. It is often used in a highly metaphorical way, always recalls these earliest educational experiences, and expands in richness of meaning as the text and its autobiographical subject advance, moving within to become the scourges of conscience in the turmoil of Augustine's spiritual struggle in Book VIII.11 when God persists in his "hidden places...with a severe mercy doubling the scourges of fear and shame" ("in occultis meis...seuera misericordia flagella ingeminans timoris et pudoris").

¹⁰ "Nam puer coepi rogare te, auxilium et refugium meum, et in tuam inuocationem rumpebam nodos linguae meae et rogabam te paruus non paruo affectu, ne in schola uapularem."

Book IX of the *Confessiones*.

For the same education through which God does "well" ("bene") for him (I.12), providing him with the intellectual skills to facilitate all further textual and spiritual development, leads him astray in the world. In the opinion of the mature author, the pagan literature through which he is taught divinely authorizes human sin, "so that shameful crimes might not be considered shameful crimes" (I.16).¹¹ Ironically, the point is made by the autobiographer through a passing mention of Homer's literature, and a more detailed treatment of the young man in Terence's *Eunuch* who condones his own adultery on the basis of a god's behavior--a particularly inappropriate moral use of learning and textuality (I.16). Yet Augustine's appropriate spiritual use of pagan literature to condemn the moral problems he sees as associated with pagan literature is striking, and suggests that what the writing Augustine is most concerned with is the way in which such literature is read and applied to the individual life.¹² Augustine's way actually converts the potentially negative *lectio* of his youth into a positive *compositio*, and does so while facilitating, not endangering, the spiritual development of his various readers. For the technique allows Augustine's text, like the Bible it consistently engages, to speak to audiences reading with different levels of intellectual and

¹¹ "Ne flagitia flagitia putarentur."

¹² I am in agreement here with Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 42, who writes "that it is not so much classical literature itself as a way of reading it that Augustine means to censure." Augustine's use of the classical texts which informed his youth is not only another example of the division "between a certain distrust of the classics and a sincere admiration for them," an ambiguity which he shares with later monastic readers and writers, but also an especially clear demonstration of the monastic belief that "pagan writings, if understood with pure intentions, are a source of edification" (Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 156 and 158). As we have seen in the Introduction, it is the way in which words from any source are used which concerns Augustine.

spiritual understanding,¹³ so that the condemnation of pagan literature sits as a final and inflexible judgement only for those who are themselves unable to understand and emulate the positive way in which the literature is read and engaged in Augustine's text.

By revealing how such literature might be read in a profitable Christian way only beneath the surface of his obvious condemnation of his young self's incorrect reading, Augustine creates a sincere autobiography which discloses immoral behavior, but which can nonetheless be read within the "safe way" ("uia tuta") Augustine recommends for children (I.15)--that is, for the spiritually immature of all ages. That, however, is not the path the young Augustine follows. His is a dangerous route with guides more concerned with the surface beauty of language than with the spirit of truth and charity it contains, more in tune with its eloquence than its meaning. And the naïve young Augustine illustrates beautifully how the "exemplary deeds and words of others impressed into our memories like a seal into wax, shape our moral life in shaping our memories."¹⁴ He soon abandons the initial instinct to prayer for the "smoke and wind" ("fumus et uentus") of rhetorical exercises (I.17), applying the harsh and potentially helpful inscriptions of the schoolmaster's whip to his simultaneous example of doing well in the world, not in the spirit.

Particularly, Augustine excels in following the "erring footsteps of the poetical figments" ("figmentorum poeticorum

¹³ Augustine claims in VI.5 that the Bible "preserves the dignity of its secret in its deeper meaning, offering itself to all with words most open and a most humble style of speaking, and exercising the attention of those who are not light in heart, so that it might catch everyone into its common lap and might throw a few to [God] through narrow apertures" ("secreti sui dignitatem in intellectu profundiore seruaret, uerbis apertissimis et humillimo genere loquendi se cunctis praebens et exercens intentionem eorum, qui non sunt leues corde, ut exciperet omnes populari sinu et per angusta foramina paucos ad te traiceret").

¹⁴ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 71.

uestigia errantes:" I.17). When given a compositional exercise to express a passage of Vergil in prose, with the prize going to the one who most eloquently and exactly expresses Juno's "feeling" ("affectus") of "anger and grief" (*ira ac dolor*), Augustine wins more applause than any of his fellow students (I.17). There is certainly no doubt about his extraordinary textual skills, and that indeed is of great danger to him, for his imitation of the ill-will of pagan literature and its masters is too good for his own good. The young boy's sincere efforts and obvious joy in his own success are presented in the *Confessiones* only under the shadow of the writer's recognition of the disturbing correspondence between the text his younger self reads and composes and the nature of that self truly wandering and erring in worldly concerns. The young Augustine is what he reads and composes,¹⁵ even though, and particularly because, that potentially beneficial textual process does not engage him in conscious spiritual meditation. That is, to borrow the language of *De Doctrina Christiana*, he does not recognize words as signs and inappropriately enjoys them in blind imitation rather than properly and meditatively using them. The boy's "illicit use" ("usus illicitus") of language constitutes a "wasting" ("abusus") of his gift and a "false use of metaphor" ("abusio"),¹⁶ and the result is predictable:

if we wish to enjoy those things which should be used, our journey is impeded, and sometimes even deflected, so that we are either retarded from obtaining these things which should be enjoyed, or even recalled, fettered by the love of inferior things.¹⁷

¹⁵ Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 19, makes a similar point when he asserts that "Augustine is defined, here as elsewhere, by what he loves."

¹⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* I.4.

¹⁷ *De Doctrina Christiana* I.3: "si eis quibus utendum est frui voluerimus, impeditur cursus noster, et aliquando etiam deflectitur, ut ab his rebus quibus fruendum est obtinendis vel retardemur, vel etiam revochemur, inferiorum amore praepediti."

With a tone of regret, the informed autobiographer suggests how the growing "vine-sprout" (*palmes*) of his heart might have been better supported textually through the Christian Scriptures (I.17), aware that his young self would have absorbed and imitated Biblical truth as readily, even if still as shallowly and literally, as he did classical fables, and thus hve been fettered by superior things. Yet the writer realizes, from his later perspective of the human will's dependence upon divine grace and God's all-determining providence,¹⁸ that it could not, for him, have been otherwise. The mature man records this disturbing yet intriguing reality by engaging the *Aeneid* he read as a boy to describe his younger self in relation to his final destiny.¹⁹ The writer reads and ruminates upon the Vergilian text in the active, figurative and personal way which was beyond the boy he was. As a boy he enjoyed having to hold in his memory

the wanderings of I know not which Aeneas, having forgotten my wanderings, and to mourn dead Dido, because she killed herself for love, when meanwhile I, most wretched, endured with dry eyes myself dying from you, God, my life, in these things. (I.13)²⁰

But memorization is not necessarily meditation, and the young man does not turn Vergil's text back upon himself in order to perceive, as does the mature man who creates the brilliant

¹⁸ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, notes that "in the *Confessions* we are faced with the full force of Augustine's new awareness of the limitations of human freedom" (172) and "a dramatic sense of God's intervention in Augustine's life" (174).

¹⁹ Stephen G. Nichols, "Voice and Writing in Augustine and in the Troubadour Lyric," in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. A.N.Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 150, claims that for Augustine *Aeneid* IV "is the great subtext of [the] *Confessions*." Although I believe that there are many "subtexts" informing Augustine's autobiography, I agree that the *Aeneid* is central to the progress of the *Confessiones*. As Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 40, claims, "the *Confessions* are in a sense a recapitulation of Virgilian epic in a Christian universe," and as such they constitute a complex "act of literary assimilation" (41). Fichter presents an interesting discussion of Augustine's use of Vergil in his chapter entitled "The *Confessions* and the *Aeneid*," 40-69.

²⁰ "Aeneae nescio cuius errores oblitus errorum meorum et plorare Didonem mortuam, quia se occidit ab amore, cum interea me ipsum in his a te morientem, deus, uita mea, siccis oculis ferrem miserimus."

rhetorical balance of contradictory parallels in the passage above, that Aeneas' leaving behind the pleasures of Dido to fulfill his destiny parallels Augustine's need to leave behind the world of secular literature in order to follow his true textual role in God's universe; that Dido's self-inflicted fiery death parallels the self-willed progressive death of his own soul; that Aeneas' wanderings in the world parallel his own worldly wanderings and "erratic ways" as a reader;²¹ that he himself, emulating Juno's rage and hatred in his own words, inscribes the reality of those emotions and their consequences in his restless soul. And because he does not read deeply and self-reflectively, his life truly does come to imitate the "errores" of the literary work which he so loved as a child, while aspects of the *Aeneid*, alive in the mature writer's *memoria*, become accurate and rich forms of textual expression to capture both allegorically and rhetorically the spiritual state of the young self. Augustine's autobiography makes the *Aeneid* his own, individualizing and expanding²² the text he has now truly assimilated in order to relate his own internal condition in the past.

Thus the writing self--the mature man engaged in personal *compositio*--demonstrates that the individual life can be read, understood and expressed through the external textuality it encounters, and, in a process from which monastic reading would later draw its model, personally assimilates and alters. This is nowhere clearer and more pervasive in the *Confessiones* than in Augustine's use of Biblical texts, the purest and truest textual "bread of the mouth within" ("panis oris intus") Augustine's converted soul (I.13). Augustine's

²¹ Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 42.

²² Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 44, states that "the boundaries of the world of Aeneas seem to have been extended in the *Confessions*, both geographically and spiritually:" for example, while the *Aeneid* looks "ahead to the vision of a historical future," the *Confessiones* "look beyond history." Perhaps most significantly, and despite the influence of divine providence, Augustine possesses a freedom of will which Aeneas lacks (see Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 56).

language throughout the *Confessiones* is interwoven with Biblical textuality; indeed, at times his text "is practically a tissue of quotations from the Bible,"²³ but a tissue which is clearly his own and in which his internal individuality is powerfully expressed. A particularly rich and striking example of Augustine's Biblical "text-work" is provided by a passage in which the young man's wanderings in the world of rhetoric are characterized and illuminated by paralleling them to, indeed by expressing them in terms of, those of the prodigal son, who "departed abroad into a remote region and there dissipated his substance by living luxuriously."²⁴ Augustine describes himself as

far from your [God's] face in a dark affection. For one does not go from you or return to you with the feet or [through] the spaces of places, or truly that younger son of yours did not seek horses or chariots or ships or fly away on a visible wing or go on the journey by moving the knee, so that living in a remote region he would prodigally dissipate that which you had given to him departing, a sweet father, because you had given, and sweeter to the needy one returning: therefore, [he was/I was] in a capricious affection, for it is dark and it is far from your face. (I.18)²⁵

The passage which discards "the paraphernalia of the epic journey, the chariot and the ship,"²⁶ establishes Augustine's linguistic wanderings as those of a spiritual nature, as "an

²³ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 34, where he is discussing the final books of the *Confessiones*.

²⁴ Luke 15:13: "filius peregre profectus est in regionem longinquam et ibi dissipavit substantiam suam vivendo luxuriose." The lost son eventually returns to his home and is graciously received by his father: Luke 15:20-24.

²⁵ "Longe a uultu tuo in affectu tenebroso. Non enim pedibus aut spatiis locorum itur abs te aut reditur ad te, aut uero filius ille tuus minor equos uel currus uel naues quaesiuit aut auolauit pinna uisibili aut moto poplite iter egit, ut in longinqua regione uiuens prodige dissiparet quod dederas proficiscenti dulcis pater, quia dederas, et egeno redeunti dulcior: in affectu ergo libidinoso, id enim est tenebroso atque id est longe a uultu tuo."

²⁶ Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 56.

epic of the soul struggling to admit the Word,"²⁷ and makes the spiritual reality of the boy's submersion in the externals of language clear.²⁸ As the repetition of "far from your face" emphasizes, the young Augustine is indeed far from his God, yet the theme of return inherent in the story of the prodigal son, as indeed in the passage's return to the very opening words which indicate Augustine's distance from his God, contains the mature author's knowledge and promise of his own gradual return to his God. The metaphorical passage which fuses Augustine and his Scriptural precedent is a fine instance of literally "speaking Bible" in relation to self, of finding oneself and one's own expression within the figural textuality of God's Word.

Yet the rhetorical agility and allegorical originality of both Augustine's personal manipulation of the gospel story and his intertextual integration of it into his autobiography ensure that Augustine's self is not lost or belittled in that Word, as it would have been had he not attained the conversion promised in his Biblical "text-work" and not written his imaginative autobiographical text. Just as Augustine's individuality is apparent in the striking rhetorical structure of the prodigal passage, it is present in the intertextual synthesis of external texts he achieves in the description of his earlier self's spiritual condition. For Augustine's

²⁷ Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood", 21.

²⁸ Although Ferguson, "Crossing of Exile and Language," associates Augustine's "regio," particularly in its later manifestation in Book VII, with "the linearity of language" as a whole (see, for example, 850), Augustine's own metaphorical words in *De Doctrina Christiana* I.4 regarding the return of the "wanderers" (peregrini) to the "homeland" ("patria") which should be enjoyed would suggest, once again, that it is the way in which language is engaged and employed which determines its spiritual value and thus the internal state of the individual reader: "but if the pleasantries of the journey and the motion of the vehicles itself delighted us, and [we were] converted to enjoy these things which we ought to use, we would not want to finish the journey quickly, and entangled in a perverse sweetness we would be alienated from the homeland, whose sweetness would make [us] blessed" ("quod si amoenitates itineris, et ipsa gestatio vehiculorum nos delectaret, et conversi ad fruendum his quibus ute debuimus, nollemus cito viam finire, et perversa suavitate implicati alienaremur a patria, cujus suavitas faceret beatos").

passage combines thematic, imagistic and verbal echoes of Vergil's *Aeneid* (which Augustine has discussed in the preceding chapters), Homer's *Odyssey* and Plotinus' *Enneads*²⁹ with the Biblical text of Luke and creates a complex metaphor of internal exile which merges the classical literary and philosophical traditions with the Christian gospel (and by typological association, with the powerful Old Testament theme of exile). Augustine's *longinqua regio* is found in the "balanced and fitly following words" (*integra et rite consequentia verba*: I.18) of secular rhetoric; it is in those "words" that he wastes his portion; it is from those "words" that he must return; it is with those "words" that he must do so. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Augustine's Christian individuality and the promise of his young self's conversion is expressed through an allegory presented in "balanced and fitly" though uniquely "following words," an original parable of self which merges the textual voices of his experience and allows him to share intimately his personal tale with a variety of audiences. Augustine's urgent and penetrating allegory allows the learned Christian bishop to engage each of his readers personally, to excite with a myriad of assimilated textual "hooks"³⁰ the individual memory of

²⁹ See Plotinus, *First Ennead* VI.8: "'Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland': this is the soundest counsel. But what is this flight? How are we to gain the open sea? For Odysseus is surely a parable to us when he commands the flight from the sorceries of Circe or Calypso--not content to linger for all the pleasure offered to his eyes and all the delight of sense filling his days...What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? This is not a journey for the feet; the feet bring us only from land to land; nor need you think of coach or ship to carry you away; all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see." All references to *The Enneads* are to Stephen MacKenna, trans., *Plotinus: The Enneads*, 4th edn., rev. B.S. Page (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1969). See also Henry Chadwick, trans., *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 20 n.34. O'Connell, in both "The Riddle of Augustine's *Confessions*: A Plotinian Key," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1964):327-372, and *Odyssey of Soul*, sees Augustine's use of Plotinus as central to the structure and progression of the *Confessiones*.

³⁰ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 114, describes medieval methods of memorization and recollection which produce "essentially a *catena*, in which a key-word or phrase acts as the hook for several bits of stored material...The monastic practice so well described by Dom Leclercq, 'whereby the verbal echoes (of Scripture) so excite the memory that a mere allusion will spontaneously evoke whole quotations' is

readers learned in classical Greek and Latin and Biblical textuality alike.

Yet Augustine describes not the good deeds of a saint with which he might be expected to draw his audience on to Christian morality and conversion, but the shallow reading and sinful actions of the spiritually lost. For the young Augustine's darkened intellectual and spiritual state, his reading of all textuality on the surface according to his own selfish involvement in external secular matters and pointedly not for its deeper meaning in relation to the state of his internal self, renders him incapable of turning the "knowledge of letters" ("litterarum scientia") he receives into a "more internal" ("interior") form of moral learning through which he might establish the "written conscience that he is doing to another that which he would not wish to suffer himself" (I.18).³¹ The mature writer, on the other hand, reveals just how deeply the texts he encounters, particularly Biblical texts, are ingrained in his own moral conscience--how he has now assimilated and used his learning in an appropriate spiritual way--by engaging and combining four different verses from the Old and New Testaments in his assessment of his younger self. Paul's understanding of the personal "conscience" ("conscientia") which reveals the "work of the

a version of this type of memorial organization." The Leclercq citation is taken from *Love of Learning*, 91, where Leclercq claims that it is the "deep impregnation with the words of Scripture that explains [this] extremely important phenomenon of reminiscence" which also allows a scriptural phrase [to] suggest quite naturally allusions elsewhere in the sacred books." For Augustine, as indeed for his contemporaries and many learned monks of the later Middle Ages who were steeped in his "monastic style," this "hook" system of allusions included classical as well as Christian texts. The passage under discussion is a perfect example of the way in which Augustine merges classical with Christian allusions in the *Confessiones* and creates a chain of words, images and concepts which hooks and then pulls the reader on to conversion along with the young rhetorician.

³¹ "Scripta conscientia, id se alteri facere quod nolit pati." It is worth noticing the allegorizing power behind a language which almost effortlessly transforms an inner moral awareness into a sophisticated personification--"conscientia."

law written in the hearts" of individuals in Romans 2:15³² is fused with the basic Christian principle found in Tobias 4:16, Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31, that a person should treat others as he or she would like to be treated and not do to others what he or she would not like to endure. Augustine's textually informed conscience is unremitting in its harsh judgement of those, including himself, whose powerful textuality follows the external laws of eloquence, but offends against this essential internal law of charity.

In the powerful expression of both his own conscience and its conscious awareness of his younger self's lack of moral awareness and consequent fall into sin, the mature writer maintains both the external law of eloquence and the internal law of charity. This is nowhere more effective and striking than in Augustine's original and extraordinary "aptitude à analyser ses états de conscience personnels et à les décrire en images fortes et audacieuses."³³ To create the very physical, very graphic and very disturbing images which highlight his revulsion upon recalling the foul "carnal corruptions of [his] soul" (II.1),³⁴ Augustine once again borrows words and images from various classical and Biblical authorities, creating an intertextual metaphor of the physically fascinated and spiritually negligent self. The mature man describes the wasting of his divine "image" ("contabuit species mea") in adolescence through the words of Daniel 10:8 ("my image was altered in me")³⁵ and enhances it with the Plotinian concept of "dispersion" (*dispersio*) from

³² "Opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis."

³³ Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 539.

³⁴ "Carnales corruptiones animae meae."

³⁵ "Species mea inmutata est in me."

beauty and unity into the "many" ("multa:" II.1).³⁶ His putrefaction "before the eyes" of God ("computrui coram oculis tuis") as he seeks to be pleasing in the "eyes of men" (*oculi hominum*) alludes to Psalms 78:10 and 52:6 (II.1), and within his young self, the landscape of Aeneas's wanderings comes alive: he is immersed in a spiritual "whirlpool" (*gurgēs*) not unlike the terrors of Scylla and Charybdis through which Aeneas must pass, and deafened by the hellish "grating chain" (*stridor catena*) of his own worldly and mortal nature (II.2).³⁷ "Mists" ("nebulae") exhaled from the "slimy concupiscence of the flesh" ("limosa concupiscentia carnis"), an obvious allusion to I John 2:16, cast his young "heart" ("cor") into darkness and obscurity (II.2), much like the many words, images and ideas of external texts--texts which themselves share similar words, images and ideas--rise out of Augustine's memory and swirl together in his original prose to envelope and shape the characterization of his young self.

The mature writer has literally saturated the textual description of his internal self as an adolescent with the texts in which he perceives that young soul drowning, the very texts with which it might be and is indeed is being saved. And in so doing, Augustine has created an individual and striking metaphorical style.

Images constituent un élément essentiel du style des *Confessions*, elles évoquent les moments décisifs de l'évolution spirituelle de saint Augustin. Où les mots objectifs semblent faire défaut, l'image est là comme un moyen d'expression qui évoque la réalité intérieure...L'image est, chez Augustin, le langage privilégié de la vie spirituelle, voire mystique...Ce style des *Confessions* est une création très originale. Augustin y a créé une langue interprète de la vie intérieure, des expériences mystiques, des réalités

³⁶ See Plotinus, *Sixth Ennead* VI.1, and Chadwick, *Confessions*, 24 n.1.

³⁷ See Vergil's *Aeneid* III.420-423 and VI.557-558, and Chadwick, *Confessions*, 24 nn.2 and 3; all references to the *Aeneid* are to Remigius Sabbadini and L.Castiglioni, eds., *P. Vergili Maronis: Aeneidos Libri XII*, Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum (Torino, Italy: Paravia, 1944).

transcendantes.³⁸

As we have seen, this new and original style, this effective allegorical way of expressing the new autobiography of the soul, depends largely on borrowed textuality, but textuality altered and fused by the ruminating and composing writer into something different and individual. The mature writer's ability to express accurately through "allegorical rewriting"³⁹ the internal confusion of the young sinner is commensurate with his ability to read and understand that self: in the learned allegorical habit of his own mind, in the authoritative words of the texts which have come before him, he discovers a meaningful pattern in the seemingly meaningless confusion of his early life, and gains through successful *meditatio* and *compositio* the self-understanding and acceptance that accompany it.

Meditatively rereading and rewriting "that most tortuous and entangled knottiness" (*ista tortuosissima et implicatissima nodositas*: II.10) which is his own life, the autobiographer comes to a sad and simple conclusion: "I flowed away from you in [my] youth and I wandered too much off the beaten track from your stability, my God, and I became to myself a region of need" (II.10).⁴⁰ Once again, Augustine merges the textually gleaned idea of the prodigal son of Luke's gospel and the Neoplatonic notion of the soul's destitution when away from God in order to express the spiritual state of his internal self.⁴¹ The metaphor, however,

³⁸ Christine Mohrmann, "Saint Augustin écrivain," *Recherches augustiniennes* 1 (1958):55 and 57.

³⁹ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 339. McMahon is actually discussing Augustine's use of Genesis 3 and Ovid's "Narcissus" in the conversion episode of the *Confessiones*.

⁴⁰ "Defluxi abs te ego et erravi, deus meus, nimis deuius ab stabilitate tua in adulescentia et factus sum mihi regio egestatis."

⁴¹ See Chadwick, *Confessions*, 34 n.17.

has developed considerably since its appearance in Book I,⁴² where it functioned primarily to establish the spiritual nature of the distance and journey it introduces. The "region of need" in Book II advances the notion of being spiritually distant from God in Book I by stating the consequences of that condition as spiritual poverty and hunger, the deep sense of physical and emotional need felt by the prodigal son in Luke 15:14 after he consumes all of his property: "and he began to want" ("et ipse coepit egere"). The advancement of the metaphor of exile into a metaphor of hunger intertwines the imagery of exile with the organic nutritional imagery which is central to both the *Confessiones* and monastic meditation, and also advances the reader's understanding of the young Augustine's internal state. In addition, it implies a regression in that state which is in fact a progression, for, as with the prodigal son, the feeling of destitution and need inspires a search for fulfillment and initiates the eventual return to the Father.

Augustine's metaphorical expression makes it clear, then, that the physical, textual and spiritual food which the young Augustine desires, aspires to and obtains, often dishonestly, is, like the "husks" (*siliqua*: Luke 15:16) the prodigal son is forced to feed upon, far from satiating his hunger. His young soul, in love with the physical world, motivates him to worldly forms of gratification, such as stealing food from his father's cellar (I.19) and pears from a neighbour's tree (II.4) or becoming enamoured with the "theatrical spectacles" ("spectacula theatrica") (III.2), but at a deeper level of his being he longs for more than God's physical creations and hungers spiritually for the divine food that his own shallow perception prevents him from obtaining, from consciously wanting, from even remotely comprehending:

⁴² This metaphor of internal exile and return continues to develop through the course of Augustine's progression and conversion in the *Confessiones*.

there was for me a hunger within for internal food, for you yourself, my God, and [yet] I did not eagerly desire with that hunger, but I was without a longing for incorruptible foods, not because I was full of them, but the emptier [I was], the more squeamish [I became].
(III.1)⁴³

Pervaded with a deep internal "hunger" ("fames") which recalls the "famine" ("fames": Luke 15:14) in the remote region to which the prodigal son flees, but unable to feel and understand that spiritual lack, Augustine's "ulcerous soul" (*anima ulcerosa*) continues to turn to the world and its texts (III.1).

Fortunately, that world provides a text which engages Augustine's intellectual and emotional faculties in a new and exciting way. Augustine stumbles upon the "book of a certain Cicero" (*liber cuiusdam Ciceronis*), the *Hortensius*,⁴⁴ during his usual studies in rhetoric and persuasion (III.4). The book constitutes a textual voice loud enough and an intellectual light bright enough to begin penetrating the dense "fog" ("caligo") which separates Augustine from the "brightness" (*serenitas*) of God's truth (II.3). The mature writer's report of his first encounter with the *Hortensius* presents one of the most striking instances of textual experience resulting in moral and intellectual progress in the *Confessiones*:

truly that book moved my affection and shifted my prayers to you yourself, Lord, and made my vows and desires different. Suddenly all empty hope grew vile to me and I eagerly desired with an incredible boiling of the heart the immortality of wisdom and I began to rise up, so that

⁴³ "Fames mihi erat intus ab interiore cibo, te ipso, deus meus, et ea fame non esuriebam, sed eram sine desiderio alimentorum incorruptibilium, non quia plenus eis eram, sed quo inanior, fastidiosior."

⁴⁴ The *Hortensius* is now lost and available to scholarship only in fragmentary form. See Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 78 n.43. Chadwick, *Confessions*, 39 n.11, points out that many of the surviving quotations from the *Hortensius* are actually cited in Augustine, an indication of the frequency with which Augustine's own texts, autobiographical or otherwise, engage the textuality he recorded as important to his intellectual and spiritual development in the *Confessiones*--yet another suggestion of the historical and intellectual truth of Augustine's autobiography.

I might return to you. (III.4)⁴⁵

Rather than Augustine initially penetrating the deeper sense of this text (for it, in fact, only begins to teach him to do this), it is as if the essential meaning of the *Hortensius* pierces into the spiritual heart of Augustine's self as he reads, allowing the intellectual light of God's truth inherent in it to shine upon his inner eye.

Indeed, as the theme of return recalling the prodigal son's journey back to his father (Luke 15:18 and 20) would suggest, the reading of this philosophical text represents "the first significant turning point in [Augustine's] life and the one in which he was directed towards God;"⁴⁶ in a sense, it initiates his "first religious 'conversion,'"⁴⁷ the beginning of the conversion promised in Augustine's successful "text-work." Perhaps more accurately, however, reading the *Hortensius* initiates an "intellectual conversion"⁴⁸ which inspires Augustine to alter his perspective on learning and life, to change his approach to reading and textuality, "to shift his emphasis from rhetorical form to philosophical content,"⁴⁹ and that has obvious spiritual consequences.⁵⁰ For the textual message of the *Hortensius* provokes him to read beneath the surface of language to the heart of the text's

⁴⁵ "Ille uero liber mutauit affectum meum et ad te ipsum, domine, mutauit preces meas et uota ac desideria mea fecit alia. Viluit mihi repente omnis uana spes et immortalitatem sapientiae concupiscebam aestu cordis incredibili et surgere coeperam, ut ad te redirem."

⁴⁶ Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 61.

⁴⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 39. O'Connell, *Odyssey of Soul*, 52, also refers to the encounter with the *Hortensius* as Augustine's "first conversion."

⁴⁸ David J. Leigh, "Augustine's *Confessions* as a Circular Journey," *Thought* 60 (1985):80.

⁴⁹ Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 23.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 40-41, makes the interesting point that "the exhortation to love 'Wisdom' had always been couched in...strongly religious terms. It is not surprising that by the fourth century, it had come to act as the bridgehead in traditional culture both for the idea of a religious conversion, and even of a conversion to a monastic life."

meaning, rather than just the letter, or even worse, just the external beauty of language, for the first time in his life: "I did not refer that book to sharpening [my] tongue and it was not the speech but that which was spoken which persuaded me" (III.4).⁵¹ And it teaches him to read for this depth of meaning, for fragments of the Truth, wherever they may be found:

I was delighted with this alone in that exhortation, that is, not (to follow) this or that sect, but to love and to seek and to follow after and to hold and to embrace strongly whatever wisdom itself might be; I was excited by that discourse and I was inflamed and I burned.
(III.4)⁵²

By providing him with intellectual illumination and inscribing in him a passionate thirst for "wisdom" (*sapientia*), the *Hortensius* turns him away from complete submersion in secular rhetoric and worldly pleasure, and ultimately to God, but it lacks the "name of Christ" ("nomen Christi"), which, Augustine strategically acknowledges only now, his "tender heart" ("tenerum cor") piously drank in with his "mother's milk" (*lac matris*: III.4), and which he thus brings with him as he reads Cicero's text. The "name of Christ" inscribed in his soul interacts with the inspiring idea of wisdom in Cicero's text to generate the profound spiritual change in Augustine's state of mind. And the words of the Bible interact with the words of the bishop as the autobiographer describes "that health-bringing admonition of the spirit"⁵³ found in the *Hortensius* with an almost exact citation from Paul's letter to the Colossians 2:8:

⁵¹ "Non...ad acuendam linguam referebam illum librum neque mihi locutionem, sed quod loquebatur persuaserat."

⁵² "Hoc...solo delectabar in illa exhortatione, quod non illam aut illam sectam, sed ipsam quaecumque esset sapientiam ut diligerem et quaererem et assequerem et tenerem atque amplexarem fortiter, excitabar sermone illo et accendebar et ardebam."

⁵³ "Salutifera illa admonitio spiritus."

beware lest anyone deceive you through philosophy and empty seduction according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of this world and not according to Christ. (III.4)⁵⁴

Augustine's substitution of "seduction" (*seductio*), a leading astray, for Paul's "deceit" or "trick" (*fallacia*) is extremely revealing, for when combined with the potentially ambiguous language by which the young man's reaction to the *Hortensius* has already been characterized (for example, *concupiscere, aestus, accendere* and *ardere*), it suggests that the young Augustine may have been almost as seduced by Cicero's text as educated.⁵⁵ Thus the mature writer's individualized Biblical "text-work," while clearly revealing his own recognition of the intellectual advice regarding reading and wisdom he received from the *Hortensius*, also indicates to his readers the nature and limitations of the comparatively simple and slightly dangerous yet nonetheless positive and important response of the young man.

For that young man, reading Cicero's text without the "name of Christ" naturally recalls him to his childhood faith and inspires him to read the "sacred Scriptures" (*scripturae sanctae*: III.5). It is the first deliberate, personal

⁵⁴ "Videte, ne quis uos decipiat per philosophiam et inanem seductionem secundum traditionem hominum, secundum elementa huius mundi et non secundum Christum." Paul's text is almost identical, but Augustine has substituted "seductionem" for Paul's "fallaciam," and added the word "huius."

⁵⁵ It is, of course, entirely possible that the Bible Augustine was citing actually contained the word *seductio*, but Anne Wenley Quick, *The Sources of the Quotations in Piers Plowman* (University of Toronto unpublished PhD thesis, 1982), 37, claims that "many medieval 'misquotations' are probably texts which were altered deliberately." Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 91, in discussing whether medieval monks are quoting older versions of the Bible or modifying the Scriptural passages they recall, claims that they are "most frequently...quoting from memory." That Augustine is quoting from memory in this instance might be suggested by the presence of the word "huius" (a word not found in the Vulgate) before the word "mundi," especially given that the insertion would seem to have no particular purpose. If this is the case, my point is still valid, for Augustine's personal mismemorization of the text is almost as significant as a deliberate misquotation. In the final analysis, however, it would seem most prudent to assume that Augustine is deliberately manipulating Paul's words to suit his personal and immediate purposes, particularly since his later engagement with Colossians 2:8 in VIII.2 uses the word *fallacia*: as we have seen, one need not look far or deeply into Augustine's *Confessiones* to detect his blatant and original manipulation of borrowed textuality.

engagement with the Biblical texts recorded in the *Confessiones*, and it is a textual experience well-known to the penetrating eye of the mature writer, but which comes as quite a surprise to the carefully trained young rhetorician, for the Bible is far beyond his spiritual reading abilities at this point in his life:

behold, I see a quality not discovered by the proud and not laid bare to children, but humble in entrance, elevated in ascent and veiled in mysteries, and I was not such that I could enter into it or incline [my] neck to its steps. (III.5)⁵⁶

Alluding to God's resistance of the proud and gift of grace to the humble in both James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5 (verses which themselves recall Proverbs 3:34), Augustine creates a brilliant image of a lofty staircase with a low lintel at its foot, perhaps in a fog-shrouded tower, to describe his initial encounter with the figural writing of the Bible. Lacking both the humility necessary to an acceptance of the Bible's deceptively simple style and, despite the profound effect of the *Hortensius* and the flickerings of light within, the deeper penetration and understanding necessary to a correct reading of its mystical meaning, as well as the desire and tenacity to labour toward the reward of comprehension, the eloquent Augustine views the Scriptures as simply "unworthy" ("indigna") of comparison with Cicero's works (III.5), and obviously unworthy of his own precious time and sophisticated efforts.⁵⁷ "At this point in his life," having partially

⁵⁶ "Ecce uideo rem non compertam superbis neque nudatam pueris, sed incesso humilem, successu excelsam et uelatam mysteriis, et non eram ego talis, ut intrare in eam possem aut inclinare ceruicem ad eius gressus."

⁵⁷ One might sympathize with Augustine on this point, for, according to Chadwick, *Confessions*, xiv, "the Old Latin Bible composed by second-century missionaries in Italy and Africa was colloquial and at times obscure to the point of being barbaric." Elsewhere, Chadwick notes that while the "second-century Old Latin (i.e. pre-Jerome) version was painfully close to translationese for large parts of the Old Testament..., the sublimity of Genesis I and the prologue of St John's Gospel moved some non-Christian readers to deep admiration" (40 n.14). Given that "Genesis and John were the two portions of the Bible upon which...Augustine commented most often and on which he became the interpretive authority" (Freccero,

understood but not enacted the lesson of the *Hortensius*, "Augustine is [still] more interested in matters of style than decisions of the heart."⁵⁸

And the young Augustine certainly does not possess the moral insight and self-knowledge to understand that the problem which exists with his reading of the Bible results not entirely from the nature of the text itself, but primarily from the "pride" ("tumor") blinding his internal "eye" ("acies:" III.5), the swelling "pride" enlarged by his successful textual experiences in secular learning. "Swollen with arrogance" ("turgidus fastu"), the young man simply cannot "penetrate" (*penetrare*) the "more internal meanings" ("interiora") of the Bible (III.5), but the writing bishop can, and, as he has already revealed, he expresses those spiritual meanings with an eloquence designed to spur on those who, like his young self, would not otherwise venture through the humble stylistic doorway to glimpse the lofty allegorical staircase. In this instance, Augustine's allusion above to Proverb 7:27 carries a particularly motivating exhortation, for the "interiora" as they appear in the Biblical verse are the "inner chambers of death" ("interiora mortis") encountered by those who leave the path of Wisdom and become entangled in the "many words and flatteries" (*multi sermones et blanditiae*: Proverb 7:21) of a loquacious and worldly harlot. Augustine's eloquent Biblical "text-work" is startling, almost frightening, because he does not want others who are absorbed in the world, who lack an internal perception of spiritual reality and who are therefore unable to read beyond the "name of Christ" and into the spiritual meaning of the Bible's raw allegory, to become ensnared in the same empty words which

"Autobiography and Narrative," 28), Augustine's own texts stand as historical proof of his argument in the *Confessiones* for the powerful and pervasive effect of eloquent and truthful texts on the human mind.

bind the mind and soul of his young self for the next nine years.

For the combination of intellectual pride (injured and strengthened by the impenetrability of the Bible), limited spiritual vision and a new-found "hunger for *philosophia*"⁵⁹ quite naturally leads Augustine to exactly the kind of materialist and loquaciously deceptive "sectam" Cicero's text had advised him against. He falls in with the Manichees, a religious sect distinguished in the *Confessiones* by a prideful understanding of human action, a view of good and evil which removes responsibility for sin, both personal and original, from the individual human being and places it on the Creator of humanity.⁶⁰ The writing bishop clearly perceives the false and empty nature of the learned and highly linguistic Manichaeian doctrine, and immediately relays this to his readers through strikingly textual metaphors. The Manichaeian doctrine is introduced through its negative relationship to the religious text which already lies stored within Augustine's *memoria*, the "name of Christ" which the Manichees

⁵⁹ Edward Peters, "Aenigma Salomonis: Manichaeian Anti-Genesis Polemic and the *Vitium curiositatis* in *Confessiones* III.6," *Augustiniana* 36 (1986):54; Peters describes this "hunger" as "an ambivalent *curiositas*, both good and evil."

⁶⁰ Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 67, provides a description of Augustine's involvement in the Manichaeian sect which helps to clarify its incredible power to undermine the authority of the Bible and to hinder Augustine's progression for nine long years, and to illuminate the stages of development which do eventually pull him away from the Manichees: "he was searching for a rational, objective, and universal Wisdom. The Catholics said this was the content of their Scriptures. The Manichees asked in reply how this could possibly be when they taught that God forbade animal sacrifices, homicide, and polygamy, yet was said to regard the patriarchs, who did these very things, as righteous men. And who but a credulous fool could accept that God was infinite and at the same time limited to the shape of a human body, however big, as Scripture teaches where it says that God made man in his image? Above all, how could the Catholics account for the origin of evil in a universe which, according to Genesis, was created solely by a good and omnipotent God?". The Manichaeian dualist notion of two universal principles, the one good (the Kingdom of Light), the other evil (the Kingdom of Darkness), battling against each other answered this central question temporarily for Augustine. See the excellent discussion in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 46-60, which claims that the "Manichaeian answer to the problem of evil is the core of the Manichaeism of the young Augustine" (46). The dualism of the Manichees includes a material notion of God which presents an enormous stumbling block for the literal-minded young Augustine. See also Peters, "Aenigma Salomonis," and the brief description of the Manichaeian faith in Chadwick, *Confessiones*, xiv-xv.

figuratively twist and corrupt:

I fell in with men proudly raving, too carnal and loquacious, in whose mouth [were] the snares of the devil and a bird-lime obtained from a mixture of the syllables of your name and of the Lord Jesus Christ and of, our consoler, the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. (III.6)⁶¹

Despite the frequency with which they speak and speak about "these names" ("haec nomina"), the Manichees perceive and penetrate no further than the "sound and clattering of the tongue" (*sonus et strepitus linguae*), for they are shallow readers with hearts "void of truth" (*inania veri*), and while they repeatedly cry out "truth" ("ueritas et ueritas"), their voices, their minds, their souls and thus their lives are pervaded and corrupted by the "false things" ("falsa") they read and speak and write about God and his creation (III.6). In sharp opposition to Paul's advice to Timothy to avoid the "snares of the devil" in order to be a minister of God's Word (*laquei diaboli*: I Timothy 3:7 and II Timothy 2:26), the Manichees, as Augustine's Biblical "text-work" would suggest, create those demonic "snares" with their twisted words.

For the Manichees abuse both the form and content of language, increasing Augustine's internal hunger for the God who is truth, but providing no true spiritual nutrition:

Oh truth, truth, how intimately the marrows of my soul sighed for you even then, when they would sound you to me frequently and in manifold ways, with the voice alone, and in many enormous books. (III.6)⁶²

Engaging both the spoken and the written word, Manichaean doctrine lacks the "inner-words" of meaning and spirit Augustine associates with true knowledge, but the young man, spiritually and intellectually insatiable, trained in rhetoric

⁶¹ "Incidit in homines superbe delirantes, carnales nimis et loquaces, in quorum ore laquei diaboli et uiscum confectum commixtione syllabarum nominis tui et domini Iesu Christi et paracleti consolatoris nostri spiritus sancti."

⁶² "O ueritas, ueritas, quam intime etiam tum medullae animi mei suspirabant tibi, cum te illi sonarent mihi frequenter et multipliciter uoce sola et libris multis et ingentibus!"

to admire the voice and the word, swayed by the satisfying surface symbols of a corrupt religion, easily falls to feast upon the pleasant-seeming, textual food provided immediately by the volumes of the Manichees. "Splendid phantasms" ("phantasmata splendida") are served to the willing young Augustine in fine oral and textual "dishes" ("fercula"), but, like the blessed of Christ's sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:6) and the fools who are Christ's apostles (I Corinthians 4:11) in the Biblical texts he engages, his is a more profound hunger and thirst for the true Wisdom he glimpsed in the *Hortensius*, and though he is "fed" (*pascere*), he is "not sustained" (*non pascere*), though he "eats" (*manducare*), he is "not nourished" (*nec nutrire*), but "drained dry" (*exhaurire*: III.6). And the mature bishop, with the true taste of God now familiar in his "mouth" (*os*), implies that even at this initial stage in the Manichaeian faith something about the spiritual nutrition he was receiving seemed wrong to the young man, for he did not feed "avidly" ("auide") upon the unhealthy and "empty figments" ("figmenta inania") of food produced by the corrupt textual "ploughing" of the Manichees (III.6).⁶³

The metaphor of knowledge and textuality as spiritual nutrition is nowhere more striking, because the nutrition is nowhere more ineffective and corrupt, than when Augustine feasts hungrily but uselessly on Manichaeian fantasies. Indeed, the Manichaeian religion presents an active engagement in religious life which is the exact opposite, almost a corrupt mirror-image, of active spiritual reading. For the Manichees consider themselves not only textually learned in the deepest truths, but even the producers of spiritual beings, contributors to the nature of God through the physical rumination of the fruits of the earth, a kind of chewing of

⁶³ "Delirans," the first verb Augustine uses to describe the actions of the Manichees, literally means "drawing the furrow awry in ploughing," which, as we shall see, is the exact opposite of what Ambrose, God's minister, does with his gift of speech.

the cud which is the utter reversal of the spiritual *meditatio* Augustine needs to develop through and towards:

if anyone holy had eaten a fig, plucked, to be sure, by another's, not his own sin, he would mix [it] in [his] guts and puff from that angels, on the contrary, particles of God indeed, by groaning in prayer and belching: these particles of the highest and true God would have been bound in that fruit were they not loosened by the tooth and stomach of the holy elect.
(III.10)⁶⁴

Rather than the later Augustinian ideal we have seen in the mature author's "text-work" whereby texts are spiritually meditated upon and metaphorically digested so that God's divine truth may enter and fulfill the human soul, the rumination of the Manichees digests material food so that the physical process of human digestion may contribute to the creation and liberation of God. The process gives supremacy to the physical creation and divine power to certain men who consider themselves chosen, good and necessary to the fulfillment of their own Creator. And the young Augustine, in a twisted parody of his ultimate role as a Christian minister of spiritual textuality for the reader of the *Confessiones*, is one of those who serve the "foods" (*escae*) necessary for this corrupt religious rumination (IV.1), a clear indication that his spiritual condition has now regressed beyond the "fables of the grammarians and poets" ("grammaticorum et poetarum fabellae"), which are rarely believed and which can at least be "transformed" (*transferre*) into "true foods" ("uera pulmenta:" III.6).⁶⁵ Indeed, in his unique position as starving Manichee and rhetorical nourisher he has moved further into spiritual exile than the prodigal son himself,

⁶⁴ "Ficum si comedisset aliquis sanctus alieno sane, non suo scelere decerptam, misceret uisceribus et anhelaret de illa angelos, immo uero particulas dei gemendo in oratione atque ructando: quae particulae summi et ueri dei ligatae fuissent in illo pomo, nisi electi sancti dente ac uentre soluerentur."

⁶⁵ *Transferre* can mean "to use figuratively or metaphorically," a sense particularly appropriate to Augustine's use of pagan and indeed all literature in the *Confessiones*.

and thus beyond the Biblical metaphor he has chosen as a means of self-expression and clearly into even a modern concept of individuality: "and I wandered far from you, excluded even from the husks of the pigs whom I fed from husks" (III.6).⁶⁶

Involved in an all too physical rhetoric and an all too material spirituality, the young Augustine searches for God "not according to the intellect of the mind, but according to the sense of the flesh"⁶⁷ and his spirit becomes entangled in the temptations of the "foolish and clamorous woman" ("mulier stulta et clamosa") of Proverbs 9:13-18:

I fell in with that foolhardy woman, in need of prudence, the riddle of Solomon, sitting upon a seat in [her] doorways and saying: "Willingly eat hidden breads and drink sweet, stolen water." She seduced me because she found me living outside in the eye of my flesh and ruminating with myself such things as I devoured through that [eye]. (III.6)⁶⁸

The explicit reference to the Bible, specifically to the "riddle of Solomon" in this case, is extremely rare in the *Confessiones*, for Augustine usually provides little or no indication that he is citing or alluding to the Scriptures. When he does, therefore, he has a good reason, and this instance is no exception, for the explanatory reference not only establishes the feminine figure of Folly as a complex allegory which must be read meditatively and figuratively, but also suggests that he became one with that allegory itself, that his life actually enacted the meaning behind the complex textuality of Solomon. He is no longer only the seduced young man tempted by the loquacious harlot alluded to in the report of his first encounter with the Bible (though he is that too),

⁶⁶ "Et longe peregrinabar abs te exclusus et a siliquis porcorum, quos de siliquis pascebam."

⁶⁷ "Non secundum intellectum mentis..., sed secundum sensum carnis."

⁶⁸ "Offendi illam mulierem audacem, inopem prudentiae, aenigma Salomonis, sedentem super sellam in foribus et dicentem: *Panes occultos libenter edite et aquam dulcem furtivam bibite*. Quae me seduxit, quia inuenit foris habitantem in oculo carnis meae et talia ruminantem apud me, qualia per illum vorassem."

but now the seducer as well, and perhaps that is why the foolish woman's tempting words in the Proverb 9:17 ("stolen waters are sweeter and hidden bread more delightful")⁶⁹ have been altered in Augustine's text to the imperative command one might associate with the *magister*. Augustine is the foolish purveyor of the stolen "foods" of religious heresy--leading both his unnamed childhood friend (IV.4) and his dearest friend Alypius (VI.7) astray into Manichaeism is proof enough of this--and his subtle use of Biblical "text-work" to express this spiritual regression which is worldly progression is specifically designed to touch the hearts and advance the understanding of those learned readers who might find themselves in a similar position.⁷⁰

And indeed, as soon as the reader recognizes him or herself in the mirror of Augustine's Biblical allegory, he or she would be reading, along with the writing bishop, meditatively and self-reflectively, recognizing the divine and personal truths inherent in the allegory, and would thus have left the lack of spiritual vision and internal perception ensnaring the young Augustine behind. But the young man is simply incapable of such a reading. "From where would I see, [I] whose [ability] to see with the eyes reached only to a body and with the mind, only to phantasms?" the autobiographer asks (III.7), recognizing his own exile from a God who was "more internal" than his "innermost" faculties and "more elevated" than his "highest" aspects (III.6).⁷¹ In the words of Plotinus, whose text has already informed Augustine's perception of his own spiritual condition, to reach "the

⁶⁹ "Aquae furtivae dulciores sunt et panis absconditus suavior."

⁷⁰ Peters, "*Aenigma Salomonis*," 62, notes that "Augustine's other usages of the figure of the *Aenigma Salomonis* identify her...sometimes as the error of heretics, *fallax doctrina*," and suggests that this meaning is relevant to Augustine's use of the allegory in the *Confessiones*.

⁷¹ "Vnde uiderem, cuius uidere usque ad corpus erat oculis et animo usque ad phantasma;" and "tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo."

beloved Fatherland," one must look beyond the material and the fantastical: "you must close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use," an "inner vision" which requires you to "withdraw into yourself and look."⁷² The process is exemplified by the writer of the *Confessiones* when he examines his internal self with the help of the allegorical verses of Solomon which textualize and encompass the sinful self of Augustine's past. The example is characteristic, for, as we have seen, Augustine the bishop frequently employs textuality as a means of internal exploration, particularly the Biblical textuality which has shaped his Christian character, and which he elsewhere describes as a kind of "mirror" ("speculum") in which the eye of the mind might perceive a sincere image of the internal "face" (*facies*) and ideally initiate the spiritual reformation of the individual.⁷³

For the young man, however, even the most fundamental spiritual precepts of the Bible remain closed--for instance that God is a "spirit" (*spiritus*: see John 4:24), that he himself is made "to the image of God" ("ad imaginem dei:" see Genesis 1:27), and that a "true internal justice" (*iustitia uera interior*) governs all things in Creation--and such a reading of text and self is therefore impossible: "I did not know these things then and I did not turn towards [them], and they struck my eyes on every side, and I did not see" (III.7).⁷⁴ He joins his material minded Manichaean friends,

⁷² *First Ennead* VI.8 and VI.9.

⁷³ See Augustine's discussion of Scripture as a mirror in *Enarratio in Psalmum CIII* I.4, in Migne, ed., *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi: Opera Omnia*, Patrologiae Latinae 37 (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, n.d.); see also Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 168-169 and 329 n.51. One is immediately reminded of Paul's words in I Corinthians 13:12, that mortal humanity sees only "through a mirror in a riddle" ("per speculum in enigmate").

⁷⁴ "Haec ego tunc nesciebam et non aduertebam, et feriebant undique ista oculos meos, et non uidebam."

and speaks against the words and writers of the Biblical texts provided for and particularly necessary to his internal development, but impenetrable to his inner eye, and rejected by his pride:

blind, I blamed the pious fathers, [who were] not only using present things as God ordered and inspired, but also predicting future things as God revealed. (III.7)⁷⁵
(III.7)

The young man's unwillingness and inability to read (*legere*) and to meditate (*meditari*) in an active spiritual way is reflected in his writing, in the nature of his ability to partake in the final assimilation of personal *compositio*. The "songs" or "poems" ("carmina") he writes and sings observe carefully the stylistic rules of metre (III.7), but ignore the law of the eternal Word and the intellectual "inner-words" underlying all externally manifest words. The wider perspective he requires is there, lying beneath the many rules which guide his own talent, lying in the unified form resulting from the complicated art of poetry, to which the more informed bishop compares the eternal order of all things created in time (III.7),⁷⁶ but the young Augustine exists on the surface of the language which is his special gift, spilling his speech and intellect in secular rhetoric and religious heresy, almost nonexistent in the "deprivation of good" (*privatio boni*) (III.7) which he will eventually learn is evil: God is indeed "far" ("longe") from his "phantasms" (*phantasmata*: III.6).

Fortunately, however, God is neither "far" nor detached from Augustine himself, as the revelatory dream given to his faithful and persistent mother clearly shows. The dream is one of the most profound and striking ways in which God's "hand"

⁷⁵ "Reprehendebam caecus pios patres non solum, sicut deus iuberet atque inspiraret, utentes praesentibus, verum quoque, sicut deus reuelaret, futura praenuntiantes."

⁷⁶ The analogy provides yet another example of Augustine's metaphorical expression of concepts beyond mortal perception in linguistic terms.

(*manus*, an echo of Psalm 143:7) extends directly into Augustine's life to rescue his sinful "soul" (*anima*, an echo of Psalm 85:13) from the "deep darkness" (*profunda caligo*) into which it has willingly fallen (III.11). In her "dream" ("somnium"), Monnica

saw herself standing on a certain wooden rule and coming toward herself a splendid young man, cheerful and smiling upon her, when she was mourning and wasted with sorrow. When he had sought (for the purpose of teaching, as is usual, not of learning) from her the causes of her grief and daily tears and she had replied that she was mourning my destruction, he ordered that which would free her from care, and admonished her to direct her attention and see [that] where she was, I was there also. And when she directed her attention, she saw me next to herself standing on the same rule. (III.11)⁷⁷

For Monnica, the dream is a divine message of prophecy and consolation dramatized and textualized through images and the voice of God's spokesperson; it promises Augustine's eventual conformity with her Christian "rule" (he is, according to the illuminator of the fifteenth-century *Vita Sancti Augustini*, only a few steps beneath her, though still gesturing in rhetorical fashion),⁷⁸ and thus his ultimate conformity with that Word within which shapes his true self.

For the writing bishop, the dream he rereads for himself and textualizes for his reader is a manifestation of God's Word regarding his life, an internal glimpse of God's eternal *compositio* granted particularly to Monnica in response to the

⁷⁷ "Vidit enim se stantem in quadam regula lignea et aduenientem ad se iuuenem splendidum hilarem atque adridentem sibi, cum illa esset maerens et maerore confecta. Qui cum causas ab ea quaesisset maestitiae suae cotidianarumque lacrimarum docendi, ut adsolet, non discendi, gratia, atque illa respondisset perditionem meam se plangere, iussisse illum, quo secunda esset, atque admonuisse, ut attenderet et uideret, ubi esset illa, ibi esset et me. Quod illa ubi attendit, uidit me iuxta se in eadem regula stantem."

⁷⁸ Boston Public Library MS 1483 depicts Monnica, in contrast, with her hands together in prayer: see Figure 5, and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 51. The situation is similar with the preceding illustration, which depicts the Manichaean Augustine readmitted to Monnica's table and conversation, but retains the distinction between them by illustrating Augustine gesticulating in a sign of dialectic argumentation and Monnica holding her hands in a gesture of prayer: see Figure 6, and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 49.

devout prayers and abundant tears of her text to God. The intimate textual relationship between God and his faithful is emphasized by the echoes of the voice of Lamentation 1:12 and 13⁷⁹ which the writer integrates into the report of the dream, echoes of despair which Monnica's dream and Augustine's passage convert to promise and hope. The internal and individual nature of this textual relationship is clearly stated in the writer's description of the dream's origin and purpose, a description engaging Psalm 9:38 (Psalm 10a:17) and the direct and intimate relationship there between God and the "poor" (*pauper*), whose "heart" (*cor*) God's "ear" ("auris") hears:

whence [came] this [dream], except because your ears were at her heart, Oh, you good, omnipotent [one], who care thus for each one of us, as if you care only for [each one], and care thus for all, as if singular?
(III.11)⁸⁰

And the highly textual way in which God's intimate concern for Monnica and Augustine as individuals is perceived is indicated by Augustine's narrative and its rich engagement of Biblical texts, as indeed by the strikingly textual responses of Augustine's medieval readers, like the illuminator of Boston Public Library MS 1483, who depicts Monnica praying on her knees before an altar, with tears in her eyes, and the head and torso of God or Christ, declaiming in an iconographical symbol of speech, above the altar; a scroll with the words "be secure, for where you [are], there [is] he" passes between God and the altar.⁸¹

The readings of both Monnica who dreams and the writing Augustine who textualizes, though very different, directly

⁷⁹ "Attend and see" (*attendere et videre*); and "wasted with sorrow" (*maerore confecta*).

⁸⁰ "Vnde hoc, nisi quia erant aures tuae ad cor eius, o tu bone omnipotens, qui sic curas unumquemque nostrum, tamquam solum cures, et sic omnes, tamquam singulos?"

⁸¹ See Figure 5, and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 51. The scroll reads: "esto segura quia ubi tu, ibi ille."

engage the Word of God in their individual ways, but for the young Augustine, both the Word of God and the words of the angelic and cheerful young man must be mediated by Monnica's sound spiritual reading, a reading in keeping with the spontaneous prayer which rises from her heart and far superior to the interpretation with which the highly trained rhetorician who is her son attempts to lead her astray:

whence [came] that, namely the fact that when she had narrated that vision to me, and I tried to interpret it in such a way that she would not despair that she would be that which I was, immediately, without any hesitation, she said "No; for it was not said to me: where he [is], you [are] there also, but: where you [are], there he [is] also". (III.11)⁸²

With solid textual support, Monnica's close reading of her dream and her assurance of its validity⁸³ provides for Augustine an example of the faithful spiritual reading of a divine allegorical text, a reading which considers both the letter and the spirit of the words and images provided. It is a model which reveals to the young man that there is yet another, better way of reading, a way both foreign and shocking to Augustine, a model which moves him deeply:

I confess to you, Lord, my recollection, as far as I recall--that which I have often not kept silent--that I [was moved] more by that response of yours through my vigilant mother, namely that she was not disturbed by the extremely similar falsehood of [my] interpretation and

⁸² "Vnde illud..., quod cum mihi narrasset ipsum uisum et ego ad id trahere conarer, ut illa se potius non desperaret futurum esse quod eram, continuo sine aliqua haesitatione: 'Non' inquit; 'non enim mihi dictum est: ubi ille, ibi et tu, sed: ubi tu, ibi et ille.'"

⁸³ The question of the spiritual validity of visionary or revelatory dreams is of central importance to medieval visionary literature as a whole, and is, in fact, one of the points which strongly links such literature to medieval autobiography. For the validity of a person's dream, as indeed of any textual representation of their internal thought and life, is judged largely on the basis of the external nature of his or her life, by the moral actions which result from his or her character, actions which themselves, as we have seen in the Introduction, result from correct reading. Monnica's sterling moral character recommends her dream highly, and the fact that Augustine has just spent several chapters (III.7-9) justifying the notion of an eternal order in Creation and the validity of prophecy clearly indicates his intentions. See the excellent discussion of visionary validity, the medieval process of *probatio* and autobiographical characterization in medieval literature in Kerby-Fulton, "Visionary Autobiography."

[that] she so quickly saw what was to be seen--that which I, certainly, had not seen before she had spoken--even then I was moved [more by that] than by the dream itself.
(III.11)⁸⁴

While the images and dialogue of her prophetic dream hold the most power for Monnica, her careful and accurate reading of its meaning, God's Word related through the mediating text of her speech and interpretation, is central for Augustine. Augustine relies on the authority of Monnica--an earthly voice of helpful *lectio*--to extract the spirit of the metaphorical text and retextualize it for him, while she immediately believes the authority of God--the internal allegory containing the meaning of God's truth--achieving a simple, yet profound, accessible, yet personal meditative reading not unlike the writing bishop's allegorical reading of the Bible texts his *Confessiones* engage, but still far beyond the young Augustine's twisted, worldly perception. Thus Monnica is given security and peace by the dream-image of Augustine's true self, while Augustine, though he is moved by the dream individualized in his memory by her interpretation and is admitted again to her Christian home and table, is left to twist and turn restlessly in his spiritual "darkness" (*caligo*: III.11).

Like the dream of Monnica, the autobiographical composition which mingles the negative and detrimental textuality of Augustine's youth with the positive and illuminating Biblical texts of his maturity has metaphorically and rhetorically promised the future conversion of the young Augustine as much as it has created an engaging and inspiring text which is a sincere expression of the sinful internal self. The promise of spiritual understanding and Christian

⁸⁴ "Confiteor tibi, domine, recordationem meam, quantum recolo--quod saepe non tacui--amplius me isto per matrem uigilantem responso tuo, quod tam uicina interpretationis falsitate turbata non est et tam cito uidit quod uidendum fuit--quod ego certe, antequam dixisset, non uideram--etiam tum fuisse commotum quam ipso somnio."

conversion is present in the writer's productive *compositio* of his still unproductive *lectio*, and through Augustine's meditative process the two Augustines and their very different perspectives are united in a true prophecy which encompasses the whole of the progressively changing individual. But the young Augustine's spiritual progression is to be the gradual and active ascent of a complex and learned intellectual capable of attaining the rich and assimilative self-expression which marks the individuality at the heart of the *Confessiones*. The nameless bishop "nourished" (*nutritus*) in the church and trained in God's "books" (*libri*) whom Monnica consults for spiritual assistance in regard to her son clearly states this when he claims that Augustine, aided by prayer, will progress spiritually through a personal exploration of textuality: "leave him there [in Manichaeism]. Only, pray to the Lord for him; he himself will discover by reading what that error may be and how great the impiety" (III.12).⁸⁵ Refusing to teach Augustine what is right and wrong --to engage in a simple textualization process of *lectio* for him-- he provides (ironically, of course, through Monnica, who retextualizes in her own narrative the whole encounter for Augustine) his autobiography, a biographical example for Augustine, Monnica and the reader of how the spiritually active reading he recommends and Monnica has demonstrated can progressively and profoundly change a life, can in fact turn a learned Manichee into a devout Christian minister:

he also narrated that he, too, had been given as a little one to the Manichees by his seduced mother, and had not only read but also often written out nearly all of their books; and that it had appeared to him, without any disputing and demonstrating against [it], how that sect

⁸⁵ "Sine illum ibi. Tantum roga pro eo dominum; ipse legendo reperiet, quis ille sit error et quanta impietas."

ought to be avoided: therefore, he had fled. (III.12)⁸⁶

The model of spiritual progression through the personal engagement of textuality parallels the path I have been tracing through both the intellectual alterations of the young reading rhetorician and the progressively allegorical individuality of the mature reflecting autobiographer; it is a model which would in the later Middle Ages be called monastic. Ascension through active *lectio* and *meditatio* to the personal morality of spiritual *compositio* is imminent for the young man: the rhetorician who so skilfully manipulates the language he has only begun to penetrate is more than capable; yet, as the writer's allegorical "text-work" beautifully illuminates, he remains ensnared in the intricate weave of the textuality which must eventually facilitate his progress.

⁸⁶ "Etiam narravit se quoque parvulum a seducta matre sua datum fuisse manichaeis et omnes paene non legisse tantum uerum etiam scriptitasse libros eorum sibi que adparuisse nullo contra disputante et conuincente, quam esset illa secta fugienda: itaque fugisse."

Chapter Two: *Meditatio*

Ambrose, Spiritual Reading and Self-Knowledge

Augustine's progression from the linguistic snares of a shallow *lectio* to a more active *meditatio* upon the spirit beneath words truly begins in Book V of the *Confessiones*. After the empty learning and the sorrowful despair of Book IV, Book V opens with a distinct note of hope: God is seen as pervasive and active not only in the souls of the faithful, but even in a soul hardened by the world and blinded to the spirit, "because a closed heart does not shut out your eye, and the hardness of men does not repel your hand" (V.1).¹ God's creations, particularly those things perceived through the sense of the flesh which still governs Augustine's actions, are seen as an active means of spiritual ascent for the exhausted "soul," which "may lift itself up, leaning upon" those creations, and "crossing over" to God (V.1),² enacting its own return to the Father. The language and methodology recall Augustine's discussion in *De Doctrina Christiana*, his treatise on reading the Scriptures, of the proper use of created things in order to "support" the individual ascending to blessedness.³

This metaphor of leaning intellectually and spiritually, "propped up" with physical realities, during the process of internal progression comes to life in the iconography of Augustinian meditation in the Middle Ages. The figure of Augustine is frequently illustrated with his head leaning to one side, or slightly forward, propped up on one hand, the

¹ "Quia oculus tuum non excludit cor clausum nec manum tuam repellit duritia hominum."

² "Exurgat in te a lassitudine anima nostra innitens eis, quae fecisti, et atransiens ad te, qui fecisti haec mirabiliter: et ibi refectio et uera fortitudo."

³ *De Doctrina Christiana* I.3; see my discussion in the Introduction above.

physical aspect of his body literally supporting the weighty thoughts of self-reflection as he reads or meditates. In depictions of that most profound act of internal reading and composing, Augustine's spontaneous conversion, Augustine is almost always illustrated leaning listlessly, often with an agitated countenance, upon his own hand (or hands) under the fig tree, sometimes with a book open before him or in the sky above him.⁴ Courcelle calls the position "méditative,"⁵ and Carruthers associates it with Augustine's "meditational composition,"⁶ which, as we have seen, is both an internal intellectual and an external physical process.⁷ The prevalence of this meditational iconography is an indication that medieval readers interpreted the *Confessiones* as an autobiography of spiritual self-progression through the active and intellectual self-reflection of *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio*, an individual progression to and beyond

⁴ See Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14; Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, plates 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16 and 19; and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 81 (Figure 4). The trend continues into the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a glance at plates 21, 27, 34, 35, 36 and 43 in Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, reveals. The fifteenth-century miniature reproduced as plate 8^{bis} in Courcelle, *Les Confessions* (see Figure 15), depicts Augustine in the *regio dissimilitudinis* of Book VII in the same meditative position; the cover of the Chadwick translation of the *Confessions* sports a beautiful colour detail of this illustration. Boston Public Library MS 1483 also depicts Augustine leaning meditatively, but flat on his back with his eyes closed, as he discovers himself in the *regio dissimilitudinis* (Figure 3, and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 73). The cover of James Marshall Campbell and Martin R.P. McGuire, eds., *The Confessions of St. Augustine: Books I-IX (Selections)* (Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 1984), depicts an early sixteenth-century German wood carving of "St Augustine Pondering" in the meditative position, but as the older bishop.

⁵ Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 170.

⁶ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 337 n.34.

⁷ The "pose of head in hand" which I am calling meditative was also used in the Middle Ages "to designate a dreamer-seer" (see Kathleen L. Scott, "The Illustrations of *Piers Plowman* in Bodleian Library MS. Douce 104," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 4 [1990]:17), an association which further supports a textual and autobiographical reading of the *Confessiones*, for dreams are not only a subconscious or divinely inspired form of meditation and composition, but also frequently pervaded with autobiographical content and clearly associated with Biblical and medieval autobiography.

conversion⁸ which Augustine insists cannot be achieved through the "mouth" (*os*), the external textuality, whether of the self or an other, but only through this active spiritual energy of the soul rising upon internal textuality (V.1).

Yet the props are as necessary as God's grace to Augustine's individual development, for, like the dream given to Monnica, they are the means through which God extends the blessing of his hand and "harasses" (*vexare*) individuals who have turned astray so that they might be "converted" (*convertere*: V.2). In Augustine's case, God "presses insistently" through the "increasingly frequent and various voices" (XIII.1)⁹ of the written texts, spoken tales or meaningful events and images upon which Augustine's learned soul naturally, often sleepily and blindly, leans. It is through the textuality of his experiences that God spurs him on to conversion, drawing him "from a distance" ("de longinquo:" XIII.1), specifically from the remote internal exile of material fascination and spiritual blindness. Words, the concrete and physical symbols of abstract and intelligible concepts, exist within, partake of and express the realms perceived by both the *sensus carnis* and the *oculus mentis*, and thus provide a supportive *via*, a metaphorical staircase from material to spiritual vision. As the autobiographer prepares to relate the young Augustine's essential progression through textuality and into spiritual vision, he himself "leans" upon his God, his memory and the many texts he has encountered in his life, writing with "the hand of the tongue" (*manus linguae*) (V.1) which in Proverb 18:21 is said to hold both "death and life" ("mors et vita"), an assimilative text of self which he hopes will provide a concrete and meditative

⁸ I am reminded here of the twisted scroll held by bishop and pilgrim opening the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 253 *Confessiones*. See Figure 1, Courcelle, *Recherches*, plate 16, Page and Bushnell, *Matthew Parker's Legacy*, plate 8, and my discussion in the Introduction above.

⁹ "Institisti crebrescens multimodis uocibus."

means of ascent through its rich and various "voices" for both his reader and himself.

The most authoritative and influential textual voice in the meditative progression of Augustine's autobiography is heard when Augustine comes to Milan and particularly "to the bishop Ambrose" ("ad Ambrosium episcopum:" V.13). Ambrose, both structurally and thematically central to Augustine's internal journey, is God's "dutiful cultivator" (*pious cultor*), who piously and diligently serves in the silver dish of his eloquence the spiritual nutrition of the Scriptural texts to all who will listen (V.13). Immediately adopting a strikingly Biblical vocabulary and imagery, the writing Augustine describes Ambrose's "eloquences" as "actively" serving the "fat" of God's "grain," the "fertility" of God's "oil" and the "sober drunkenness" of God's "wine" to His "people" (V.13),¹⁰ including the skeptical and despairing young man Augustine then was. The spiritual nutrition which, as it is related in Augustine's autobiographical text, serves the very food God is said in the Scriptures to bestow in the very words of those Scriptures (Psalms 80:17, 147:14, 4:8 and 44:8), includes for Augustine not only a reading of the Bible which both illuminates and goes far beyond the letter of language, but also a practical and symbolic lesson by example in how to read spiritually in a conscious and deliberate fashion, and finally, a clear and promising image of what he himself might one day be. The influence of Ambrose--his words, both written and spoken, and his actions, read symbolically like words--on Augustine is indeed "far out of proportion to any direct contact which the two men may have had."¹¹

¹⁰ "Eloquia strenue ministrabant adipem frumenti tui et laetitiam olei et sobriam uini ebrietatem populo tuo."

¹¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 87, where he asserts that "we are dealing, here, with a relationship between two people whose eddies may escape the historian." Indeed, Augustine himself, if Chadwick, *Confessions*, 3 n.2, is correct in his interpretation of "per ministerium praedicatoris tui" (I.1), places the influence of Ambrose next to that of Christ in inspiring and instilling his Christian

To understand this profound influence and the essential change it initiates in Augustine's spiritual awareness, however, it is important to understand the significance of the young man's previous experiences,¹² and particularly the way in which his recent engagement with the eloquent but empty speech of Faustus, a kind of "bishop of the Manichees" ("manichaeorum episcopus:" V.3), has prepared his mind and soul for the encounter with Ambrose. Driven by his unsatiated internal hunger, Augustine has been asking the Manichees difficult philosophical and theological questions for years, and has received, the reader will recall, less than "husks." He has heard of Faustus' "reputation, that he was most skillful in all honourable teachings and above all educated in the liberal disciplines,"¹³ and has laid his hope in the "knowledge" (*scientia*) that Faustus will serve him "to eat" ("comedendum:" V.3). Searching for the Wisdom on which the *Hortensius* focused his attention, Augustine tastes Faustus' speech and experiences a wonderful eloquence woven with very little substance, a text which lacks the intellectual nutrition that Augustine has come to seek, even if still in a rather worldly way, in his reading:

when he came, I experienced a man agreeable and delightful with words, and babbling much more sweetly those very things which they [the Manichees] are wont to say. But what [did] the most comely servant of precious cups do for my thirst? My ears were already filled with such things, and thus they did not seem better because they were said more elegantly; neither [did they seem] true because eloquent, nor [did] the soul [seem] wise

faith, and does so in the opening chapter of the *Confessiones*.

¹² As Bäuml, "Varieties and Consequences," 253, writes, "the reception, the understanding, of written texts, as of everything else, is conditioned by the expectations of the perceiver, which are formed by prior experience." The necessity of each step to the ascension and comprehension of Augustine's textual staircase makes it difficult for the ruminative reader of the *Confessiones* to skip over or disregard any aspect of Augustine's text.

¹³ "Fama enim de illo praelocuta mihi erat, quod esset honestarum omnium doctrinarum peritissimus et apprime disciplinis liberalibus eruditus."

because of an agreeable countenance and graceful eloquence. (V.6)¹⁴

Augustine has already been taught by God's "wondrous and hidden means" (*miri et occulti modi*: V.6), particularly through the rustic yet intelligent discourse of the wise old physician of Book IV,¹⁵ that the surface beauty of a text--the "precious cups" which had so entranced his young mind--is only a small part of the textual experience, and that to read wisely one must realize that a statement is neither "true because eloquently spoken," nor "false because the signs of the lips sound disorderly," or, conversely, neither "true because pronounced without ornament," nor "false because the speech is splendid" (V.6).¹⁶ Like "wholesome and unwholesome foods" ("*cibi utiles et inutiles*"), "wisdom and folly" (*sapientia et stultitia*) can be served in "words" (*verba*) woven variously; and the words, as signs, are in the end only as useful (or useless) as that which they signify (V.6). Augustine seeks the "inner-words" of Wisdom behind what the Manichees claim are sound spiritual words, but finds in Faustus' eloquent speech only folly, a figure with whom the autobiographer's "text-work" has already acquainted us. Faustus teaches many secular things that are revealed false when Augustine actively compares them in an intellectual

¹⁴ "Vbi uenit, expertus sum hominem gratum et iucundum uerbis et ea ipsa, quae illi solent dicere, multo suauius garrientem. Sed quid ad meam sitim pretiosiorum poculorum decentissimus ministrator? Iam rebus talibus satiatae erant aures meae, nec ideo mihi meliora uidebantur, quia melius dicebantur; nec ideo uera, quia diserta, nec ideo sapiens anima, quia uultus congruus et decorum eloquium."

¹⁵ Augustine encounters the physician, a worthy man of the world who urges him not to pursue the texts and doctrine of the astrologers (*mathematici* and *genethliaci*), early in Book IV, immediately before the death of his childhood friend. Augustine "engaged and immovable, would cleave to his discourses--for they were pleasant and grave, with a vivacity of meanings, [but] without a refinement of words" ("*eius sermonibus--erant enim sine uerborum cultu uiuacitate sententiarum iucundi et graues--assiduus et fixus inhaerebam*:" IV.3). The physician's text demands the same depth of reading as the *Hortensius*, but lacks the eloquence.

¹⁶ "Iam ergo abs te didiceram nec eo debere uideri aliquid uerum dici, quia eloquenter dicitur, nec eo falsum, quia incomposite sonant signa labiorum; rursus nec ideo uerum, quia impolite enuntiatur, nec ideo falsum, quia splendidus sermo est."

meditation to the texts of the philosophers and the world itself, and the great Manichee's discourse upon spiritual matters is thus seriously compromised. Yet Faustus claims that the "Holy Spirit, the consoler and enricher of the faithful, was in him personally with plenary authority,"¹⁷ and thus that those "false teachings" ("falsa") of both a secular and spiritual nature are true and divine (V.5), making himself, by virtue of his eloquent speech, a "great snare of the devil" (V.3).¹⁸

Yet the text of Faustus is a "snare" through which God, working in his wondrous and hidden and often ironic ways, spurs on the progression of Augustine's soul:

that Faustus, who stood out as a snare of death for many, had now begun, neither willing nor knowing, to loosen [the snare] in which I had been caught. (V.7)¹⁹

Faustus does this not only by revealing the weakness of the Manichaeian textual weave, but also, and most disturbingly, by reflecting a sinful and shocking self-image for Augustine's eyes (both external and internal, past and present) to read:

my heart and my recollection are before you [God], who were then acting with me in the hidden secret of your providence and were already turning my dishonourable errors before my face, so that I might see [them] and detest [them]. (V.6)²⁰

The mature man's Biblical "text-work" reveals a sophisticated understanding of the self-image: he engages Peter's condemnation in Acts 8:21 of Simon's "heart" for wanting to

¹⁷ "Sed spiritum sanctum, consolatorem et ditatorem fidelium tuorum, auctoritate plenaria personaliter in se esse persuadere conatus est."

¹⁸ "Magnus laqueus diaboli:" the language recalls, as it did in III.6, that of I Timothy 3:7 and II Timothy 2:26, but Faustus is "magnus," with speech more powerful and enticing than the average Manichee.

¹⁹ "Ille Faustus, qui multis laqueus mortis extitit, meum quo captus eram relaxare iam coeperat nec uolens nec sciens."

²⁰ "Coram te cor meum et recordatio mea, qui me tunc agebas abdito secreto prouidentiae tuae et inhonestos errores meos iam conuertebas ante faciem meam, ut uiderem et odissem."

buy the gift of God ("for your heart is not right before God"),²¹ and combines it with the words of God's promise in Psalm 49:21 to "set" the sinner "in a clear light before" his own "face" in order to facilitate his salvation ("I will set you in a clear light and place [you] opposite to your face").²² He clearly perceives the abuse of God's gift, in this case of speech, in the Manichaean textuality of both Faustus and the young Augustine, and understands God's action and intention in providentially sending His eternal Text to harass the young man through the ambiguous and troubling image of Faustus.

For the proud young Manichaean, who is not yet capable of such a rich and spiritual reading, Faustus is simply far too similar to him for comfort.²³ Faustus' learning is more limited than Augustine's, but not unlike it; his use of it is hauntingly similar:

I at once experienced a man wanting in the liberal disciplines, except grammar, and his [grasp] of this itself [was] customary. And because he had read some Tullian orations and very few books of Seneca and some of the poets and whatever volumes of his sect were written in Latin and in an orderly way, and because the daily exercise of discussing was present, thus the eloquence, which was made more acceptable and more seductive by the government of his nature and with a certain natural charm, sufficed. (V.6)²⁴

Like Augustine, Faustus is both a recipient and a server of

²¹ "Cor enim tuum non est rectum coram Deo."

²² "Arguam te et statuum contra faciem tuam."

²³ So similar, in fact, that Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 36-37, uses Augustine's description of Faustus' speech to describe that "ideal product" of the rhetorical education Augustine received, the elegant and persuasive "orator."

²⁴ "Expertus sum prius hominem expertem liberalium disciplinarum nisi grammaticae atque eius ipsius usitato modo. Et quia legerat aliquas Tullianas orationes et paucissimos Senecae libros et nonnulla poetarum et suae sectae si qua uolumina latine atque composite conscripta erant, et quia aderat cotidiana sermocinandi exercitatio, inde suppetebat eloquium, quod fiebat acceptius magisque seductorium moderamine ingenii et quodam lepore naturali."

the Manichaeian texts; and as with Augustine, "many were implicated in him through the enticement of sweet-speaking" (V.3).²⁵ Like Augustine and all the believers of the Manichaeian faith, he is prideful and does not wish to be considered "small" (*paruus*: V.5). The self-image Faustus provides in the physical reality of the world does for the young man what Solomon's textual allegory of Folly does for the composing bishop: both provide a mirror for the self-understanding which is necessary to personal development. Faustus presents a "text" which the worldly young man is able to "read," and one which contains a rather damning hope, for even Faustus is humbled before Augustine's prideful intellect: he wisely refuses to dispute with Augustine and soon becomes the rhetorician's literary pupil. "The temperance of a confessing mind is more beautiful than those things which I wanted to know" (V.7),²⁶ the older writer asserts, recognizing the potential for growth even in Faustus, yet passing harsh judgment upon his younger self.

And that younger self enacts both the potential and the ambiguity of this lesson, reading enough in the metaphorical text God has written beneath Faustus' speech and little enough in Faustus' speech itself to reinitiate his progression and enter a stage which appears on the surface to represent yet another regression. "Despairing" ("desperans") of Manichaeian answers to his intellectual and spiritual questions, "despairing" of the Manichaeian faith as a means to truth, Augustine moves away from the Manichees in mind if not in deed, and into a spiritual limbo:

all my effort, by which I had decided to proceed in that sect, utterly perished once that man was known, not so that I would separate from them completely, but as if not finding anything better than that into which I had already rushed in whatever way, I had decided to be

²⁵ "Multi implicabantur in eo per inlecebram suauiloquentiae."

²⁶ "Pulchrior est...temperantia confitentis animi quam illa, quae nosse cupiebam."

contented in the mean time, unless by chance anything,
which ought more to be chosen, might shine forth.
(V.7)²⁷

Yet even this period of anxious spiritual indecision and restless despair finds and is represented by a textual authority, the Academics, who, in what the bishop now admits is the limited reading of the young man, "had judged" that one "ought to doubt" concerning all things and "that nothing of truth can be comprehended by men" (V.10).²⁸ That such intellectual despair is entirely characteristic of neither the Academics nor Augustine is indicated by their writing a text and his reading a text in support of that skeptical knowledge. That this regressive period actually represents an important progression is indicated by the fact that Augustine's spiritual instability is as central to the profound influence of Ambrose upon his internal development as is his continuing lack of personal and spiritual understanding: in order to see and accept a new faith, he must first lose faith in his previous religion.

The sharp opposition between these religions, between the texts, the knowledge and the characters of Faustus and Ambrose is heralded immediately by the rich Biblical vocabulary and agricultural imagery which, as we have seen, Augustine engages to introduce and describe Ambrose, his speech and his actions. It is an intertextual imagery which engages the theme of spiritual nutrition found in the Bible and assumes a rumination of textuality like that practiced in the later medieval monastic process of *lectio, meditatio* and *compositio*, and entirely unlike the rumination of the Manichees. As God's

²⁷ "Conatus omnis meus, quo proficere in illa secta statueram, illo homine cognito prorsus intercidit, non ut ab eis omnino separarer, sed quasi melius quidquam non inueniens eo, quo iam quoquo modo inrueram, contentus interim esse decreueram, nisi aliquid forte, quod magis eligendum esset, eluceret."

²⁸ "De omnibus dubitandum esse censuerant nec aliquid ueri ab homine comprehendi posse decreuerant."

ploughman, Ambrose multiplies and provides with his thought and tongue and pen spiritual sustenance for God's faithful to accept and taste and ingest. For the proud and despairing young man, the nutrition received contains not only words and meanings and actions, but this spiritual readerly process of textual ascension and service itself: Ambrose teaches Augustine how to teach himself by actively reading and assimilating the spiritual knowledge of a universal God and an individual self. That that is indeed God's intention (His divine Text) in their meeting is clearly expressed by the autobiographer's elegant rhetoric: "to him I was led not knowing by you, so that through him I would be led knowing to you" (V.13).²⁹ The note of self-awareness inherent in this spiritual awareness suggests the significance of individuality in Augustine's internal ascension, just as the touch of original Ambrosian textuality--Augustine borrows the "sober drunkenness" (V.13) of Ambrose's seventh hymn³⁰ and combines it with the Psalms listed above in describing the bishop's speech--suggests the importance of individuality in the spiritual service Augustine receives from Ambrose.

Indeed, it is the individual personality of God's ploughman which Augustine, despairing of finding truth and still reading too shallowly, first finds appealing in Ambrose. Augustine loves the bishop immediately, but not as a "teacher of truth" (*doctor veri*), a *magister* of the *sapientia* which is the essence of his learned speech; rather, he considers him a "kind man" (*homo benignus*: V.13). Accordingly, he reads Ambrose's sermons (or tries to read his sermons)

²⁹ "Ad eum...ducebar abs te nesciens, ut per eum ad te sciens ducerer." Augustine's word order reflects his meaning--notice how the participle "nesciens" follows the verb, whereas the parallel "sciens" precedes the verb--and as a result, the reader literally participates in the intellectual and emotional nuances of the autobiographical experience as he or she reads.

³⁰ *Hymn VII.23-24*: "Let us drink the sober drunkenness of the fertile spirit" ("Laeti bibamus sobriam/Ebrietatem Spiritus"). The citation is taken from *Sancti Ambrosii, Mediolanensis Episcopi: Opera Omnia, Juxta Editionem Monachorum S.Benedicti*, vol. 4 (Paris: Gauthier Fratrem et Soc., 1836).

inappropriately, engaging only the surface of the language, testing the eloquence the bishop's reputation boasts, aiming for careful aesthetic *lectio* while ignoring, struggling against, even fearing the meanings behind Ambrose's text:

I eagerly heard him discussing among the people, not with the intention which I ought [to have had], but as if exploring his eloquence, whether it would agree with his reputation, whether it would flow more or less than it was proclaimed; and intent, I was suspended on his words, but I remained negligent and contemptuous of the matters.
(V.13)³¹

The focus of the keen and exacting reading eye Augustine engaged to read Faustus and his text has been altered by that encounter and the skepticism and despair it initiated. Why read more deeply when there is little hope that there is even a "way for man" (*via homini*: V.14) to come to God? Yet Augustine, always curious, ever seeking, and never a true skeptic as his constant need to know and to place his trust in some learned authority reveals, willingly meditates upon the surface beauty of those sermons, and immediately compares Ambrose's more learned but less pleasing eloquence to Faustus' smooth speech. The intellectual meditation leads the young Augustine to notice, though reluctantly and certainly not as completely as the writing Augustine, the difference between the Manichaean "deceits" (*fallaciae*) Faustus spews and the "salvation" (*salus*) which Ambrose preaches "most wholesomely" ("saluberrime:" V.13).

Indeed, the young man cannot help but notice the striking contrast, for with such an emotionally and intellectually engaging speaker at his ear, with such truthful meaning behind that spoken text, he must necessarily face the essence of Ambrose's words and therefore progress, even unknowingly: "I

³¹ "Studiose audiebam disputantem in populo, non intentione, qua debui, sed quasi explorans eius facundiam, utrum conueniret famae suae an maior minorue proflueret, quam praedicabatur, et uerbis eius suspendebam intentus, rerum autem incuriosus et contemptor astabam."

was drawing near gradually and not knowing [it]" (V.13).³² Wallowing in and almost enjoying his own despair, Augustine stubbornly resists spiritual growth, but Ambrose's sharp spiritual speech penetrates his darkened heart, allowing the light of truth to shed illumination gradually within his soul:

for although I did not do enough to learn those things which he spoke, but only to hear how he spoke--certainly that empty care had remained for me, now despairing that the way to you lay open to man--, even the things which I neglected came into my mind along with the words which I loved; for I could not separate them. And while I opened my heart for receiving how eloquently he would speak, how truly he spoke also entered equally, indeed step by step. (V.14)³³

A beautiful tribute to the power of careful and truthful cultured speech in which style and substance are inextricably intertwined,³⁴ and another exemplary model for the enormous potential of Augustine's own textual gift, Ambrose's text motivates some essential changes in the admiring Augustine's perception. With his heart and its perception open to truly positive speech, he hears riddles from the "old writings" (*scripta vetera*) solved--presumably those same riddles which stumped his intellect and offended his ear when he first read Scripture "to the letter" ("ad litteram") which Paul warns against in II Corinthians 3:6 and which the bishops Ambrose and Augustine realize is deadly--and begins to understand that the Catholic faith can be maintained with intellectual dignity (V.14). Eloquent spiritual explanations acquired through the learned meditative technique of allegorical exegesis open the

³² "Propinquabam sensim et nesciens." The moving emotional power of Ambrose's speech and person is indicated by Monnica's intense attachment and devout dedication to him; see VI.2.

³³ "Cum enim non satagerem discere quae dicebat, sed tantum quemadmodum dicebat audire--ea mihi quippe iam desperanti ad te uiam patere homini inanis cura remanserat--ueniebant in animum meum simul cum uerbis, quae diligebam, res etiam, quas neglegebam; neque enim ea dirimere poteram. Et dum cor aperirem ad excipiendum, quam diserte diceret, pariter intrabat et quam uere diceret, gradatim quidem."

³⁴ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 77, notes that Ambrose's "words unite style to substance."

conceptual door to the Bible and put an end to one important aspect of Augustine's despair, his doubt regarding the defensibility of Christianity:

with most parts of those books explained spiritually, I now blamed that despair of mine exactly in that I had believed that the law and the prophets could not be entirely justified against those hating and mocking [them]. (V.14)³⁵

Finally judging himself by, rather than condemning, "the law and the prophets" of the Biblical texts (*lex et prophetae*: see Matthew 5:17 and 7:12, and Luke 16:16), the young Augustine is forced to realize that only his own state of mind was to blame for what he regarded as the questionable nature of the Biblical texts, an abrupt and significant change which focuses personal scrutiny upon the self (V.14).

Thanks to Ambrose's positive use of his own textuality and the borrowed textuality he has made his own, the Catholic and Manichaean faiths now hang in a balance for Augustine, the former not necessarily the one to be held, the latter not necessarily to be condemned. Within the battleground of Augustine's spirit, the Christian faith is certainly not "conquered" ("uicta"), but also not yet the "conquerer" ("uictrix"), yet Augustine now perceives a direction in which to move in a willing and conscious fashion, and "stretches his mind" (*intendere animum*) to seek ways to convict the Manichees of utter falsehood himself (V.14). His inability to dismiss the Manichaean texts completely from his beliefs, actions and personality at this point is a manifestation of his deep connection to textuality, that of the Manichees, and his continuing inability (despite the example of spiritual reading evident in the sermons which have begun to validate the Scriptures) to achieve spiritual perception himself. As the

³⁵ "Spiritualiter... plerisque illorum librorum locis expositis iam reprehendebam desperationem meam illam dumtaxat, qua credideram legem et prophetas detestantibus atque inidentibus resisti omnino non posse."

perceptive bishop writes, if the young man could have thought of a "spiritual substance," all the falsehoods of the Manichees would have faded from his mind, but he could not (V.14).³⁶

Nonetheless, the final statement of Book V is one of progress and conviction--progress and conviction experienced by the developing young man and expressed by the reflecting writer through stages represented by authoritative textuality: the philosophers, the Academics, the Manichees, the name of Christ and the Catholic doctrine. Still in a state of spiritual and intellectual doubt, but "leaning" on the skeptical texts of the Academic philosophers, Augustine resolves to make a change:

in the manner of the Academics, as they are regarded, doubting concerning all things and wavering among all things, I decided that the Manichees should indeed be abandoned, judging in that very time of my doubt that I should not remain in that sect, to which I now preferred several philosophers: to these philosophers, however, I refused to commit the care of my soul's languor entirely, because they were without the salutary name of Christ.
(V.14)³⁷

As the nameless bishop of Book III prophesied, Augustine has indeed discovered his error and progressed "by reading," and he continues to do so, for the absence of the "name of Christ" in the skeptical texts upon which he most depends makes them inadequate and makes the Catholic faith of Christ and his apostles, who truly have the power to cure his spiritual "languor" (*languor*: see Matthew 9:35 and Luke 9:1), the faith he received from his mother, the faith that Ambrose's text has revealed may very well present a way to truth, the only open

³⁶ "Si possem spiritalem substantiam cogitare, statim machinamenta illa omnia soluerentur et abicerentur ex animo meo: sed non poteram."

³⁷ "Academicorum more, sicut existimantur, dubitans de omnibus atque inter omnia fluctuans manichaeos quidem relinquendos esse decreui, non arbitrans eo ipso tempore dubitationis meae in illa secta mihi permanendum esse, cui iam nonnullos philosophos praeponebam: quibus tamen philosophis, quod sine salutari nomine Christi essent, curationem languoris animae meae committere omnino recusabam."

and viable path (V.14). Thus Augustine sits finally at this journey's beginning as a "catachumen" ("catachumenus"), waiting until some certain intellectual light "shines forth" (*elucere*) to illuminate his internal steps and allow him "to steer" (*dirigere*) an appropriate spiritual course (V.14), until he is able to lean in an entirely willing, personal and meditative sense on Ambrose's spiritual text and God's eternal Word.

Having opened the door to the Christian faith, Ambrose's spiritual speech continues into Book VI,³⁸ guiding the true beginning of Augustine's ascension through personal, meditative reading. Augustine must move, with the help of Ambrose's texts, both spoken and silent, from the passive reception to the active engagement of texts, from an exclusively material to a predominantly spiritual perception. The Book opens with Augustine still despairing of finding the truth,³⁹ still seeking God "outside" himself ("foris a me"), turning neither his inner eye nor the texts he engages back upon himself, and thus not finding the true "God of the heart" ("deum cordis") recognized by the devoted voice of Psalm 72:26 (VI.1). Ambrose becomes the exemplary *via* for Augustine who must learn to engage the intelligent, the imaginative and the affective aspects of his spiritual being in order to gain true knowledge about both self and God. In the metaphorical expression of the mature writer, the young man must be brought from spiritual "sickness to health with a more difficult trial running between, as if through a progressive stage which

³⁸ It is rare in the *Confessiones* for a single authoritative speaker to span more than one Book; the main exception, of course, is Monnica, who is Augustine's spiritual mother just as Ambrose is his spiritual father. Monnica's support and guidance is both various and constant; Ambrose, whose influence is almost as all-pervasive and certainly as profound, is central to both Augustine's growth out of shallow *lectio* in Book V and his active engagement in *meditatio* which begins in Book VI.

³⁹ "Desperabam de inuentione ueri."

physicians call critical" (VI.1).⁴⁰

The return to a more active search for truth on Augustine's part in Book VI is indicated by his desire and efforts to engage the bishop of Milan, although in intellectual dispute rather than spiritual meditation: ignoring internal reflection and prayer, Augustine's "mind was intent to seek and restless to discuss" (VI.3).⁴¹ With its worldly perception, Augustine's "mind" considers Ambrose a "kind of happy man according to the world" (*felix quidam homo secundum saeculum*), but finds his "celibacy" ("caelibatus"), an issue central to Augustine's own progression but far beyond his present physical orientations, "toilsome" ("laboriosus") (VI.3). He reads the bishop in the same way he attempts to read his ministerial text, on the surface, unable, or rather unwilling, to penetrate the intellectual and spiritual individual:

I did not know how to conjecture and I had not experienced what hope he might carry about, and what struggling he might have against temptations of [his] excellence itself, or what consolation in adversities, and how much to be tasted [were] the joys his hidden mouth, which was in his heart, would ruminate from your bread. (VI.3)⁴²

The young man trained in the material religion of the Manichees simply cannot conceive of the bishop's spiritual person, his internal joys and trials. Quite specifically, as the mature autobiographer sees it, the young man familiar with the external physical rumination of the Manichees cannot imagine and has not experienced Ambrose's internal spiritual rumination of God's Word, the very sort of meditative

⁴⁰ "Aegritudine ad sanitatem intercurrente artiore periculo quasi per accessionem, quam criticam medici uocant."

⁴¹ "Ad quaerendum intentus et ad disserendum inquietus erat animus meus."

⁴² "Quid... ille spei gereret, et aduersus ipsius excellentiae temptamenta quid luctaminis haberet quidue solaminis in aduersis, et occultum os eius, quod erat in corde eius, quam sapida gaudia de pane tuo ruminaret, nec conicere noueram nec expertus eram."

assimilation of textuality which Augustine is moving slowly towards, and which the author of the *Confessiones* reads as a central structural and developmental principle in his spiritual life. The young Augustine, trained in rhetoric and dialectic, wishes to speak and dispute privately with the man whose breast is God's oracle, but is kept by the crowds of the faithful from the bishop's "ear and mouth" (*auris atque os*: VI.3). In his spiritual ascension, Augustine is forced to move within himself and struggle with his own thoughts and feelings simply because he is not allowed his disputational search for knowledge with the intellectual and spiritual guide he deeply admires.⁴³

What he does experience and meditate upon is Ambrose's ruminative reading, which the autobiographer describes as refreshment for the "mind" (*animus*) and parallels immediately with the "props" (*sustenacula*) which sustain the bishop's "body" ("corpus:" VI.3). Ambrose's reading strikes the worldly young rhetorician as somewhat remarkable: "when he was reading, [his] eyes were drawn through the pages and [his] heart probed the meaning, but [his] voice and tongue were at rest" (VI.3).⁴⁴ Reading "silently and never otherwise" ("*tacite et aliter numquam*:" VI.3), ignoring the external aesthetic concerns of the words--the pronunciation of their eloquence and the performance of their delivery--and concentrating solely upon their intellectual and spiritual meanings, clearly represents the internal ruminative process of *meditatio* and mental *compositio* in which Ambrose, when not teaching, is engaged. Indeed, "Christian monks of late classical antiquity clearly distinguished between reading as

⁴³ Similarly, Augustine was denied the opportunity to dispute with the nameless bishop his mother consults for help in Book III, and thus forced to move within and meditate alone upon the report of the encounter relayed by Monnica.

⁴⁴ "Cum legebat, oculi ducebantur per paginas et cor intellectum rimabatur, uox autem et lingua quiescebant."

an oral activity and meditation, which was intrinsically silent."⁴⁵ For Augustine's contemporary audience as for later medieval readers, "to read silently" ("legere tacite") or "to read to oneself" ("legere sibi") represents, as does the medieval oral/aural tradition so well expressed by Leclercq as hearing the "voices of the pages,"⁴⁶ an act of *meditatio* as opposed to *lectio*.⁴⁷

Like the internal words and images of Monnica's dream, the truths reaped from silent reading are the products of an intimate dialogue with God, that "instruction véritable...que Dieu dispense aux âmes spirituelles, notamment au cours de lectures silencieuses comme les pratiquait saint Ambroise."⁴⁸ The particularly intimate nature of a silent engagement of the written word is emphasized by Augustine himself in his *Soliloquia*, those internal ruminations presented as a dialogue between Augustine and personified Reason. Reason advises

⁴⁵ Saenger, "Silent Reading," 370. Saenger's article provides an illuminating survey of the history of silent reading and reading aloud, as well as summarizing the history of scholarship in this area.

⁴⁶ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 19. Leclercq's association between meditation and vocal murmuring intercepts with the Augustinian notion of silent reading as meditation when he writes that "in certain texts" the "murmur" is "reduced to the minimum, an inner murmur, purely spiritual" (*Love of Learning*, 21).

⁴⁷ See Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 170-173, for a discussion of "silent reading" and "reading aloud," which she describes as "two distinct methods of reading taught for different purposes in ancient schools and both practiced by ancient readers," two distinct methods which "correspond roughly to those stages in the study process called *meditatio* and *lectio*" (170). As an example, Carruthers engages none other than Augustine's description of Ambrose's reading, which, she writes, "presents an excellent contrast between the two kinds of reading, *lectio* and *meditatio*. Ambrose withdraws over a book into silence, *meditatio*, even though others are present; Augustine contrasts it specifically here with the activity of *lectio*, delivered in a loud voice to a listener who freely asks questions. In meditational reading, Ambrose, the reader, is *intentus*; in the other kind, the listener is *suspensus* and *intentus*" (171). Ambrose, then, teaches Augustine through example (as indeed through the *compositio* and *lectio* of his sermons) how to be *intentus* by himself, how to engage a text personally and internally for the good of his spiritual health.

⁴⁸ Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 322. Saenger, "Silent Reading," 413, discusses the impact of silent reading on the lay culture of the Middle Ages, making the interesting observation that "private silent reading in the vernacular gave laymen the means of pursuing the individual relationship to God which had been the aspiration of erudite Christians since Saint Augustine." The intensity of this silent relationship is best expressed in Augustine's dramatic textual conversion to Christianity.

Augustine to write down the thoughts and ideas they discuss lest memory fail, but not to utter them aloud to a scribe, for "these things ought not to be dictated, for they long for pure solitude," a solitude which does not, however, dismiss a reading audience.⁴⁹ Indeed, according to Paul Saenger, "silent reading and composition" provide a "dimension of privacy," encourage "individual critical thinking" and provide an opportunity for originality, all of which cause a personalization and intensification of "spiritual experiences."⁵⁰ The extensive explanations the young Augustine invents for Ambrose's silent internal dialogue with the Word which is his God--that it allows the bishop to study without interruption, without the need to teach what he reads to others⁵¹ and without wasting the voice he needs for preaching--suggest to the reader that the young rhetorician does indeed have little concept of this kind of private and individual use of textuality, while emphasizing the importance of intimate textual rumination to a Christian bishop, and thus to the spiritual autobiographer. The young man's rather naïve yet truthful assertion that "with whatever mind he did it,

⁴⁹ *Soliloquia* I.1: "nec ista dictari debent; nam solitudinem meram desiderant" (see my discussion in the Introduction). Shortly afterwards, Reason argues that a "crowd of readers" is not necessary, but that the informal writing of personal thoughts will satisfy a "few fellow citizens" ("nec modo cures invitationem turbae legentium; paucis ista sat erunt civibus tuis:" I.1).

⁵⁰ Saenger, "Silent Reading," 399 and 401.

⁵¹ The responsibility of the spiritual *magister*, the reader and writer of spiritual texts, is great: both Ambrose and Augustine are constantly burdened with the need to teach their listeners and readers, to take them along with them, as they themselves learn through reading and composing. The recognition and acceptance of this God-given responsibility is paramount throughout the *Confessiones*, but it does not diminish the importance of personal internal development, of the individual's spiritual responsibility to himself. On the contrary, the need to correctly use one's textual gift for the good of others itself necessitates the kind of personal progression which takes place in silent reading and writing, even though that reading and writing initially excludes others, particularly, as Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*, 219, points out, "the illiterate" who would have made up a significant portion of a bishop's congregation in late antiquity and the Middle Ages. When Ambrose reads to himself, it is time for the internal *meditatio* and *compositio* of personal growth which eventually lead to the external *compositio* and *lectio* designed to engage the many listeners of his congregation.

that man certainly did [it] with a good [mind]" (VI.3),⁵² not only declares both the positive and the private nature of silent reading to the reader of the *Confessiones*, but also contrasts the writing Augustine's recognition of the priority of the intelligible spirit over the sensible letter of the text with the young man's continuing inability to grasp the concept of spiritual or intelligible reality.

Augustine also continues to experience Ambrose's public preaching, the external *compositio* of the meditative reading process we have examined, the teaching which engages his congregation in *lectio* and ideally draws them on to *meditatio*: "indeed, I would hear him on every Lord's day rightly handling the word of truth among the people" (VI.3).⁵³ Ambrose's sermons are the manifestation of his spiritual reading in linguistic service as the ploughman of God's Word. In sharp opposition to Manichaean speech, Ambrose's composition follows Paul's advice for God's minister, if he is to be effective, to be an "untroubled workman, rightly handling the word of truth."⁵⁴ Augustine's development in Book V has already indicated how effective Ambrose's speech is; in Book VI, the young Augustine becomes more and more *intentus* on the meaning beneath those sermons, and is gradually freed completely from the twisting and deceptive snares of the Manichaean texts:

more and more it was confirmed for me that all the knots of dexterous artifices which those deceivers of ours wove together against the divine books could be untied.

⁵² "Quolibet...animo id ageret, bono utique ille uir agebat."

⁵³ "Eum quidem in populo uerbum ueritatis recte tractantem omni die dominico audiebam."

⁵⁴ II Timothy 2:15: "sollicite cura te ipsum probabilem exhibere Deo operarium inconfusibilem recte tractantem uerbum ueritatis." With regard to the agricultural imagery associated with God's Word and its preachers in both the Bible and the *Confessiones*, it is worth noticing that while the Manichees draw the plough awry ("delirantes:" III.6) and the philosophers/astrologers cultivate the world ("colunt et seruunt creaturae:" V.3), Ambrose is the accurately cultivating ploughman of God's Word.

(VI.3)⁵⁵

Particularly, though he still has no conception of "spiritual substance" ("spiritalis substantia") and thus no understanding of how this might be, Augustine discovers that the Catholic faith, contrary to the Manichaean perspective of Christianity, teaches a spiritual God, a God unconfined by the "form of the human body" ("humani corporis forma"), unrestricted by the physical and mortal limitations of the creature Genesis 1:26-27 and 9:6 claims was made to God's "image" (*imago*: VI.3).⁵⁶

This discovery not only leads him away from his Manichaean criticisms of Christianity, but also immediately generates relief and joy and shame that he had "not barked against the Catholic faith, but against the figments of carnal thoughts" (VI.3).⁵⁷ Self-criticism follows: he recognizes how "thoughtless" ("temerarius") and "impious" ("impius") he had been to criticize and blame that which he should have been seeking to understand (VI.3).⁵⁸ The anxiety of doubt and shame initiates in both the developing young man and the writing bishop an internal reflection upon the self, both past and present, a contemplative search of mind and soul which the autobiographer presents in a rhetorical passage which merges and distinguishes the complex perspectives of the reading and writing autobiographical subject in its varying degrees of

⁵⁵ "Magis magisque mihi confirmabatur omnes uersutarum calumniarum nodos, quos illi deceptores nostri aduersus diuinos libros innectebant, posse dissolui."

⁵⁶ As Chadwick, *Confessions*, 94 n.7, points out, the mature Augustine's description in this chapter of the spiritual nature of a God unconfined by space depends greatly on Plotinus, though Augustine's language is, as often, couched in Biblical terms.

⁵⁷ "Gaudens erubui non me tot annos aduersus catholicam fidem, sed contra carnalium cogitationum figmenta latrasse."

⁵⁸ Because the mature writer is constantly criticizing and condemning his younger self's behavior, it is difficult to see this self-criticism as striking or particularly significant, but it should be noted that this self-criticism occurs at the time of the past narrative, and thus is remarkable, for it implies an enormous development in self-knowledge and personal conscience on the part of the young man.

intellectual and spiritual enlightenment:

the care [regarding] what I might hold for certain gnawed at my innermost parts so much more sharply by how much more I was ashamed that I, mocked and deceived by the promise of certainties for so long, had babbled with childish error and rashness so many uncertainties as if [they were] certain. For that they were falsehoods was clear to me afterwards. Yet it was certain that they were uncertain and that they had once been held as certainties by me, when I would with blind contentions accuse your catholic [church], even if I had not yet discovered it teaching true things, yet not teaching those things which I seriously accused [it of teaching]. Therefore, I was confounded and converted. (VI.4)⁵⁹

The often awkward contradictions inherent in both the style and substance of Augustine's prose effectively reflect not only the conflict and confusion felt by the struggling catechumen, but also the difficulty experienced by the mature bishop as he attempts to understand and express his most critical yet most subtle stages of spiritual development. The autobiographer has captured the contrition of his multifaceted conscience in the very structure of his spiritual text, presenting it to his struggling reader in an intimate and experiential way.

And while the young Augustine meditates, the teaching of Ambrose continues, reading and explaining the writings of the Old Testament week after week, and not with that "eye" (*oculus*)--the *acies carnis* so familiar to Augustine--which before made them appear "absurd" ("absurda"), but, as we have seen, in accordance with the spirit, the inner-words of truth, lying beneath the Biblical text. As Ambrose would say,

the letter slays, but the spirit enlivens, when he would lay open spiritually, with the mystic covering removed, those things which seemed to teach perversity [when read]

⁵⁹ "Tanto...acrior cura rodebat intima mea, quid certi retinerem, quanto me magis pudebat tam diu inlusum et deceptum promissione certorum puerili errore et animositate tam multa incerta quasi certa garrisse. Quod enim falsa essent, postea mihi claruit. Certum tamen erat, quod incerta essent et a me aliquando pro certis habita fuissent, cum catholicam tuam caecis contentionibus accusarem, etsi nondum compertam uera docentem, non tamen ea docentem, quae grauiter accusabam. Itaque confundebar et conuertebat."

to the letter, not saying that which might offend me, although he would say those things of which I was still ignorant [regarding] whether they were true. (VI.4)⁶⁰

Engaging the exact words of Paul's advice regarding the ministry of the New Testament in II Corinthians 3:6 ("littera...occidit Spiritus autem vivificat"), Ambrose teaches the proud and reluctant young scholar how to penetrate, deliberately and self-reflectively, the essence of the allegorical texts of the Bible. Ambrose's teaching allows Augustine to escape the knots of materialism and literalism which bind his mind and spirit, and to move not only away from the void of the Manichees, but also beyond the prodigal "husks" of rhetoric to feed upon the hidden meanings of "figurative" texts "whose secrets are to be removed like kernels from shells as the food of charity."⁶¹ While the process is one of slow assimilation which culminates much later in the developing young man, its success is readily apparent in the autobiographical writing of the mature bishop, who engages and integrates in his own text both Ambrose's textual engagement of II Corinthians 3:6 and his own reference to the "covering" ("velamen") Paul claims, in verses 13, 14 and 15 of the same chapter, Moses in his text placed over his "face" (*facies*), over the "reading of the Old Testament" (*lectio veteris testamenti*) and over the "heart" ("cor") of the unconverted reader. The removal of this "covering" from Augustine's inner vision is the most important stage in his textual progression, and one which he now passes along to those reading his intertextual autobiography, following in the apostolic footsteps of his spiritual *magister* and teaching the readers of his *Confessiones* how to read his and all texts by

⁶⁰ "*Littera occidit, spiritus autem uiuificat, cum ea, quae ad litteram peruersitatem docere uidebantur, remoto mystico uelamento spiritaliter aperiret, non dicens quod me offenderet, quamuis ea diceret, quae utrum uera essent adhuc ignorarem.*"

⁶¹ *De Doctrina Christiana* III.12: "figurata sunt: quorum ad charitatis pastum enucleanda secreta sunt."

always looking beneath the surface of the physical words and images and beyond even the intellectual meanings to the spiritual essences of Truth.

It is clearly this kind of spiritual perception which Augustine, in *De Beata Vita*, written immediately after his conversion,⁶² attributes to the teachings of Ambrose:

I noticed often in the sermons of our priest, that when one would think about God, nothing of the body should be thought of at all, and not when [thinking] about the soul [either]; for it is the one thing nearest to God.⁶³

The "other-worldly" nature of Ambrose's spiritual philosophy consistently elevated the internal and spiritual aspects of humanity above the physical realities, and, as we have seen, the "spirit" or "hidden meaning" of texts above the "letter."⁶⁴ This approach to Christianity bred an attitude to learning and literature which allowed Ambrose to engage the spiritual truths inherent in any and all textuality in the cause of the Catholic faith.

He could comb the books of a brilliant new generation of Greek bishops and a whole tradition of Greek Christian scholarship, to give his congregation some of the most learned and up-to-date sermons in the Latin world. Nor did he have any scruples about borrowing from the pagans: he gloried in being able to parade his spoils from the pulpit--this 'gold of the Egyptians' was fair prize.⁶⁵

For the reader of the *Confessiones*, this could as easily apply to the textuality of the mature Augustine; indeed, in the Ambrosian attitude to learning and devotion lies the philosophy the autobiographer calls upon to understand his

⁶² See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 74.

⁶³ *De Beata Vita* I.1: "animaduerti...et saepe in sacerdotis nostri...sermonibus..., cum de deo cogitaretur, nihil omnino corporis esse cogitandum, neque cum de anima; nam id est unum in rebus proximum deo." All citations from *De Beata Vita* are from Green and Daur, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini*; the passage is cited in translation in Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 84.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 84 and 85.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 84.

young self's spiritual progression through textuality and engages to write the intertextual narrative of his internal individuality.

Although the young Augustine is not yet capable of such a sophisticated use of the Ambrosian philosophy he has encountered, it is surely the spiritual lessons learned from Ambrose which inspire his meditative reading of the "books of the Platonists" (*Platoniorum libri*) in Book VII of the *Confessiones*,⁶⁶ and thus ultimately lead to his ability to perceive of a purely spiritual reality. The faith inspired by Ambrose in the figurative wisdom of the Bible and its abstract spiritual authority is particularly vital. This faith begins on a personal and internal level for Augustine in the meditations which immediately follow the Biblical *lectio* of Ambrose's external *compositio*. With his doubting heart softened by the logical and spiritual value of Ambrose's Biblical readings, with God's hand "working upon and composing his heart,"⁶⁷ Augustine reflects upon his own belief in the "innumerable things" ("innumerabilia") he has not personally experienced, including, of course, many of the concepts and beliefs--the inner-words--he has become aware of through the experience of textuality only (VI.5). The "holy letters," whose "authority" aids those seeking "truth" and failing with "reason" alone, take precedence over other texts because they are the texts Ambrose preaches, and Augustine realizes upon meditation, God would not have vested them with "so excellent an authority through all lands" if he did not wish to be both

⁶⁶ The reader should remember that Augustine's progress is much more gradual than my discussion might lead one to believe. The increasingly meditative and personal readings of several texts and events take place between the teaching of Ambrose and the engagement of the Platonic texts. These readings, particularly those recalled from the past and reread by the young man, are inspired by the teaching of Ambrose as much as is the reading of the Platonic texts, but the latter constitutes a particularly critical and culminative rung in Augustine's developing ability to put into play the spiritual philosophy of reading he received from Ambrose.

⁶⁷ "Pertractans et componens cor meum."

believed and sought through them (VI.5).⁶⁸ And the "authority" of these texts is increased in Augustine's mind not by their rhetorical elegance or the elite nature of their audience, but by their ability to reach through style, allegory and meaning the widest of audiences:

that authority appeared to me more venerable and more worthy of sacred faith [particularly] in that it was both in readiness to be read by all and would preserve the dignity of its secret in [its] deeper meaning, offering itself to all with most open words and a most humble style of speaking and exercising the attention of those who are not light at heart, so that it might catch everyone into its common lap and might transport a few to you through narrow apertures, yet many more than if it did not stand out on so great a summit of authority and did not draw up the crowds in its lap of holy humility.
(VI.5)⁶⁹

Certainly Augustine's opinion regarding the true value of textuality has changed, and the focus of his reading eye has shifted to a perspective much closer to the spiritual vision of the autobiographer who engages the words of Ecclesiasticus 19:4 ("levis corde") and the metaphor of the "narrow gate" ("angusta porta") leading to eternal life in Matthew 7:13 and 14 in order to express his earlier thoughts regarding those allegorical writings.

It is with this new and more penetrating focus that Augustine engages "certain books of the Platonists translated from the Greek tongue into Latin," books which God provides, through rather ironic means, for his spiritual ascension

⁶⁸ "Cum essemus infirmi [Romans 5:6] ad inueniendam liquida ratione ueritatem et ob hoc nobis opus esset auctoritate sanctorum litterarum, iam credere coeperam nullo modo te fuisse tributurum tam excellentem illi scripturae per omnes iam terras auctoritatem, nisi et per ipsam tibi credi et per ipsam te quaeri uoluisses."

⁶⁹ "Eo...mihi illa uenerabilior et sacrosancta fide dignior apparebat auctoritas, quo et omnibus ad legendum esset in promptu et secreti sui dignitatem in intellectu profundiore seruaret, uerbis apertissimis et humillimo genere loquendi se cunctis praebens et exercens intentionem eorum, qui non sunt leues corde, ut exciperet omnes populari sinu et per angusta foramina paucos ad te traiceret, multo tamen plures, quam si nec tanto apice auctoritatis emineret nec turbas gremio sanctae humilitatis hauriret."

(VII.9).⁷⁰ In these profound books, second only to the Scriptures and their ploughman, Ambrose, in their influence on Augustine's development, Augustine reads many of the concepts the mature bishop recognizes as central to the Christian faith, concepts the young Augustine must grasp in order to attain the spiritual vision and self-knowledge he desires. Yet the manifest "words" of the philosophers remain unarticulated, for he does not express the concepts, the "inner-words," he found in the Platonic books with the "words" (*verba*) in which he read them (VII.9).⁷¹ Instead, he uses Biblical words; in fact, the record of the encounter with these Platonic texts constitutes one of the richest and most pervasively Biblical chapters in the whole of the *Confessiones*. The "texture" of the autobiographer's account here is indeed "a tissue of quotations from the Bible:"⁷² the first sixteen verses of John 1 on the eternal Word of God are cited and discussed in detail; the notion of Christian humility (so absent in Augustine's first engagement with Scripture) in Matthew 11:25-29 is recalled; Paul's writings (Acts, Romans, Philippians)

⁷⁰ "Procurasti mihi per quendam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum quosdam Platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos." A great deal of work has gone into determining the exact identity of these books. They almost certainly included *The Enneads* of Plotinus and works by his pupil Porphyry, as well, perhaps, as a few other texts from the Neo-Platonic school in general, and were translated, it is generally assumed, by the Marius Victorinus whose conversion story appears in Book VIII of the *Confessiones*. See Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 17-88, for extensive discussions of the "Libri Platoniorum" and their influence on the young Augustine; Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 182 and 202 n.63, for a brief summary of both traditional and recent assumptions regarding these texts; O'Connell, "A Plotinian Key" and *Odyssey of Soul*, for a very Neo-Platonic reading of the *Confessiones*; and Chadwick, *Confessions*, xix, xix n.2 and 121 n.14. For the present purposes, the effect these Platonic books had on Augustine is central, as is his choice not to mention them by name and to express their contents through extraordinarily rich Biblical "text-work." Augustine the bishop is once again making his text the "via tuta" for those readers who might be spiritually harmed by directly engaging the philosophical books and who might gain the same spiritual principles through reading the Bible, yet also the more dangerous *via* for those learned who would turn back to the Platonic texts whose spirit they recognize in Augustine's *Confessiones*.

⁷¹ "Et ibi legi non quidem his uerbis, sed hoc idem omnino multis et multiplicibus suaderi rationibus."

⁷² McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 34, who is actually discussing the final books of the *Confessiones*, where Augustine's Biblical "text-work" matches that found in VII.9.

are engaged nine times, the Psalms, six times, and themes from Genesis, Exodus, Proverbs and Wisdom are alluded to. The autobiographer's rich and intimate "text-work" deeply reflects the young Augustine's new-found faith in the authority of the Bible, the now predominantly Christian perspective which allows him to think and read in terms of that authoritative text, and the intricate way in which he begins to weave the concepts of Christian and pagan literature into the extremely textual and highly spiritual personal philosophy which results in the mature man's spontaneous "text-work."⁷³

The Platonic texts are rich with ideas that to the eyes of Augustine parallel the spiritual God and soul Ambrose has preached, particularly the Word of God and the nature of self expressed in John 1:1-14. A spiritual "word" ("uerbum:" see John 1:1) which is "God" ("deus:" see John 1:1), which is "born not from flesh or blood or from the will of man or flesh, but from God,"⁷⁴ and which is the force of creation in the "beginning" (*principium*: see John 1:1); an uncreated God, with an equal Son; the "Word" as the "true light" ("*lumen uerum*," but "*lux vera*" in John 1:9) of the world, and the "soul of man" ("*hominis anima*") as citing "testimony from the light" ("*testimonium...de lumine*:" see John 1:7) and thus participating in Christ and eternal Wisdom--all of these concepts, said "variously and in many ways" ("*uarie...et multis modis*"), are "tracked down" (*indagare*) in the Platonic texts (VII.9). Like the illuminating teaching of Ambrose, they widen and intensify the scope of Augustine's intellectual and

⁷³ Augustine's new predominantly Christian perspective and his newly acquired ability to read deeply is also apparent earlier in Book VII when he refutes the arguments of the "raving ones" (*deliri*) who believe the methods of the astrologers are true and valid, and does so by "ruminating" (*ruminare*) upon the Biblical story of the twins Jacob and Esau (VII.6). It is the first instance recorded in the *Confessiones* of the young Augustine using Biblical textuality in such a meditative and affirmative way, but is neither as striking nor as complex as the record of his engagement with the Platonic texts.

⁷⁴ "Verbum, deus, non ex carne, non ex sanguine non ex uoluntate uiri neque ex uoluntate carnis, sed ex deo natus est."

spiritual perception, leading him "to recognize intelligible substance,"⁷⁵ and indeed a whole intelligible realm of ultimate existence. And it is only through such a philosophical authority and such a spiritual understanding that the talented and learned young Augustine can truly begin to grasp the Christ of his time, the Christ who "was not a suffering Saviour. There are no crucifixes in the fourth century. He was, rather, 'the Great Word of God, the Wisdom of God.' On the sarcophagi of the age [and as *De Magistro* and Augustine's other early dialogues might suggest], He is always shown as a Teacher, teaching His Wisdom to a coterie of budding philosophers."⁷⁶ Yet the wisdom Augustine attains from these secular texts is only possible because of the way in which he reads them, a spiritual way, sifting the internal kernels from the symbolic husks which are words, holding fast the hidden meanings, the truthful inner-words behind the external words, and meditating upon them--a way of reading in keeping with the sermons and meditations of that Christian philosopher, Ambrose.

Not surprisingly, it is here, in remembering his earlier reading of the Platonic texts, that Augustine first mentions the Biblical metaphor of the Egyptian gold, the metaphor which we have seen Brown use to describe the way in which Ambrose engages secular textuality,⁷⁷ a metaphor as central to the textual development of the young Augustine as to the textual expression of the mature bishop. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine's formal treatise on reading and religion, the bishop specifically states that anything "true," such as

⁷⁵ Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 183.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 42; the words cited within Brown's text are Augustine's, *Sermo* 279.7. Augustine's abundant use of Genesis and John (see Chapter 1 above), which he saw as "linked...by their tracing of the history of the word" (Freccero, "Autobiography and Narrative," 28), suggests how important the notion of the eternal Word was to Augustine's thoughts and works.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 84, and above.

"liberal disciplines more fitted to the use of truth" and "certain most useful moral rules," written by the "Platonists," or indeed any other "philosophers," should be taken with the converted individual like spiritual "gold and silver" and transformed "to Christian use."⁷⁸ This attitude toward reading finds its basis in the "silver and gold" ("argentea et aurea") of Exodus 3:22 and 11:2, the Egyptian treasure which the Israelites are instructed by God to take with them out of exile and captivity and put to better use. It is this spiritual treasure of truth which the autobiographer, once again reading his younger self through Biblical textuality,⁷⁹ sees that young self straining to collect with mind and soul in his reading of the Platonic texts: "I focused my attention on the gold which you willed that your people carry away from Egypt, since it was yours wherever it was" (VII.9).⁸⁰ The gold he collects from these texts is a learned

⁷⁸ *De Doctrina Christiana* II.40: "philosophi autem qui vocantur, si qua forte vera et fidei nostrae accommodata dixerunt, maxime Platonici, non solum formidanda non sunt, sed ab eis etiam tanquam injustis possessoribus in usum nostrum vindicanda. Sicut enim Aegyptii non solum idola habebant et onera gravia, quae populus Israel detestaretur et fugeret, sed etiam vasa atque ornamenta de auro et argento, et vestem, quae ille populus exiens de Aegypto, sibi potius tanquam ad usum meliorem clanculo vindicavit; non auctoritate propria, sed praecepto Dei, ipsis Aegyptiis nescienter commodantibus ea, quibus non bene utebantur: sic doctrinae omnes Gentilium non solum simulata et superstitiosa figmenta gravesque sarcinas supervacanei laboris habent, quae unusquisque nostrum duce Christo de societate Gentilium exiens, debet abominari atque devitare; sed etiam liberales disciplinas usui veritatis aptiores, et quaedam morum praecepta utilissima continent, deque ipso uno Deo colendo nonnulla vera inveniuntur apud eos; quod eorum tanquam aurum et argentum, quod non ipsi instituerunt, sed de quibusdam quasi metallis divinae providentiae, quae ubique infusa est, eruerunt, et quo perverse atque injuriose ad obsequia daemonum abutuntur, cum ab eorum misera societate sese animo separat, debet ab eis auferre christianus ad usum justum praedicandi Evangelii. Vestem quoque illorum, id est, hominum quidem instituta, sed tamen accommodata humanae societati, qua in hac vita carere non possumus, accipere atque habere licuerit in usum convertenda christianum."

⁷⁹ It might be argued that it is at this point in his development that Augustine first perceives a parallel between the Egyptian gold of the Bible and the secular and philosophical gold of his own exile in the externals of language, and, indeed, the process of active reading involved in such an understanding of self is apparent in the engagement with the Platonic texts, but it is probably more accurate to assume that the Egyptian gold metaphor is the product of the mature author reading and writing his past. It is important to remember, in this regard, that the early books of *De Doctrina Christiana* were in fact written very close in time to the *Confessiones*: see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 184, and Chapter 1 above.

⁸⁰ "Intendi in aurum, quod ab Aegypto voluisti ut auferret populus tuus, quoniam tuum erat,

intellectual authority, a dialectic text in the philosophical tradition which agrees with the rustic, allegorical text of the Bible, validating the concept of a spiritual God and a spiritual realm of which the inner self is a part.

Yet that is not all that the Platonic volumes present for Augustine's consideration, for there are spiritual dangers inherent in their textuality:

I read there also that the glory of your incorruptibleness [was] changed into idols and various likenesses, into the similitude of the image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed beasts and serpents, clearly into the Egyptian food, by which Esau lost his birthright, since the first-born people worshipped the head of a four-footed beast in favour of you; they converted into Egypt in heart, bending your image, their own soul, before the image of a bull-calf eating hay. (VII.9)⁸¹

Describing the sacrilegious pagan ideas and practices he comes across in the Platonic texts through the spontaneous Biblical language which is his personal, allegorical voice, the autobiographer engages the Scriptural words of Paul's condemnation of heathen idolatry in Roman's 1:23, of Esau's sale of his birthright in Genesis 25:33-34, of the Israelites' idolatrous abuse of the Egyptian gold in Exodus 32:1-6, of Paul's description in Acts 7:39 regarding the Israelites' regressive internal conversion back into Egypt, of the crooked soul of the individual in Psalm 56:7, and of the Psalmist's description of the Israelites' corrupt worship in Psalm 105:20. In the mature bishop's opinion, the philosophers, like the Israelites, corrupt the image of the eternal spiritual God in both their minds and souls by bending their spiritual

ubicumque erat."

⁸¹ "Legebam ibi etiam immutatum gloriam incorruptionis tuae in idola et uaria simulacra, in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et uolucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium, uidelicet Aegyptium cibum, quo Esau perdidit primogenita sua, quoniam caput quadrupedis pro te honorauit populus primogenitus, conuersus corde in Aegyptum et curuans imaginem tuam, animam suam, ante imaginam uituli manducantis faenum."

nature into the world, and it is this which the Christian reader, anxious to restore and preserve the true image of God within, "ought to detest and avoid."⁸² And this is exactly what the young man does. As the autobiographer asserts, "I found these things there and I did not chew upon" them (VII.9).⁸³ Clearly, he is now able to distinguish the divine truth of God from the corporeal fallacies of the philosophers, selecting the former for meditation, and firmly rejecting the latter:

I did not stretch my attention into the idols of the Egyptians, with which they who transformed the truth of God into a lie and cultivated and served the creature rather than the creator ministered from your gold.
(VII.9)⁸⁴

Like the Apostle in whose words (Romans 1:25) the mature bishop metaphorically speaks, the young Augustine has begun to advance beyond the world and its learning, consciously cultivating the texts of the world for the spirit of truth. He seeks God's truth wherever it might be found, as the *Hortensius* had so long ago encouraged him to do, and his ability to separate kernel from husk and truth from falsehood accurately indicates his return from the exile of submersion in the material aspects of secular language.

Augustine's new *meditatio* is, in many ways, a culmination of Ambrose's spiritual teaching, and thus it is hardly surprising that Augustine's active spiritual reading of the Platonic texts generates the first consciously willed meditative search within. Augustine feels "admonished to return to himself" ("admonitus rediret ad memet ipsum") and enters "into the innermost aspects" ("in intima") of his self

⁸² *De Doctrina Christiana* II.40: "debet abominari atque devitare" (see the long citation from *De Doctrina Christiana* above).

⁸³ "Inueni haec ibi et non manducaui."

⁸⁴ "Non attendi in idola Aegyptiorum, quibus de auro tuo ministrabant, qui transmutauerunt ueritatem dei in mendacium et coluerunt et seruierunt creaturae potius quam creatori."

(VII.10). The move within results in the first true internal glimpse, the first intuitive perception of a spiritual God within himself illuminating the internal eye of his spiritual soul:

I entered and I saw with whatever eye of my soul above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, an unchangeable light, not this common [light], conspicuous to all flesh and not as if it was a greater [light] of the same kind, as if that would shine much, much more clearly and would occupy the whole with [its] magnitude. This was not that, but another, very much different from all these. Thus it was not above my mind like oil over water and not like sky over earth, but superior, because it itself made me, and I [was] inferior because made by it. (VII.10)⁸⁵

Having gained the "inner vision" Plotinus recommends in the *First Ennead*,⁸⁶ the young Augustine achieves a personal knowledge of his spiritual Creator, of his own spiritual nature, and of the close relationship between them. He clearly hears God's divine "voice from a height" (*uox de excelso*) urging itself as the true text, the true intellectual and spiritual food for the hungry mind and soul:

"I am the food of great ones: grow and you will chew upon me. And you will not change me into you like the food of your flesh, but you will be changed into me." (VII.10)⁸⁷

Hearing spiritually "as it is heard in the heart" ("sicut auditur in corde") God's assertion of ultimate existence and truth—"I am who am"—⁸⁸ Augustine recognizes that his own

⁸⁵ "Intraui et uidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem, non hanc uulgarem et conspicuam omni carni nec quasi ex eodem genere grandior erat, tamquam si ista multo multoque clarius claresceret totumque occuparet magnitudine. Non hoc illa erat, sed aliud, aliud ualde ab istis omnibus. Nec ita erat supra mentem meam, sicut oleum super aquam nec sicut caelum super terram, sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea."

⁸⁶ *First Ennead* VI.8 and 9.: "close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use;" "withdraw into yourself and look" (see the discussion in Chapter One).

⁸⁷ "Cibus sum grandium: cresce et manducabis me. Nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me."

⁸⁸ "Ego sum qui sum:" see Exodus 3:14.

true existence as a spiritual being must lie within the goodness of that eternal creative Spirit (VII.10).

The young Augustine's ability to perceive the necessity of an affirmative existence within the eternal Word does not, however, mean that he has already achieved that positive spiritual state. In fact, reading his young self as carefully and decisively as that self has read the Platonic texts, the autobiographer admits that "when I first knew you, you raised me up, so that I would see that there was that which I might see, and that I was not yet [one] who might see" (VII.10).⁸⁹ God's voice is shouted at him "from afar" ("de longinquo"), because, as the young man realizes for the first time, he is "remote" ("longe") from God in the "region of dissimilitude" (*regio dissimilitudinis*) he first entered upon his early immersion in the surface of secular texts (VII.10).⁹⁰ Spiritual exile continues despite the attainment of spiritual vision because Augustine continues to lack what the Platonic texts lacked, a conception and assimilation of the humble Incarnation of the eternal Word, a sincere manifestation of Christ in a textual life. For the Platonists, unlike the evangelist John, do not tell how God "came into his own" ("*in sua propria uenit*:" see John 1:11), how the "word was made flesh and dwelt among us,"⁹¹ how the Christ man who must be worshipped and followed willingly humbled himself in both life and death (VII.9), and how that Incarnation must become a reality in his own life. These concepts are hidden from the worldly "wise" (*sapientes*), the extremely learned like

⁸⁹ "Cum te primum cognoui, tu assumpsisti me, ut uiderem esse, quod uiderem, et nondum me esse, qui uiderem."

⁹⁰ Although the mature Augustine has acknowledged the internal exile of his younger self throughout the *Confessiones*, and particularly in those self-expressive metaphors describing his early education, it is here that the developing young man first perceives the reality of his spiritual condition.

⁹¹ "*Verbum caro factum est et habitauit in nobis*:" see John 1:14.

Augustine and the philosophers he reads, by the cloud of intellectual pride, for those

who have been elevated as if in the tall boot of higher learning do not hear [Christ] saying: "Learn from me, since I am mild and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls," and if they recognize God, they do not glorify him as God or render thanks [to Him], but they vanish in their thoughts, and their foolish heart is darkened; saying themselves to be wise they are made stupid. (VII.9)⁹²

Unable to read and assimilate the words (cited above) of Christ in Matthew 11:29, the prideful learned enact the spiritual folly of the heathens discussed by Paul in Romans 1:21-22, allowing the most important aspect of their selves, the internal individuality of mind and soul and personal reflection, to fade slowly away into nonexistence.

It is along this self-elevating yet fading path to nothingness that the young Augustine continues, despite his new ability to read meditatively and his enormous internal advances. Indeed, his illuminating internal experience is literally submerged by the autobiographer in the language of the Platonic philosophers whose texts both advance and hold fast the young man,⁹³ an interesting contrast to the Biblical language engaged to describe Augustine's encounter with their texts. In this philosophical "region of dissimilitude," even recognized, is the loss of individuality; in the "image and similitude" of the Word (*imago et similitudo*: Genesis 1:26),

⁹² "Qui...cothurno tamquam doctrinae sublimioris elati non audiunt dicentem: *discite a me, quoniam mitis sum et humilis corde, et inuenietis requiem animabus uestris, etsi cognoscunt deum, non sicut deum glorificant aut gratias agunt, sed euanescunt in cogitationibus suis et obscuratur insipiens cor eorum; dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt.*"

⁹³ Ferguson, "Crossing of Exile and Language," 851, writes, regarding the *regio dissimilitudinis*, "Augustine draws on two passages from Plotinus' *First Ennead*: a description of the soul's 'interior journey' from the realm of matter to 'our dear country' of the Good (chapter 6); and a discussion of the soul's fall into vice and bestiality which Plotinus characterizes by a direct echo of Plato's phrase 'region of dissimilitude' (chapter 8)." Those wishing to consult the original Greek passages regarding the "region of dissimilitude" in Plato and Plotinus should see Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, Appendix V, 623-624. See also Chadwick, *Confessions*, 123-124 nn.18-23 for Augustine's extensive use of Plotinian ideas and language in this section of the *Confessiones*.

on the other hand, is the affirmation of individual existence. And the mature bishop enacts this reality here and elsewhere in his autobiographical text, engaging and altering and mingling the voices and words and images of external textuality which inform his experience, including that in which his young self is mired, synthesizing all into an original metaphorical expression of Christian individuality, exiled in the past from its true nature, redeemed in the present by its assimilative and unique engagement of the many words through which God's Word is scattered on earth. The Word becomes artistically incarnate in personal textual expression, and synthetic textual individuality lies at the heart of self-exploration and self-affirmation in that Word, as the medieval audience of that abundantly illustrated fifteenth-century *Vita Sancti Augustini* (Boston Public Library MS 1483) clearly understood. Augustine is depicted in the "region of dissimilitude" (*regio dissimilitudinis*) lying on his back, with his eyes closed in spiritual vision and, despite the awkwardness of the position, his hand propped under his head in a symbol of meditation; the hand of God reaches down from a dark cloud and presents not one, but two texts (one a book and one a scroll) to support and inform the exploration and realization of Augustine's internal self.⁹⁴ Even and especially in this most intimate of moments, Augustine's medieval readers recognized the textual essence of his spiritual identity and its intimate relationship to the consolidating Word of God, the Word which the young man has

⁹⁴ See Figure 3, and Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 73. Speculation as to what these two texts may be (the Bible and the voice of God, or the Bible and the Platonic books, or the Platonic books and the voice of God) must remain just that, for the illustration is unfinished, the book and scroll, blank. Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 546, testifies to the popularity of Augustine's composite textual allegory of self with medieval audiences when he claims that "la 'région de dissemblance' a pu être repérée quatre-vingt-dix fois, dans des contextes variés, chez trente-cinq auteurs" from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries alone. Joseph S. Wittig, "Piers Plowman B, Passus IX-XII: Elements in the Design of the Inward Journey," *Traditio* 28 (1972):232, points out that "the medieval use of this topos springs chiefly from Augustine's *Confessions*."

yet to assimilate personally in order to achieve the engaging Christian individuality so brilliantly expressed by the mature author, the textual individuality so influential for learned communities in the Middle Ages, the providential individuality composed within the self in the spontaneous textual conversion of Book VIII.

Chapter Three: *Compositio*
 Personal Reading and Textual Conversion

It is in the rustic garden in Milan, trapped by his conscience in the painful struggle of his own internal meditations, that Augustine finally inscribes God's text on to the intellectual and emotional parchment of his spiritual memory, immediately enacting the words of Biblical textuality in his life. Not surprisingly, it is here also that the mature writer stylistically and thematically weaves Christian textuality into his autobiography in one of the most subtle, complex and extensive examples of personal "text-work" found in the *Confessiones*. Thus metaphorically and literally, Augustine, both past and present, personally fulfills the Christian notion of the Word made flesh in his own textuality, linguistically recreating the Incarnation lacking in the Platonic texts of Book VII in both his own internal *compositio* of Christ's words during conversion and his external manifestations of that spiritual textualization in the *Confessiones*.

For the autobiographer, the "mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ"¹ whom the philosophers do not know (VII.18) provides humanity with an example of the life that should be lived by a human being within whom the Word of God resides. Christ manifests a divine yet human voice "calling" (*vocans*) out in Scripture for the meditation and participation of all who hear and understand: "I am the way and the truth and the life," He claims in John 14:6, "mingling" with "flesh," in Augustine's metaphorical language, "the food" which human beings (Augustine in particular) are too "feeble" to receive, transforming the "wisdom" of the omniscient Word into a milk for spiritual "infancy" accessible to the limited linguistic

¹ "*Mediator dei et hominum, homo Christus Iesus;*" see I Timothy 2:5.

perception of humanity (VII.18).² It is no mistake that Augustine's mingling of Christ's words with his own in the body of his autobiographical text emulates the activity of the incarnate Word, for the writing bishop has already done what his young self, who has no concept of the "mystery" of the Word made flesh,³ must (VII.19): he has "grasped the meaning of the Incarnation for his own personal life" by assimilating it in not only "the metaphysical," but also "the moral order,"⁴ following "the way," seeking "the truth" and living "the life" manifested by God's allegory of the flesh.

As Book VIII of the *Confessiones* opens, it is his own personal *via* to assimilate and emulate both internally and externally the incarnate Word of Christian textuality which the young Augustine deliberately seeks. The author admits that "the Saviour Himself was pleasing" to the young man he then was, but that he had not yet made his new perception manifest in his individual soul and life, because "it still disgusted [him] to go through [Christ's] narrow places" (VIII.1).⁵ Prepared by his recent internal ruminations, but bearing the burden of a "heart" ("cor") which needs to be purged from its "old leaven" (*fermentum vetus*), the young man seeks new textual nourishment, particularly advice as to an individual and "appropriate way" ("aptus modus") for him, given his past experiences and training, "to walk" ("ad ambulandum") along God's "way" ("uia"), and does so from a man noted not for his eloquence or learning, but for living "most devoutly"

² "Ego sum uia et ueritas et uita, et cibum, cui capiendo inualidus eram, miscentem carni, quoniam uerbum caro factum est, ut infantiae nostrae lactesceret sapientia tua, per quam creasti omnia."

³ "Quid...sacramenti haberet uerbum caro factum, ne suspicari quidem poteram."

⁴ Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 30.

⁵ "Placebat...ipse saluator et ire per eius angustias adhuc pigebat."

("deuotissime:" VIII.1). Simplicianus,⁶ aside from his role as an example, tells Augustine the tale of a man whose life experiences and linguistic talents echo Augustine's own much more keenly than Simplicianus' could. The story of Victorinus, the famous rhetorician whose Latin translations of the Platonic books have already so moved the spirit of the young Augustine, is one of spiritual conversion from worldly success to Christian service, a story specifically designed by both God and Simplicianus to urge Augustine "to the humility of Christ" ("ad humilitatem Christi:" VIII.2).

Victorinus is a "most learned old man," who is "most skilled in all the liberal doctrines" and who has "read and distinguished between a great many of the philosophers" (VIII.2).⁷ Highly successful in the secular realm, he is a "rhetorician" ("rhetor") for the city of Rome and a staunch supporter and "worshipper" ("venerator") of the Roman gods with his "terrifying mouth" (*os terricreps*), a man submerged in the same secular literature which has so powerfully informed Augustine's self, a man who nonetheless "did not blush to be a child of Christ" and an "infant" of the baptismal "font," to subject his "neck to the yoke of humility" and subdue his "forehead to the reproach of the

⁶ The name Simplicianus obviously bears thematic significance, as do the names of several characters in the *Confessiones*. Simplicianus, of course, lives a simple and Christ-like life; the famous Victorinus he tells of is victorious in the world until he achieves a victory over the world in Christian conversion. Faustus, whose name means "favourable" or "lucky," is, as we have seen, famous without substance, whereas Ambrose truly preaches the "divine food" his name suggests he would; the differences between the value of their speech is further highlighted by the fact that "faustus" is an adjective, only a modifier, whereas "ambrosia" has the solidity of a concrete noun. The allegorical, almost personified, quality of what are in most cases verifiable historical characters is more an indication of Augustine's tendency to select events to emphasize the working of divine Providence in his life (indeed, he might say, an indication of the extensive working of that divine Providence in his life), than a suggestion that his autobiography does not possess historical validity.

⁷ "Doctissimus senex et omnium liberalium doctrinarum peritissimus quique philosophorum tam multa legerat et diiudicauerat."

cross" (VIII.2).⁸ Surely if he was able to descend from the pride of secular speech and convert his soul and mind and tongue to the spirit and textuality of Christianity, Augustine, too, could actualize such an enormous change in his person. Victorinus achieved his conversion with the help of textual encounters not unlike those Augustine experiences: he carefully read the "holy scripture and all the Christian writings,"⁹ he spoke to Simplicianus privately, and, urged on by the devout man, he gained spiritual strength "by reading and longing" ("legendo et inhiando") and soon feared the spiritual shame of being "denied by Christ" ("negari a Christo") more than the social embarrassment of being mocked by his erring friends (VIII.2). Thus he is able to seize Christianity and join the church "so that he might be regenerated through baptism" ("ut per baptismum regeneraretur:" VIII.2), achieving exactly the sort of active and whole-hearted spiritual commitment the young Augustine is straining to embrace.

The spiritual turmoil and pressing urgency Augustine feels upon hearing this tale is strengthened by the public nature of Victorinus' conversion, and the profound effect the publicly textualized conversion of such a famous and eloquent man has on his listeners. Fulfilling the words of prophecy about the wicked in Psalm 111:10, "the proud saw and grew angry; they gnashed with their teeth and wasted away" (VIII.2),¹⁰ but the faithful rejoice as Victorinus professes his new faith, for they make intimate use of the spiritual and

⁸ "Non erubuerit esse puer Christi tui et infans fontis tui [see Psalm 35:10, John 4:14 and Apocalypse 21:6] subiecto collo ad humilitatis iugum [see Ecclesiasticus 51:34, Jeremiah 27:12 and Matthew 11:29] et edomita fronte ad crucis opprobrium" [see Galatians 5:11].

⁹ "Sanctam scripturam omnesque Christianas litteras inuestigabat studiosissime."

¹⁰ "Superbi uidebant et irascebantur, dentibus suis stridebant et tabescebant." The notion of pining away recalls the fading thoughts of the worldly wise in VII.9 and the heathens in Romans 1:21-22 (see the discussion in Chapter Two).

necessarily autobiographical text of the man they so admire to inscribe their own souls with the public textualization of Christian faith he speaks:

when he ascended to recite, everyone who knew him clattered his name to one another in turn with a noise of congratulation. But who there did not know him? And with a suppressed sound there resounded through the mouths of all the rejoicing ones: "Victorinus, Victorinus." Suddenly they resounded with exultation, because they saw him, and suddenly they were silent with attention. He pronounced the truthful faith with remarkable confidence and everyone wanted to snatch him inwards into their heart. And they seized him by loving and rejoicing: these were the hands of the ravishing ones. (VIII.2)¹¹

The power of Victorinus' person and speech to engage his audience, inspiring it with an intense desire to internalize him, his speech and the Christian faith he represents, is absolutely striking. Like the master and interpreter of the influential text at the heart of a "textual community," Victorinus is "a charismatic figure in his own right, whose power to motivate groups derive[s] from his oratory, gestures, and physical presence,"¹² as much as from the Christian text the faithful so rejoice to hear him articulate. Those, like Victorinus, who "are known by many" because of their public talent serve not only as "authoritative" examples of the way to salvation for the "many" who willingly follow (VIII.4),¹³ but also as personal spiritual instructors, penetrating and nourishing with the learned textual record of their own spiritual progression the progressing souls of those who read and listen to their autobiographical texts.

¹¹ "Ubi ascendit, ut redderet, omnes sibimet inuicem, quisque ut eum nouerat, strepuerunt nomen eius strepitu gratulationis. Quis autem ibi eum non nouerat? Et sonuit presso sonitu per ora cunctorum conlaetantium: "Victorinus, Victorinus." Cito sonuerunt exultatione, quia uidebant eum, et cito siluerunt intentione, ut audirent eum. Pronuntiauit ille fidem ueracem praeclara fiducia, et uolebant eum omnes rapere intro in cor suum. Et rapiebant amando et gaudento: hae rapiantium manus erant."

¹² Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 90; see also the discussion in the Introduction above.

¹³ "Multis noti, multis sunt auctoritati ad salutem, et multis praeunt secuturis."

The beneficial effects of Victorinus' engaging speech are increased rather than decreased by the fact that he was a great sinner, a successful man of the world, an artful man of language's surfaces, who turned both soul and speech suddenly and publicly to Christian spirituality. Like the prodigal son of Luke 15, he has been lost and is found again, even as he addresses the inflamed crowd, and thus he serves as a motivating and individual example for many others who are still lost, as a very real textual prop even for those proud ones gnashing their teeth. The point is an important one, as indicated by the autobiographer's long reflective meditation (VIII.3-4) upon the conversion of Victorinus and that of the Apostle Paul, of the joy on earth and in heaven over the recovery of the lost "sheep" ("ouis:" see Luke 15:4-6) and the lost "coin" ("drachma:" see Luke 15:8-9), over the return of the lost "son" (see Luke 15:11-32) and the conversion of a great sinner into a great saint (see Acts 13:7-12), over the transformation of the textual "vessels" ("uasa") of the wise from serving the devil to serving God and the salvation of the "many" ("plures") who follow, held by the authority of a powerful voice publicly sharing the reality of the personal internal self through confessional textuality. As he meditates, the writing Augustine speaks directly to those of his readers who remain lost, encouraging them to join the "many," to weave the conversion of their characters out of and into the many words of the *Confessiones* in which he retextualizes and individualizes Simplicianus' tale of Victorinus.

Though not as thoughtful as the mature author, the young Augustine, like Victorinus' listeners, is immediately inflamed with a desire "to imitate" ("ad imitandum:" VIII.5) the rhetorician, and Simplicianus seizes the opportunity to educate and inspire his pupil further. He tells Augustine how Victorinus chose, "in the times of Julian" ("Iuliani temporibus"), to give up the "loquacious school" (*loquax*

schola) rather than the "Word" ("uerbum") of God (VIII.5). Thus, the answer to Augustine's concerns regarding an "appropriate way" for a gifted textual individual like himself to walk a Christian path is completed. Simplicianus has indicated to Augustine exactly how to direct his own textual gift along the *via* of the Word, and he has done so not only through the example of Victorinus, but also through the way in which he has told Victorinus's tale, the events he has emphasized, the emotions he has played upon and the careful order in which he has shared the facts. In the fashion of Victorinus and the writing Augustine himself, the wise old man acts as the knowledgeable Christian *magister* of an influential text, reading, interpreting and composing, transforming the principles he teaches into a food Augustine is able to consume, and teaching the young man how to understand the experiences of life and change them into a palatable and spiritually effective textuality which is both truthful and artistic. Throughout his autobiography Augustine does just this, selecting, composing, defining and expanding the true facts of his life into a sincere yet useful text of the self, a text which frequently reaches out to his audience through the engaging words of Biblical textuality. Indeed, even the story Simplicianus relates about Victorinus is engaged by the reader of the *Confessiones* only through the carefully designed narrative of the Christian autobiographer. The direct voice of neither Victorinus nor Simplicianus is heard; Augustine is our guide, as many have been his.

And what Augustine reveals to the reader about Simplicianus' speech is that Simplicianus deliberately tells the young man about Victorinus' rejection of rhetoric only after the young rhetorician already wanted to imitate that great man's conversion: that is, that the man who sincerely lives and acts according to the *via* of Christ composed the historical facts behind his story to accommodate and influence the internal reality of his reader. It is a technique which

the writing Augustine clearly employs throughout his sincere autobiography with regard not only to his readers' intellectual and spiritual development, but also to the internal progression of his younger self and its sincere expression to his readers. An example particularly pertinent to the role of the textualizer at the heart of Simplicianus' tale is presented in the *Confessiones* two books earlier by the record of Alypius' conversion from the "madness of the circus games" ("insania circensium") with which the otherwise virtuous young man has become enamoured (VI.7). Although it has slipped from Augustine's "memory" ("memoria") to correct his friend, he serves as an involuntary instrument of speech for the God who forgets no one, particularly a future "presiding priest" (*antistes*), and enacts "correction" ("correctio") through the tongue of the "unknowing" (*nesciens*) Augustine (VI.7).

On a day when Alypius is present in his classroom, Augustine feels the powerful force of Providence working within him through both the text he teaches and the metaphorical text he composes in order to illuminate the meaning of the first text engagingly to his students:

there was by chance a reading in my hands. While I was explaining this [reading], and when it seemed seasonable to apply a similitude of the circus games in which that which I was insinuating would become both more delightful and more plain, with a satirical mocking of those whom that madness had captivated, you know, our God, that I did not then reflect upon healing Alypius from that pestilence. (VI.7)¹⁴

Calling almost subconsciously upon metaphorical techniques which are a stylistic trademark of Augustinian textuality, the young Augustine evokes a profound response from his listener. Alypius immediately recognizes the text for what it is, a

¹⁴ "Forte lectio in manibus erat. Quam dum exponerem (et cum) oportune mihi adhibenda uideretur similitudo circensium, quo illud quod insinuabam et iucundius et planius fieret cum inrisione mordaci eorum, quos illa captiuasset insania, scis tu, deus noster, quod tunc de Alypio ab illa peste sanando non cogitauerim."

divine exhortation designed to shape his character, and, despite Augustine's lack of intention, takes it from the mouth of the man he "loves greatly" (*diligere multum*: VI.7) to heart. He reads the reprimand woven from text and experience as a deliberate and specific exhortation on Augustine's part, and does so actively and self-reflectively, applying it immediately to his personal life:

for indeed, after that word he snatched himself out of so deep a pit, in which he was willingly plunged and made blind with wonderful pleasure, and he shook out his mind with a strong temperance and all the filths of the circus games sprang back from him and he went there no more.
(VI.7)¹⁵

For the reader of the *Confessiones*, as for the autobiographer, the event serves not only as a lesson in the enormous potential of Augustine and his *compositio* to move the minds of humanity,¹⁶ but also as a motivating model of personally active and spiritually effective reading on the part of Alypius. Yet both lessons appear to mean little to the young Augustine who formulates the analogy for his friend and who is himself caught in the "pit" of worldly pleasures he finds in Carthage, the place where the event actually takes place, although it is not narrated in the *Confessiones* until after the meeting with Ambrose in Milan. The autobiographer's order of presentation reflects the fact that the experience does not really mean for the developing Augustine until after the teaching of Ambrose in Book VI when he recalls it from his

¹⁵ "Etenim uero ille post illa uerba proripuit se ex fouea tam alta, qua libenter demergebatur et cum mira uoluptate caecabatur, et excussit animum forti temperantia, et resiluerant omnes circensium sordes ab eo ampliusque illuc non accessit."

¹⁶ The positive power of Augustine's speech over the human mind and soul is, the reader will recall, paralleled by a negative power, for Augustine begins to lead others astray into Manichaeism almost as soon as he himself becomes ensnared in that false textuality. Indeed, immediately after Augustine converts Alypius from the circus games in the scene presently under discussion, he leads him into the falsehoods of Manichaeism.

memory and meditates upon it,¹⁷ and when it is also the most useful to his reader. The autobiographer introduces the Alypius event only in the form of his young self's meditation upon it to emphasize the reality and progression of his internal self over the historical facts of his external experiences,¹⁸ "arranging the events of his life selectively, as he wishes to call them up,"¹⁹ illuminating the inner reality of his spiritual and intellectual development. Not only does this sincerely express his true self to his readers, but it also provides his readers with the story only after their own encounter with the retextualized lesson of Ambrose, when, that is, they are meditatively prepared for it.

Though certainly not yet capable of perceiving the "providential pattern...revealed"²⁰ to the mature autobiographer in the course of his more sophisticated meditations upon the event he sees as a prophetic manifestation of his textual gift, the young Augustine who recollects and reflects upon this important event after his own meditative preparation does ascend to a greater understanding of what he might, and by implication should be

¹⁷ Coward, "Memory and Scripture," 21, expresses a similar idea when he writes that during Augustine's youth "the capacity for memory was nourished within him and filled with many contents both secular and sacred," contents which were "appropriated into his experience in terms of their meanings and spiritual significance" only "later in life."

¹⁸ Augustine frequently narrates events out of the chronological order of his actual experience in order to relate spiritual and internal rather than physical and external truths about himself: the many events related in the young man's meditations in Book VI are perfect examples of this trend. Thus I would argue that this is not so rare a phenomenon in the *Confessiones* as, say, McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 74, suggests when he writes that this achronological narrative technique is a "narrative oddity," because Augustine generally "narrates events in the 'natural order' of their historical occurrence." An understanding of Augustine's concern with the inner-man and the way in which he shapes his narrative to reflect that helps to dispel notions that the *Confessiones*, because they frequently move away from chronological order, are "badly composed" and lack design (see McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 2, 9 and 23, Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 92, and Courcelle, *Recherches*, 20, for the scholarly dialogue on this matter).

¹⁹ Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 46.

²⁰ Fichter, *Poets Historical*, 46.

achieving with the textual talent he has been given. Thus there is little doubt that Augustine, as he sits before Simplicianus listening to his carefully structured tale, would have seen a troubling parallel between Victorinus and himself, and therefore found himself faced with the most agitating and motivating self-image he has yet been forced to read and ruminare. The internal friction of personal meditation--a kind of internal rumination of the self--is, once again, the natural result, and the struggle grows continually more frustrating. Augustine's *via* clearly involves serving God with his textual talent, and though the young Augustine may now recognize this and "sigh" (*suspirare*) for the "occasion" (*occasio*) to seek and serve God, he is still held back by his own "iron will" (*ferrea voluntas*), bound in the "chain" (*catena*) of his worldly thoughts and customs (VIII.5). The "new will" ("uoluntas...noua") coming to life by means of Augustine's progress through textual encounters struggles against the old:

my two wills, one old, the other new, the first carnal, the second spiritual, collided with each other and dissipated my soul with [their] discord. (VIII.5)²¹

The writing Augustine's allegorical textualization of the experience enables him, as it has throughout the *Confessiones*, to understand and articulate his past inner state, and to share that state with his Biblically learned readers in an intimate fashion: he engages Paul's exhortation for the sinner to put off the "old man" (*veter homo*: Ephesians 4:22) and put on the "new man" (*novus homo*: Ephesians 4:24) who "is renovated in knowledge according to the image" of God (Colossians 3:10),²² and he recalls the Apostle's autobiographical discussion in Romans 7:14 of a "spiritual

²¹ "Duae uoluntates meae, una uetus, alia noua, illa carnalis, illa spiritalis, conflagabant inter se atque discordando dissipabant animam meam."

²² "Renouatur in agnitionem secundum imaginem eius qui creauit eum."

law" ("lex spiritalis"), but a "carnal" self ("carnalis sum").²³ The bishop reads his younger self through the text of Paul's similar experience, and, like the Apostle, preaches internal conversion, becoming an authoritative *magister* of internal exploration and expression. This autobiographical technique is by now familiar, but what is new in this instance is the autobiographer's implication that the young Augustine also read himself through Paul's autobiographical words:²⁴

I understood with myself as experience that which I had read, how the flesh might lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; I indeed in both, but more I in that which I approved of in myself, than in that which I disapproved of in myself. For I [was] no more there now, because for the most part I suffered it unwillingly, [rather] than willingly did it. (VIII.5)²⁵

He uses Paul's words regarding the battle of the "flesh" ("caro") and "spirit" ("spiritus") in Galatians 5:17 in order to define what he experiences within; he engages the internal struggle Paul textualizes in Romans 7:15-20 as a battle between his well-meaning self and the "sin" ("peccatum:" 17 and 20) which rests in his body in order to distance himself from the evil he wishes to leave behind and to acknowledge his own progression. Like Paul, his pleasure in the "law of God according to the inner man" (*lex Dei secundum interiorem hominem*) is thwarted by the "law of sin" (*lex peccati*) governing his flesh (Romans 7:22-23), and the young man can appeal finally only to God's "grace" ("gratia:" Romans 7:25) for the textual assistance he still requires to arise from the

²³ Earlier in Chapter 7, Paul informs the Romans that the new law of Christianity requires service "in the newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" ("in novitate spiritus et non in vetustate litterae:" Romans 7:6).

²⁴ The fact that the young man was indeed reading Paul at this time is verified by the presence of the "book" (*codex*) of the Apostle on his table in VIII.6.

²⁵ "Intellegebam me ipso experimento id quod legeram, quomodo caro concupisceret aduersus spiritum et spiritus aduersus carnem, ego quidem in utroque, sed magis ego in eo, quod in me approbavam, quam in eo, quod in me improbavam. Ibi enim magis iam non ego, quia ex magna parte id patiebar inuitus quam faciebam uolens."

spiritual "slumber" ("somnum") he has not yet shaken off (VIII.5).²⁶

That "grace" comes in the form of yet another voice with yet another tale of spiritual conversion, a tale for which Augustine, prepared by the reading of Simplicianus' narrative and of his own internal state, is now ready. Ponticianus is a fellow African, a man of the world, yet also a Christian, who comes to Augustine's house and unexpectedly finds the "book" (*codex*) of the Apostle Paul on Augustine's table (VIII.6). Thus, the first link in a chain of apparently chance discoveries of texts which interconnects the narratives of both Ponticianus and Augustine the autobiographer up to the point of the young man's conversion is forged. Recognizing in Paul's "book" a familiar textual context and Augustine's keen interest in the Christian writings, Ponticianus narrates--or, more precisely, his discourse narrates, for it arises almost of its own volition ("ortus est sermo")--the biographical tale of "Anthony, the Egyptian monk" (*Antonius Aegyptius monachus*: VIII.6), whom Leclercq claims was regarded as "the Father of all monks...in all milieus and in every period of the Western Middle Ages."²⁷ Anthony is "converted" (*conversus*) suddenly to monastic asceticism when he hears, by chance, a gospel "reading" (*lectio*) from Matthew 19:21 and takes "what was read" ("quod legebatur") as if it were a divine exhortation designed specifically for him (VIII.12). The miraculous tale which was unknown to Augustine and Alypius until "that hour" (*illa hora*: VIII.6), however, remains unknown to Augustine's audience (with the exception of those many medieval readers who would already know the story), for the autobiographer

²⁶ Sleeping and dreaming are activities which take on often ambiguous and always metaphorical meanings throughout the *Confessiones*: see especially, along with the passage presently under discussion, III.6 (Manichaean nourishment), III.11 (Monnica's visionary dream), VI.13 (Monnica's nonvisionary dreams), IX.12 (Monnica's rest in God), and X.30 (the temptation of dreams). The motif is one of the many metaphors of self-understanding and self-expression found in the *Confessiones*.

²⁷ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 125.

follows the textual example of Simplicianus, manipulating the material he engages to achieve the most profound effect, and strategically does not share Anthony's conversion with the reader of the *Confessiones* until immediately before his own conversion several chapters later. The technique once again implies a concentration upon the reality and development of the intellectual and spiritual individual, the internal self: the young Augustine does not truly and personally understand the significance of Anthony's textual conversion until the dramatic scene in the garden, and that is where, the mature bishop must assume, the revelation of that tale will be the most beneficial for his readers as well.

Having thus provided Augustine and his friend with the "life" of St Anthony which for "medieval monks" was "not simply an historical text," but most profoundly, "a living text, a means of formation of monastic life,"²⁸ Ponticianus' speech naturally spins off ("sermo eius deuolutus est") into a discussion of "monastic communities" ("monasteriorum greges"), those learned groups whose "organizational principles...were clearly based on texts"²⁹ like the *Vita Antonii*, particularly when those texts are interpreted by an authoritative and charismatic personality like Ambrose, the "nourisher" of both church and monastery (*nutritor*: (VIII.6), or Augustine the author of the *Confessiones*, themselves a fundamental text at the heart of medieval monasticism and spiritual individuality. And it is to the individual that the narratives of both Ponticianus and Augustine almost immediately turn as Ponticianus tells the personal tale of two individuals whose lives are inspired and altered by the text of Anthony's life and conversion (VIII.6). Walking one afternoon, two of Ponticianus' acquaintances come upon a

²⁸ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 125.

²⁹ Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 90.

rustic "cottage" (*casa*) and find within it a "book" (*codex*) containing the "life of Anthony" ("*uita Antonii*"), a "book" which

one of them began to read and to wonder and to be inflamed and, while reading, to meditate upon seizing such a life and, having abandoned his secular service, serving you. (VIII.6)³⁰

Like Augustine himself, this reader of Anthony's text must sever his considerable ties to the world, his ambitions and desires within it, in order to convert his talents and actions to spiritual service. Intimate reading, the will to change, the feelings of self-directed "shame" (*pudor*) and anger ("*iratus sibi*:" the notion derives from Psalm 4:5), the oral condemnation to his friend of his present life (a condemnation which reflects in its sharp and troubled questions the internal conflict of his meditations, and is clearly an expression of his "own language"³¹), and the continuing influence of the *Vita Antonii* result in the spontaneous conversion of the unnamed individual. The event exemplifies a truly spiritual use of learning and textuality,³² a kind of meditative reading which reaches beyond the human intellect and into the mysterious emotional aspects of the human heart:

confused by the travail of a new life, he returned his eyes to the pages: and he read and he was changed within, where you [God] saw, and his mind was stripped from the world, as it soon appeared. For while he read and rolled over the waves of his heart, he growled sometimes and distinguished and discerned better things. (VIII.6)³³

³⁰ "Legere coepit unus eorum et mirari et accendi et inter legendum meditari arripere talem uitam et relicta militia saeculari seruire tibi."

³¹ Harpham, "Language of Autobiography," 47, and the discussion in the Introduction above.

³² David C. Benson, "An Augustinian Irony in *Piers Plowman*," *Notes and Queries* 221 (1976):53, points out that the conversion of both Victorinus and Ponticianus' acquaintance are "the result of the right use of learning."

³³ "Turbidus parturitione nouae uitae reddidit oculos paginis: et legebat et mutabatur intus, ubi tu uidebas, et exuebatur mundo mens eius, ut mox apparuit. Namque dum legit et uoluit fluctus cordis sui, infremuit aliquando et discreuit decreuitque meliora."

Intimately engaging the text he reads and enacting its meaning in the reality of his life, he vows himself, like Anthony, to the monastic service of God and personally composes a new and spiritual life for himself. Like Victorinus (and indeed somewhat like Ponticianus who is telling the tale), the new convert almost effortlessly takes with him into ascetic Christianity the friend who experiences the brief textual expression of his conversion, the intensely emotional and spiritually necessary autobiography of the internal friction behind his internal change.

Ponticianus' narrative presents dimensions of the conversion experience which Augustine did not encounter in Simplicianus' more straightforward text: like the conversion of Anthony the young Augustine has heard though not yet internalized and the reader of the *Confessiones* has not yet experienced, the transformation of Ponticianus's friend is virtually instantaneous, yet the internal struggle through which it is enacted is carefully textualized by both Ponticianus and the writing Augustine, as well as by the man who reads and changes; like Augustine's moving encounters with the *Hortensius* and the Platonic books, the textual encounter of Ponticianus' acquaintance is one of private reading, and indeed the intimacy of the scene as a whole is striking;³⁴ and, like the textual encounters and spiritual progressions of Monnica, the conversion of Ponticianus' two friends is that of "simple men, not scholars,"³⁵ uneducated, unknown--indeed, even unnamed--individuals who can nonetheless read far more

³⁴ It is quite possible that Ponticianus' friend reads the text of Anthony aloud to his comrade; indeed, most reading in antiquity probably would have been uttered aloud and the spiritual intimacy of the conversion experience is little diminished by such a suggestion: see Saenger's discussion in "Silent Reading." There is, however, a striking contrast apparent in the episode between the words the man speaks aloud to his friend and the words his eyes and mind encounter in the book, between the external and internal meditations and compositions of his conversion experience.

³⁵ Benson, "An Augustinian Irony," 53.

effectively than Augustine himself.³⁶ These new dimensions create an intimate and personally engaging narrative which acts as the agent of God's Word, bridging³⁷ the expanse between external textuality and internal conviction, opening Augustine's internal eyes yet further to the sincere and shocking image of his spiritual self reflected before his face in the text he hears:

Ponticianus narrated these things. But you, Lord, among his words, twisted me back to myself, drawing me away from my back, where I had placed myself while I did not want to attend to myself, and you established me before my face so that I would see how filthy I was, how distorted and dirty, stained and ulcerous. And I saw and I shuddered, and there was no place whither I might flee from myself. And if I tried to turn [my] sight away from myself, he narrated that which he narrated, and you placed me before myself again and you thrust me into my eyes so that I would find my iniquity and hate it. I knew it, but I disguised and repressed and forgot [it].
(VIII.7)³⁸

Reading in this intensely self-reflective way, actively comparing himself to those unlearned men with the help of Ponticianus' textual mirror,³⁹ the young Augustine loves

³⁶ We have already seen Augustine's surprise and wonder at his mother's ability to read and interpret her dream so much more effectively and truthfully than he could. In an episode with even more striking parallels to the conversion of Ponticianus' friends, Augustine is "amazed" (*mirare*) at Monnica's willingness to give up one of her old religious customs simply because she knows that the order to do so originates from the mouth of Ambrose (VI.2). Augustine sees his mother as an extraordinarily devoted Christian and a religious visionary who shares a special connection with her God; thus he is able to accept her spiritual reading abilities much more readily and thus much less effectively in a personal and spiritual sense than the abilities of these two ordinary and worldly men.

³⁷ The metaphor is an appropriate one for describing the effects of Ponticianus' narrative, for the root of his name, *pons*, means "bridge."

³⁸ "Narrabat haec Ponticianus. Tu autem, domine, inter uerba eius retorquebas me ad me ipsum, auferens me a dorso meo, ubi me posueram, dum nollem me attendere, et constituebas me ante faciem meam, ut uiderem, quam turpis essem, quam distortus et sordidus, maculosus et ulcerosus. Et uidebam et horrebam, et quo a me fugerem non erat. Et si conabar auertere a me aspectum, narrabat ille quod narrabat, et tu me rursus opponebas mihi et impingebas me in oculos meos, ut inuenirem iniquitatem meam et odissem. Noueram eam, sed dissimulabam et cohibebam et obliuiscabar."

³⁹ I am reminded of Augustine's metaphor of Scripture as the moral mirror of the internal self in *Enarratio in Psalmum CIII* I.4; see my discussion in Chapter One above.

(*amare*) them for so easily converting, and hates (*odisse*) himself for allowing so "many years" ("multi...anni") to pass by wasted in lusts of the flesh, religious heresy and worldly ambition since he was first "aroused to the study of wisdom" ("excitatus...studio sapientiae:" VIII.7).⁴⁰ Examining, analyzing, assessing and criticizing his own internal condition throughout that period, he admits that seeking no longer functions as even the shallow excuse it has served as for quite some time, and he is placed naked before the merciless eyes and cutting tongue of his own conscience:

the day had come in which I would be laid bare to myself and my conscience would speak angrily within me: "Where is the tongue? Surely you said that you did not want to throw away the burden of emptiness on account of uncertain truth. Behold, now it is certain, and that burden still presses you down and those who have not been worn away thus in seeking and have not meditated those things for ten years and more receive wings on freer shoulders. (VIII.7)⁴¹

Spurred on by the authoritative and intimate tales of textual conversion Ponticianus relates, Augustine's now actively reading "conscience" finds and uses its internal "tongue", lashing corrosively at Augustine "within" ("intus"), cultivating and confounding (*confundere*) his spirit with a "horrible shame" (*pudor horribilis*), the same emotion which inspired Victorinus' final conversion, which must have motivated the young Alypius when faced with Augustine's condemning speech, and which certainly motivates the striking conversion of Ponticianus' friend. The autobiographer's dramatic external composition of his younger self's moral struggle in response to Ponticianus' tale as an internal monologue of the conscience accurately reflects the extremely

⁴⁰ Augustine is referring to his early encounter with Cicero's *Hortensius*.

⁴¹ "Venerat dies, quo nudarer mihi et increparet in me conscientia mea: "Vbi est lingua? Nempe tu dicebas, propter incertum uerum nolle te abicere sarcinam uanitatis. Ecce iam certum est, et illa te adhuc premit umerisque liberioribus pinnas recipiunt, qui neque ita in quaerendo attriti sunt nec decennio et amplius ista meditati."

textual nature of the process of self-understanding and internal ascension through which the young rhetorician progresses.⁴²

It is an aspect of the same textualizing process which the mature autobiographer engages to express himself, and the reality of his younger self, throughout the *Confessiones*. Indeed, the very passage which describes the author's understanding of the immediate effect of Ponticianus' narrative on his young self textualizes the experience with words which recall and transform the words of various Biblical texts. The Psalmist's reflection in Psalm 35:3 that the unsightly deeds of the unjust will eventually make their "iniquity" hateful to them ("inveniatur iniquitas eius ad odium"), God's warning in Psalm 49:21 that the sinner must eventually "face" his corrupted self ("statuam contra faciem tuam"), and the Psalmist's acknowledgement in Psalm 138:7 of his own inability to "flee" (*fugere*) from that God⁴³ are combined with a reminiscence of the "hearer" ("auditor") but not "doer" ("factor") of the Word in James 1:23-24 who has seen the "countenance of his own inborn nature" (*vultus nativitatis suae*) and "forgotten what sort of [man] he was" ("oblitus est qualis fuerit"). The textual mirror of Scripture reveals for the mature writer the spiritual state of his younger self on the brink of conversion, and it advances his self-understanding, just as Ponticianus's narrative mirror

⁴² Augustine's internal struggles are often dramatized in his written works as monologues and dialogues. The internal dialogue of VI.11, in which Augustine debates with himself regarding what sort of life he ought to live, is an excellent and lively example of this technique. This kind of internal textualization is allegorized, as it is here with "conscientia," in the *Soliloquia*, where Augustine discusses the nature of God and the human soul in a very personal and reflective way with an extremely conscientious character called Reason, who, as Augustine writes, is "either I myself or someone else," speaking either "outwardly or inwardly" ("ait mihi...sive ego ipse sive alius quis, extrinsecus sive intrinsecus, nescio:" I.1). Augustine's encounter with his old "amicae" and the personified "continentia" in VIII.11 is another dramatic and allegorical example of the same technique.

⁴³ The sentiment of Psalm 138:7 is also found in Lucretius, *De Natura Rerum*, Horace, *Carmina* and Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*.

advances that of the developing young man. These texts present the self to the reading eyes of both the rhetorician and the bishop through the familiar medium of textual signs. Ponticianus textualizes the miraculous conversions of others for the rhetorician who is only learning to compose spiritually within, while the Biblical texts are personally retextualized for the ideally progressing reader of the *Confessiones* by the writing bishop, who engages them to express his own intellectual and spiritual alterations. Augustine advances Ponticianus' narrative technique by combining it with the unnamed convert's textuality, personalizing the process into autobiography.

This external articulation of the internal self which the autobiographer obviously finds necessary to the fulfillment of his true textual self, both in the past and in the present, intensifies when Ponticianus' tale is over. The young Augustine moves across the bridge of textuality and entirely into himself, engaging in the internal meditation of textuality, beating his own "soul" (*anima*) with "the whips of thoughts" (*sententiarum verbera*), internally urging it in schoolmaster fashion to follow him to God (VIII.7). Its refusal comes no longer by virtue of its "arguments" ("argumenta") regarding a lack of necessary knowledge, but is the result of a "fear" ("trepidatio") of leaving behind the very things which he realizes will bring about eternal "death" (*mors*: VIII.7). Augustine thus finds himself experiencing "great strife" (*grandis rixa*) with his own "soul" ("anima") within his "heart" (*cor*), deep internal strife textualized in an impassioned cry to Alypius which both captures and releases the thoughts and emotions generated by the meditation of Ponticianus' story:

disturbed in countenance as in mind, I fall upon Alypius, I shout: "What do we endure? What is this? What have you heard? The unlearned rise up and seize heaven, and we with our doctrines without heart, behold where we are tumbled about in flesh and blood! Or, because they have

gone before, is it shameful to follow and not shameful not even to follow?" (VIII.8)⁴⁴

Highlighted by the dramatic immediacy of the present tense, this rare instance of the direct speech of the developing Augustine accurately reflects the anger and the frustration, the self-discovery and biting shame which urges him onward. It is a clear example of the young Augustine's "own language," an autobiographical expression in response to external and internal textuality, an intimate outburst indicating self-understanding and inspiring personal progression.

The sheer intensity of personal emotion far surpasses that which the young Augustine had captured in his prose imitation of Vergil as a school boy, and even that which he had poured into his earliest prayers for divine assistance against beatings at school.⁴⁵ The mature bishop acknowledges that his young self was not voicing the "customary things" ("solita"); rather "my forehead, my cheeks, my eyes, my colour, the measure of my voice spoke my mind more than the words which I was bringing forth" (VIII.8).⁴⁶ The intense physicality of the autobiographer's description in fact indicates the degree to which the young man's expression surpasses the limitations of physical textuality--it is the "inner man" speaking "inner words" who is captured in the spoken, written and enacted words of Augustine, both young and old. The delve within pushes the boundaries of the young Augustine's character, overwhelming and altering his being; the autobiographical expression it produces characterizes the internal "tumult" ("tumultus") which carries him into rustic

⁴⁴ "Vultu quam mente turbatus inuado Alypium, exclamo: 'Quid patimur? Quid est hoc? Quid audisti? Surgunt indocti et caelum rapiunt, et nos cum doctrinis nostris sine corde ecce ubi uolutamur in carne et sanguine! An quia praecesserunt, pudet sequi et non pudet nec saltem sequi?'"

⁴⁵ These early instances of *compositio* are discussed in Chapter One of this thesis.

⁴⁶ "Plus loquebantur animum meum frons, genae, oculi, color, modus uocis quam uerba, quae promebam."

isolation "in the garden" ("in hortum")⁴⁷ and, precisely through that external textualization, Alypius with him "step after step" ("pedem post pedem:" VIII.8), just as the man in Ponticianus' tale led both his friend and himself to conversion through his own similarly troubled and personal outbursts in response to external textuality. Augustine's personal cry to Alypius constitutes a meditative composition more personal, more emotional, more imaginative and more useful for both self and listener--Augustine is always both the *magister* and the individual--than any the young Augustine has before achieved.

The keen understanding of intelligible reality and personal spirituality apparent in Augustine's spontaneous words to Alypius clearly surpasses the love of worldly "inferior things" ("inferiora") which characterized the much earlier meditations "from his innermost heart" ("ex intimo corde meo:" IV.13), the only intellectual food he was capable of placing before the "mouth of his contemplation" ("os contemplationis meae") when he wrote *De Pulchro et Apto* (IV.14).⁴⁸ In addition, the Biblical "text-work" woven into his composition, the intertextuality which engages and alters the notion of the "violent ones seizing" ("violenti rapiunt") heaven in Matthew 11:12, and combines it with the spiritual

⁴⁷ That which is simple, rustic, and organic is strikingly inspirational and spiritual throughout the *Confessiones*: one need only reflect upon the agricultural imagery associated with Ambrose's profound speech to confirm this. The conversion of Ponticianus' friends takes place in a rustic "cottage, where certain servants of yours, poor in spirit, lived" (*casa, ubi habitant quidam servi tui spiritu pauperes*) (VIII.6); the conversion of Augustine takes place "in a garden" ("in hortum") (VIII.8), "under a certain fig tree" ("sub quadam fici arbore:" VIII.12); and the contemplative experience at Ostia takes place while Augustine and Monnica lean at a window looking out upon a "garden" ("hortus:" IX.10).

⁴⁸ This, the earliest of Augustine's works, was lost to Augustine when he wrote the *Confessiones*, as he asserts in IV.13: "I wrote the books 'De Pulchro et Apto,' I think two or three; you know, God: for it has fallen away from me. For we do not have them, but they have wandered from us I know not how" ("et scripsi libros 'De Pulchro et Apto,' puto, duos aut tres; tu scis, deus: nam excidit mihi. Non enim habemus eos, sed aberrauerunt a nobis nescio quo modo"). The books remain lost to modern scholarship, but for a brief summary of what little information has been gathered on this work, see Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, 110-111 nn.73 and 80.

inadequacy of a concentration upon "flesh and blood" ("caro et sanguis") found in Matthew 16:17, I Corinthians 15:50 and Galatians 1:16 reveals a Christian self-awareness, self-understanding and self-expression which is both biting and illuminating.⁴⁹ As he sits in meditation, he seems to recognize the spiritual dimensions of the conversion to which he aspires, the abstract path which his soul must follow, the metaphorical journey with which the reader of the *Confessiones* is already familiar:

one did not go there [into a covenant with God] with ships or chariots or feet, as much as I had gone from the house into that place where we were sitting. For not only to go, but also to arrive there was nothing other than to will to go, but to will resolutely and completely, not to turn and throw around this [way] and that [way] a half-wounded will, wrestling with a part rising up and another part falling down. (VIII.8)⁵⁰

The young Augustine's discovery that it is the spiritual action of the will alone which is required not only reveals the closing gap in the understanding of the young and the mature Augustine, but also adds depth and definition to the autobiographer's metaphorical use of the prodigal son parable: throughout the *Confessiones*, as in the tales of Simplicianus and Ponticianus, it is the individual will which must act to initiate conversion, the individual will whose existence and freedom of choice had been utterly negated for Augustine by Manichaeism.

It is here, therefore, that Augustine must finally deal with the concept of free will so central to his internal

⁴⁹ Although it is entirely possible that the Biblical citations are solely an addition of the writing Augustine, their presence in the direct voice of the young Augustine at a time when he has been reading the Bible suggests that they may well have been engaged by the younger man, and certainly indicates that the autobiographer would have the reader understand that his young self engaged the ideas--the "inner-words"--behind the Biblical verses, if not the the words themselves.

⁵⁰ "Non illuc ibatur nauibus aut quadrigis aut pedibus, quantum saltem de domo in eum locum ieram, ubi sedebamus. Nam non solum ire, uerum etiam peruenire illuc nihil erat aliud quam uelle ire, sed uelle fortiter et integre, non semisauciam hac atque hac uersare et iactare uoluntatem parte adsurgente cum alia parte cadente luctantem."

development both as a human creature and as an individual with unique experiences. Seeking an understanding of his personal experience, the young man embarks upon a *meditatio* of the human will which, as it is composed in the *Confessiones*, merges at a new level the maturing and the mature autobiographical perspectives. The urgent mental "contritions" ("contritiones:" VIII.9) concerning his free will constitute for the young Augustine a search for further self-understanding and the active engagement of personal conviction; for the mature autobiographer, these same internal "contritions" constitute a search for a providential comprehension--yet another level of self-understanding--and a sincere textual expression of the internal process which brought him ultimately to spiritual conversion. Arguing against the theories of the Manichees which have corrupted both him and that Manichaean audience he most wants to take along with his younger self to spiritual conversion, the writer reveals the mental footsteps for both himself and his reader of that self's gradual meditative progression toward an understanding of human indecision and action as a spiritual battle within the individual soul, for which each individual is personally responsible. Thus, the responsibility for his many mistakes both past and present, for his life itself, falls finally and solidly on the young man's shoulders, creating a contritional "tension in the very memory itself, a battle with the precise quality of [the] past experiences"⁵¹ from which Augustine seems unable to gain his freedom. At one moment, "with a word" ("cum uerbo") of desire, he advances; the next, he slips back, but not quite into his "former state" ("pristina"), progressing, but with the "ingrown worse" ("deterius inolitum") holding more authority in him than the "unaccustomed better" ("melius insolitum:" VIII.11).

Suspended by the personal "fear" (*horror*) his own

⁵¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 174.

advancement generates (VIII.11), Augustine himself provides the *via* out of his spiritual impasse through his own meditative, imaginative and compositional abilities, through the creative textual gift he has been exercising and sharpening for years. He creates an allegorical composition--internal for the young rhetorician; externalized by the bishop writing the *Confessiones*--which visualizes and dramatizes the battling forces within his soul in order to read and understand them, and ultimately to convert and unify his spiritual self and its manifestation in physical actions. The allegorical drama enacts the internal struggle between the opposing desires for sexuality and continence which Augustine's new self-awareness and sense of personal responsibility force him to recognize as central to the active alteration of lifestyle which is the essence of Book VIII. The concupiscent voices which have twisted his internal perception and influenced his worldly actions since youth are many and agitating, like the divided soul they exist within and misshape:

Trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities, my old friends, held me back, and they plucked softly at my carnal garment and they murmured quietly: "Do you dismiss us?" and "From that moment we will not be with you beyond into eternity" and "From that moment this and that will not be allowed for you beyond into eternity."
(VIII.11)⁵²

As the autobiographer did with the allegorical monologue of *Conscientia* in VIII.7 and the young man did in the emotional monologue to his friend in VIII.8, the struggling Augustine textualizes his internal experience by imagining it in a dramatic form, making that experience immediately manifest to his creative and linguistically-oriented individuality, and thus to his ruminative inner senses.

⁵² "Retinebant nugae nugarum et uanitates uanitatium, antiquae amicae meae, et succutiebant uestem meam carneam et submurmurabant: 'Dimittisne nos?' et 'A momento isto non erimus tecum ultra in aeternum' et 'A momento isto non tibi licebit hoc et illud ultra in aeternum.'"

By thus imagining and meditating upon the "precise nature"--the fears, the demands and the needs--of his past desires, which the autobiographer further textualizes and defines by equating with the "vanities" of Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:8, Augustine discovers himself turned away from and moving beyond them, as if they are "muttering from his back and plucking furtively"⁵³ at him as he leaves them behind (VIII.11). Yet, for all his internal self-recognition, he cannot silence or ignore these earthly voices--not, that is, until personified *Continentia*, toward whom he now turns his "face" (*facies*), appears to his mind's eye as unified, peaceful and "fruitful" ("fecunda"), a sharp contrast to the female figure of proverbial Folly who characterizes his Manichaean phase, and reminiscent of the "cheerful" (*hilaris*) young man of Monnica's dream:

the chaste dignity of continence was revealed, serene and not carelessly cheerful, honourably flattering so that I would come and not hesitate, and extending her pious hands, filled with herds of good examples, out to accept and embrace me. (VIII.11)⁵⁴

Augustine's imaginative *compositio* dramatically urges him on to the embrace of God, goading him with concrete words and images, agitating him with inspiring examples of chastity to ask for God's help, to trust in God, to live in God. The autobiographer's retextualization of the experience is designed to move the mind and imagination of the reader in a parallel way.

It is hardly surprising, then, that Augustine's

⁵³ "A dorso mussitantes et...furtim uellicantes."

⁵⁴ "Aperiebatur...casta dignitas continentiae, serena et non dissolute hilaris, honeste blandiens, ut uenirem neque dubitarem, et extendens ad me suscipiendum et amplectendum pias manus plenas gregibus bonorum exemplorum."

Continentia is a very Biblical figure,⁵⁵ engaging several textual hooks with which to capture the reader. Clearly the product of Augustine's spiritual meditative reading and his developing ability to textualize the experiences and alterations of his internal self, she is the joyful "mother of children" ("mater filiorum:" Psalm 112:9) who freely borrows Paul's plea in Colossians 3:5 to mortify (*mortificare*) the "members" ("membra") of the physical body and the Psalmist's claim in Psalm 118:85 that the wicked "narrate" (*narrare*) fables which bear no relation to God's "law" ("lex:" VIII.11). She merges New and Old Testament texts to dismiss sexual activity and physical fertility in support of a chaste lifestyle and its spiritual fruitfulness: "become deaf against those unclean members of yours on the earth, so that they may be mortified. They tell you delights, but not like the law of your Lord God" (VIII.11).⁵⁶ She could be said to embody and allegorize the Biblical textuality Augustine is yet reluctant to accept, particularly as that textuality has become a substantial aspect of Augustine's spiritual self, for she speaks from and for the better part of that self.

The originality of Augustine's striking and imaginative allegory of Continentia and the Amicae is, according to Courcelle, to be found precisely in the dramatized internal struggle "of the self against the self" (VIII.11),⁵⁷ for Augustine "[a] *opposé* Contenance aux Vanités" in order to give his allegory "valeur psychologique, en accord avec son développement sur les deux volontés."⁵⁸ This personalized

⁵⁵ For suggestions as to the various possible literary sources of Augustine's Continentia and the links between autobiography, particularly of a hagiographical nature, allegory and vision, see Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 127-136.

⁵⁶ "Obsurdesce aduersus immunda illa membra tua super terram, ut mortificentur. Narrant tibi delectationes, sed non sicut lex domini dei tui."

⁵⁷ "De me ipso aduersus me ipsum."

⁵⁸ Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 136.

internal dialogue, this allegorical *compositio* of the "controversy" in Augustine's "heart" ("controversia in corde") has a profound and immediate effect: "I was excessively ashamed" ("erubescebam nimis"), the author recollects (VIII.11), for this mini-autobiography of his younger self draws his "whole wretchedness" (*tota miseria*) together "in the sight of [his] heart" ("in conspectu cordis:" VIII.12). This particularized, visualized and textualized perception of the struggle taking place within his own internal nature advances the young Augustine's self-knowledge beyond the *regio dissimilitudinis* of his philosophical meditations and the ulcerous self-loathing of his response to Ponticianus' tale, beyond his emotional outburst to Alypius and his wandering meditations on the freedom of the will, and to an intimate understanding of the desires at the core of his being, desires which both consciously and subconsciously motivate his daily actions. Moving past pride and anger and into the darker spaces of the human will, Augustine gains a deeper self-understanding through his engagement with the self-created internal texts the autobiographer externalizes for the reader of the *Confessiones*, and this new comprehension generates a sense of personal responsibility and an intense and heartfelt shame which results in a healthy outburst of tears: "an enormous tempest arose, bearing a great downpour of tears" (VIII.12).⁵⁹ To allow his emotions unbridled expression "in their own voices" ("cum uocibus suis"), Augustine leaves Alypius and seeks "solitude" ("solitudo"), throwing himself "under a certain fig tree" ("sub quadam fici arbore"), pouring out the tears of humble sacrifice, finally composing a personal prayer for God's help to change, not someday, not tomorrow, but immediately:

I let go of the reins to my tears, and the streams of my eyes burst forth, your acceptable sacrifice, and not

⁵⁹ "Oborta est procella ingens ferens ingentem imbrem lacrimarum."

indeed in these words, but with this meaning, I said many things to you: "And you, Lord, how long? How long, Lord, will you be angry until the end? Do not be mindful of our ancient iniquities." For I felt myself to be held by them. I was casting about miserable voices: "How long, how long 'tomorrow and tomorrow?' Why not now? Why not the end of my unsightliness in this hour?" (VIII.12)⁶⁰

As the tears of contrite "sacrifice" ("sacrificium:" Psalm 50: 19) cleanse the young Augustine's spiritual vision, he pours forth personal thoughts and feelings which the mature autobiographer expresses in the words of the repentent sinner of the first penitential Psalm⁶¹ and the prayer of the church begging for relief from persecution in Psalm 78:5 and 8.⁶² Recognizing his own past tendency to procrastinate active spiritual change, the young man moves beyond the insincere and ineffective spiritual desire he recalls (in the autobiographical meditations following Ponticianus' story) having felt in his youth: "Give me chastity and continence, but not yet" (VIII.7);⁶³ and beyond the "slow and sleepy words--'Soon,' 'Behold, soon,' 'Allow a very little while--'" which hinder his progress, though he knows the "truth" (*veritas*), after Simplicianus' tale (VIII.5).⁶⁴ For he finally wills, with "one whole will" ("tota uoluntas una:" VIII.10), his own conversion in the "bitterest contrition of his heart," and his sincere internal speech to God requesting

⁶⁰ "Dimisi habenas lacrimis, et proruperunt flumina oculorum meorum, acceptabile sacrificium tuum, et non quidem his uerbis, sed in hac sententia multa dixi tibi: 'Et tu, domine, usquequo? Usquequo, domine, irasceris in finem? Ne memor fueris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum. Sentiebam enim eis me teneri. Iactabam uoces miserabiles: 'Quandiu, quandiu "cras et cras?" Quare non modo? Quare non hac hora finis turpitudinis meae?'"

⁶¹ "And you, Lord, how long?" ("et tu Domine usquequo:" Psalm 6:4).

⁶² "How long, Lord, will you be angry until the end" ("usquequo Domine irasceris in finem:" Psalm 78:5); and "Do not remember our ancient iniquities" ("ne memineris iniquitatum nostrarum antiquarum:" Psalm 78:8).

⁶³ "Da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo."

⁶⁴ "Verba lenta et somnolenta: 'Modo,' 'Ecce modo,' 'Sine paululum.'"

transformation is answered at once by an unknown voice, which, like Augustine's emotional cry to Alypius, is made striking and immediate by the use of the present tense in the mature man's autobiographical narrative:

behold, I hear a voice from a neighbouring home with the melody of one saying and frequently repeating, as if of a boy or a girl, I know not: "Take up, read; take up, read." (VIII.12)⁶⁵

In the wording of Augustine's autobiographical description, the prophetic voice Augustine hears is reminiscent of the "voice from heaven" urging John to "take the open book from the hand of the angel" in Apocalypse 10:8,⁶⁶ but localized⁶⁷ and softened, personalized by the more humble historical details of his surroundings. And the penetrating effect upon the young Augustine of the childlike orality similar to that through which he first "unknotted" his own youthful tongue in prayer⁶⁸ is virtually immediate. The emotional and intellectual intensity he has been pouring into tears and prayers is focused in an almost instinctual meditation upon the meaning of this mysterious text, reading it in relation to himself and the textual encounters already inscribed in his soul:

and at once most intent, with my expression altered, I

⁶⁵ "Dicebam haec et flebam amarissima contritione cordis mei. Et ecce audio uocem de uicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis quasi pueri an puellae, nescio: 'Tolle lege, tolle lege.'" The complexity of Augustine's passage is increased by the rich connotations of words such as *cantus*, meaning "prophecy" or "incantation," as well as "song," "melody" and "poetry," and *tollere*, meaning both "to remove" or "to destroy" and "to raise" or "to elevate," as well as "to take up" or "to lift up." For an intriguing discussion of the ancient tradition of true prophecy emanating from the mouths of playful children in many texts of both a pagan and a Biblical nature, see Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 137-154.

⁶⁶ "Et vox quam audiui de caelo iterum loquentem mecum et dicentem vade accipe librum apertum de manu angeli."

⁶⁷ See Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 165-168, for a discussion of the source (a physical "neighbouring" or a heavenly "divine" home) of the voice Augustine hears in relation to the adjectives "uicina" (appearing in most manuscripts and favoured by most editors) and "diuina" (appearing rarely and perhaps an interesting reader-response to Augustine's text).

⁶⁸ See the discussion in Chapter One above.

began to reflect upon whether children were wont in any kind of playing to sing anything of such a kind, and it simply did not occur [to me] that I had heard [it] anywhere. (VIII.12)⁶⁹

Having no earthly experience in the storeroom of his *memoria* by which to explain the phenomenon of this voice, he interprets the oral text he hears as a divine order designed specifically for his ears, so that he might return to the written text, "so that I might open the book and read the first chapter that I found" (VIII.12).⁷⁰ As Courcelle claims, "il est naturel au sein christianisme, religion du Livre, la formule renvoie à l'autorité du texte 'révélé,'" ⁷¹ and as Courcelle's extensive examples reveal, the Bible itself provides many instances of God's commands and revelations to His patriarchs and prophets being closely associated with the written text, both its physical production and presentation, and its spiritual ingestion.⁷² Medieval illustrations of Augustine's conversion demonstrate a similar concern with the role of textuality in personal revelation: a rich iconography of books, scrolls, words in the sky, gestures of speech and the meditative position is central to the representation of what is essentially an internal experience.⁷³ Fra Angelico's

⁶⁹ "Statimque mutato uultu intentissimus cogitare coepi, utrumnam solerent pueri in aliquo genere ludendi cantitare tale aliquid, nec occurrebat omnino audisse me uspiam."

⁷⁰ "Vt aperirem codicem et legerem quod primum caput inuenissem."

⁷¹ Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 159.

⁷² See Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 155-163, for a rich discussion of the "tolle, lege" formula and its literary tradition; as Biblical examples of the importance of written texts to the communication between God and humanity, Courcelle cites Exodus 17:14 and 24:7, Isaiah 8:1, Jeremiah 36:1-2 and 28-29, Ezekiel 2:9-3:1 and Apocalypse 5:7-8 and 10:8-10. See also Courcelle's discussion of Biblical sortilege (143-154).

⁷³ See Figures 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 (see also Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 81, and Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, plates 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, and 19). The iconographical trend continues well beyond the end of the fifteenth-century, as a glance at Courcelle's remaining plates will reveal.

fifteenth-century rendition of the scene (Figure 9)⁷⁴ reveals the same preoccupation with the textual encounters of the *Confessiones*, but by literally visualizing the various levels of textuality inherent in Augustine's story: he portrays Augustine in a meditative position under the fig tree, Alypius looking on at a slight distance in a similar position, and an unknown monk, most likely Anthony, in a mountainous desert landscape behind and above the garden, overshadowing and informing the visualization of Augustine's experience as it in turn informs Alypius' experience, much as Anthony's text influences and informs the reality of Augustine's conversion, and Augustine's immediate record of his experience informs Alypius' transformation.⁷⁵

By eliminating the more obvious signs of speech and writing, Fra Angelico has emphasized the deeper meaning of these textual events, the deeper meaning which Augustine himself, working within a linguistic medium, attempts to emphasize through a constant mixture of spoken, written and enacted texts. Augustine's immediate perception of the mysterious voice he personally experiences as demanding a return to the text is dependent upon the various internal and external texts of his experience, and particularly upon his active reading of that voice in light of the textual record of Anthony's conversion through Biblical textuality, the "living text"⁷⁶ of the *Vita Antonii* which Augustine has already

⁷⁴ See also Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, plate 8.

⁷⁵ As Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, 647-650, points out, there has been significant debate as to the identity of the ascetic figure in the background of Fra Angelico's rendition: both Simplicianus and Anthony have been suggested as historical possibilities, and, as a more general alternative, the "personnification...de la vie monastique" (648) has been offered. All three are essentially true, for, as we have seen, the ideal personification of the ascetic Christian lifestyle for Augustine, as for later medieval monks, was Anthony, and this lifestyle was embodied for Augustine in Simplicianus. Fra Angelico has managed, in Augustinian fashion, to transform the deeper meaning of Augustine's textuality and that of the texts he calls upon into painted visual images, creating without a word an illustration as spiritually textual as the *Confessiones* themselves.

⁷⁶ Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 125.

received orally and now recollects and shares with his reader through his own writing:

for I had heard about Anthony, that he had been admonished by an evangelical reading upon which he had come by chance, as if that which was read were said to himself: "Go, sell all that you have, give to the poor and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow me:" and by such a divine utterance he was immediately converted to you. (VIII.12)⁷⁷

Anthony's personal reading of Matthew 19:21 and the spiritual conversion which follows guide Augustine's unique and individual experience, determining the intimate level at which the childlike voice, the conversion tale itself and the Biblical text within that tale are engaged and internalized, initiating the movement from the mysterious voice to the unknown Scriptural verse. The episode enacts a "return of the oral to its written scriptural counterpart,"⁷⁸ an intimate return to the Pauline texts Augustine has already been reading, a prodigal-like return which allows him to read with the new and penetrating perspective illuminated through textual encounters and self-understanding.

He returns to Alypius, snatches up the "book" (*codex*) of Paul's text and reads *tacite*, with the spiritual *acies* of his mind, as if it were written precisely for him, the first text which God's providence brings before his physical eyes, a text which the reader will recognize as highly appropriate to the passionate and intellectual individuality of the young Augustine:

I snatched [the book], I opened [it] and I read in silence the chapter upon which my eyes were first thrown: "Not in games and drunkennesses, not in beds and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make forethought for the

⁷⁷ "Audieram enim de Antonio, quod ex euangelica lectione, cui forte superuenerat, admonitus fuerit, tamquam sibi diceretur quod legebatur: *Vade, uende omnia, quae habes, da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelis; et ueni, sequere me;*: et tali oraculo confestim ad te esse conuersum."

⁷⁸ Nichols, "Voice and Writing," 151.

flesh in concupiscences." And I did not want to read beyond and there was no need. Indeed, with the end of this thought, as if a light of security had poured into my heart, all darkneses of doubt dispersed at once. (VIII.12)⁷⁹

Spiritually illuminative reading, "a type of readership in which literary interpretation is a form of true self-knowledge,"⁸⁰ informs Augustine's personal conversion as it did Anthony's, but in a manner more complex, more intimate and more internal, for Augustine reads not one, but three texts--the mysterious voice, the story of Anthony (including its intertexts), and Romans 13:13-14--and he ruminates and recombines these texts of his accumulated experience silently in solitude, achieving an intimate relationship with the Word of God as it speaks personally to him. And the Biblical passage which Augustine's eyes find is indeed personal, for he receives not the admonition to sell worldly possessions and follow Christ's footsteps, but the Apostle's cry for the dismissal of the fleshly desires and worldly ambitions which have tightly bound Augustine's soul, and for the active and intimate assimilation of the incarnate Word the young man has so notably lacked.

Augustine reads and immediately takes Paul's words to heart, allowing them to penetrate his spiritual and moral being, recognizing himself in the "inner-words" which mean beneath the written text and recomposing himself in conformity with its meaning. He thus accepts the Christian individuality which he has always possessed, but denied and suppressed, and finally wills with a "whole will" the personal reformation in the "image of God" which he explains in Book XIII of the

⁷⁹ "Arripui, aperui et legi in silentio capitulum, quo primum coniecti sunt oculi mei: *Non in comessationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et impudicitis, non in contentione et aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis. Nec ultra uolui legere nec opus erat. Statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt.*"

⁸⁰ Harpham, "The Fertile Word: Augustine's Ascetics of Interpretation," *Criticism* 28 (1986):238.

Confessiones each sinner must achieve for him or herself.⁸¹ "In his decision to read these biblical words and to accept what they [say] as the foundation of his personal morality, he [assents] to the Incarnation as the criterion of his life and his metaphysical and moral speculation."⁸² In the words of the autobiographer, God "entered" (*intrare*: IX.1) the young man who willingly inscribed the Apostle's inspired words upon the memorial fabric of his soul; by putting on the words of Paul, Augustine puts on the Word of God, weaving his individual *compositio* of self from and into that primal Word. Thus, the Word of God is made flesh within the individual, and the process of spiritual meditative reading culminates in a personal assimilation of true textuality so profound that the spiritual, moral and physical character consciously becomes one with that text, deliberately recomposing itself to become the individual personality it was created by the Word and shaped by its many providential textual experiences to be. For Augustine, putting on the Word which is Jesus Christ means taking up the monastic life exemplified by Anthony, a life removed, as much as possible, from secular concerns in the spiritual service of God. Thus, from the entirely personal and single-minded perspective Augustine assumes during the moment of conversion, the transformed individual has no need to read the physical text further once Paul's verse is ingested and

⁸¹ "Be reformed in the newness of your mind, not [living] now according to [your] kind, as if imitating a preceding neighbour, and not living from the authority of a better man. For you did not say: 'Let man be made according to [his] kind,' but: 'Let us make man to our likeness and similitude,' so that we may prove what your will may be" (*reformamini in nouitate mentis uestrae, non iam secundum genus, tamquam imitantes praecedentem proximum nec ex hominis melioris auctoritate uiuentes. Neque enim dixisti: Fiat homo secundum genus, sed: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, ut nos probemus, quae sit uoluntas tua:* XIII.22). Augustine's passage mixes Paul's words in Romans 12:2 with ideas found in Genesis 1:21 and 26. In emphasizing the centrality of Augustine's will to hear, to read and to change, I disagree with theories like that of Lawrence Byrne, "Writing God's Story: Self and Narrative Structure in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Christianity and Literature* 38 (1989):22, that "nothing" in the conversion "is self-willed or the result of deliberate choice." As Augustine himself writes, his "free will was called out in the moment" of conversion (*euocatum est in momento liberum arbitrium meum:* IX.1).

⁸² Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 32.

the internal illumination associated with the assimilation of "inner-words"⁸³ is received, so he lays aside the worldly linguistic medium of textuality which has been so essential to his development.

As he soon discovers, however, spiritual service in this life must necessarily be in the world, and thus, particularly for the talented and intelligent Augustine, must be manifested in linguistic and literary forms: Augustine's "tongue" (*lingua*) must be converted as his "heart" ("cor") has been (IX.4). Obviously this means that he must remove himself from the "rhetorical profession" (*professio rhetorica*) and write instead "books" ("libri") devoted to God's truth (IX.4),⁸⁴ but it also involves the more pervasive though subtle shift in perspective which occurs at the very moment of his conversion, creating a calm in both the searching soul of the young man and the recollecting voice of the autobiographer. Augustine is filled with a personal confidence in the validity of textualizing his own experience for another, and a personal assurance of the necessity of "'converting' himself into a textual representation,"⁸⁵ transforming his life in the flesh into words, and asserting that textual individuality within the earthly Creation of the eternal Word. He autobiographically serves God at once by telling Alypius of the profound spiritual change he has just undergone, and leading his friend to his own textual conversion through the Pauline verse which follows the words so inspirational for Augustine. With a "tranquil expression" (*tranquillus vultus*) and the Bible he has just proclaimed no further need for in

⁸³ See the discussion in the Introduction above.

⁸⁴ Although Augustine would have considered all of his extant works "libri" written in the service of his God, the specific books to which he refers at this point are those he wrote at Cassiciacum after his conversion, but before his baptism. They include the dialogues *Contra Academicos*, *De Beata Vita* and *De Ordine*, and the internal monologue of the *Soliloquia* and the unfinished *De Immortalitate Animae*.

⁸⁵ Harpham, "The Fertile Word," 238.

hand (VIII.12), he immediately acts as a Christian *magister*, adopting the mature perspective of the meditative reader of his own life, the creative spiritual writer of his autobiographical *Confessiones*, and the imaginative textual guide for his reader's own conversion. Augustine's reading of the Pauline text leads to a self-reflective *meditatio* culminating in an internal *compositio* of the self externalized for an audience to read, ruminate and internalize in a textual spiral of spiritual progression, a dynamic linguistic cycle within and between individuals which is captured by the illustration of the conversion in the fifteenth-century *Vita Sancti Augustini* of Boston Public Library MS 1483 (Figure 4).⁸⁶ Augustine is depicted twice in the same narrative frame: to the left he appears propped meditatively beside an open book with the hand of God, holding a triple arrow as a symbol of the penetrating Trinity, stretching toward him from above, and to the right he stands with Alypius, the Bible open in his hand, and shows his friend the significant verse.

Augustine's personal teaching of the Bible and the conversion experience, his ability to give it an individual and autobiographical flavour, is a sign of his new and intimate understanding of spiritual textuality, an understanding culminated in the textual conversion we have just examined. It is in conversion that the young Augustine truly weaves the reality of his own life and the essence of Scriptural textuality together in a personal and didactic *compositio*; thus it is here that the mature writer reveals just how intimately the words of his experience and the divine Word are woven together in his autobiographical *Confessiones*. Engaging Biblical texts not only "at the level of words (*verba*)," but also with regard to "the realities (*res*) which the words record," Augustine "refigures" and "rethinks" the texts he engages "allegorically, redescribing their forms on

⁸⁶ See also Courcelle and Courcelle-Ladmirant, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, 81.

his own ground, for his own purposes," personally reversing the universal Fall of Genesis 3 as he reverses the sins of his own life.⁸⁷ A great many of the details of Augustine's text suggest this reversal: the positive and inspiring speech of Ponticianus reverses the negative and ensnaring speech of the serpent, but also of Faustus and Augustine himself; the Garden of Eden and the garden from which the young Augustine stole pears (II.4) is replaced with the "little garden" ("hortulus") of the absent "lord" ("dominus") of the house where Augustine is staying (VIII.8); the shame of Augustine replaces the pride of Adam and Eve, and the pride that has overshadowed his own life; the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil finds its parallel in the "pear tree" ("arbor...pirus") from which Augustine steals (II.4) and its opposite in the "fig tree" (*fici arbor*) under which Augustine achieves conversion (VIII.12); Augustine heeding the divine voice he hears reverses Adam and Eve ignoring the divine command of God, as well as his own deafness to the many voices, most notably Monnica's, which have urged his conversion; the eating of the physical food which generates forbidden knowledge, including the evil which lies beneath the physical spirituality of the Manichees, is replaced by the meditative reading of a spiritual text which generates a desirable change in lifestyle;⁸⁸ "the metaphorical opening of the eye of [Augustine's] heart" replaces the metaphorical opening of the "eyes" ("oculi:" Genesis 3:7) of Adam and Eve and puts an end to the blindness of Augustine's shallow knowledge;⁸⁹ Eve

⁸⁷ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 339 and 340. McMahon also discusses Augustine's refiguring of Ovid's *Narcissus*, another of the several texts Augustine engages in the course of relating his spiritual conversion to his readers, but my discussion here will be limited to Augustine's Biblical "text-work."

⁸⁸ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 346, points out that "the ancient analogy between digesting food and digesting words in thought appears in Genesis 3: Eve eats of the Tree of Knowledge;" in addition, he notes that "the analogy also controls a rich strand of imagery in the *Confessions*."

⁸⁹ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 347.

leading Adam astray is reversed by Augustine leading Alypius to God, a deed which redeems both Augustine and the virtuous young man he had originally led into Manichaeism; and Augustine and Alypius openly announcing their conversion to Monnica reverses Adam and Eve hiding their fall into sin from God, even as it opens the closed doors of Augustine's heart and allows him "to chatter" (*garrire*) openly with his God (IX.1).

Augustine's conversion, then, as it is recorded in this typological reading of the self,⁹⁰ undoubtedly "traces a detailed reversal of Genesis 3 in its 'historical' or literal details" as "in its spiritual or allegorical meaning."⁹¹ This potentially artificial "text-work", however, does not negate the historical and autobiographical value of the conversion scene, for, as we have seen, Augustine the autobiographer frequently perceives, understands and expresses himself with the help of the textuality which has shaped his character, and that intertextual expression is a personal and sincere manifestation of his complex, synthetic individuality--indeed, one could say it is his individuality. This is particularly true in Augustine's use of Biblical textuality to express personal reality, for, "when the human structure reflects the Divine structure, genuine knowledge is gained,"⁹² and the knowledge gained by Augustine as he recalls and records his experience in the "little garden" that day is an understanding of his self and his life as an ever-shifting reflection of the eternal Word, a reflection often distorted and overcast in the

⁹⁰ Warren Ginsberg, *The Cast of Character: The Representation of Personality in Ancient and Medieval Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 87, emphasizes "the typological function of the entire [conversion] scene" and indeed of the whole of what he calls "the autobiographical section of the *Confessions*," referring, presumably, to Books I-IX.

⁹¹ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 348.

⁹² Bubacz, "Augustine's Structural Theory of Perception," *Studia Patristica* 17, part 3 (1982):1220.

regio dissimilitudinis of the past, but clarified and illuminated as an individual *imago Dei* in the conversion which calls upon the whole of his experience. For both the young man and the mature bishop, who meet and merge in this scene as they have in the autobiographer's "text-work" throughout the *Confessiones*, divine Word and spiritual self are united, establishing a "personal relationship" with God⁹³ which is shared with the reader of the *Confessiones* in an authoritative yet personal narrative which literally and metaphorically intertwines the words of men and God and self in an individual language representing the "real truth,"⁹⁴ the "inner-words" as it were, of Augustine's life. Augustine "represents his self-understanding in" what some might call "a fictionalized" and what I would call a selective and intertextualized narrative, which is nonetheless a "truthful narrative," for Augustine's individualized "text-work," his interweaving of spoken, written, enacted and visualized textuality, his "modes of...self-understanding and self-representation are as historically particular as his self,"⁹⁵ and they express more accurately and with more intimacy than could any other autobiographical language the internal, "spiritual truth of his personal history"⁹⁶ within the textual realm of Christian Creation.

⁹³ Leigh, "Circular Journey," 77, discusses "the movement from the general relationship to God of the opening book to the personal relationship to God established by Augustine at the end of the conversion story."

⁹⁴ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 356.

⁹⁵ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 361 and 362.

⁹⁶ McMahon, "Autobiography as Text-Work," 357.

Conclusion:

The Personal Engagement of Spiritual Textuality

Augustine's textual and intertextual modes of perceiving and expressing the various dimensions of "the spiritual truth of his personal history" do not, however, come to an end as his autobiographical text spirals back upon itself in the conversion which merges spoken utterance with written text, personal history with divine allegory, and developing object with writing subject. Indeed, that is where they truly begin for the bishop ruminating upon and composing the text of his internal life, bringing both his young self and his reader to the Christian perspective from which he has been writing all along. With his past now neatly synthesized through textuality into his present identity, Augustine is free to turn to "who he may be, not who he was" ("quis ego sim, non quis fuerim:" X.3), and embark upon a lengthy philosophical and allegorical discussion of memory, time and creation in relation to both his autobiography and the opening verses of Genesis. This narrative conversion does not, however, constitute a turn away from the individual, for "the understanding and exposition of the Scriptures was the heart of a bishop's life," and as Augustine "meditates on the opening lines of the book of *Genesis*," he moves into his own mind and carries "his readers with him into his thoughts."¹ Leaning thoughtfully upon the text of Augustine as he leans meditatively upon the text of Genesis, "wrapt in the silent contemplation of an open page,"² the reader becomes aware that Augustine has in fact achieved the allegorical and textual self-understanding he expresses throughout the *Confessiones* during his spiritual rumination of

¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 162.

² Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 162.

the Scriptural text of Creation, into which he now writes that textualized self. The text of Genesis has acted as an effective Christian *magister*, teaching Augustine how to read and understand his own internal nature much as his personal exegesis now influences his reader's perception of text and self.

The Biblical exegesis which concludes the *Confessiones*, then, also culminates Augustine's meditative autobiography of textual and internal ascension through *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio* to an understanding, fulfillment and expression of the individual inner self created by God's Word. All thirteen books of the *Confessiones*, "taken as a whole, constitute his complete autobiography,"³ but this has hardly been the accepted reading of Augustine's personal text.⁴ Several scholars have, however, found thematic and structural unity in the *Confessiones*, and through many different intellectual avenues--the principle of confession, explorations of time and language, philosophical and literary traditions informing Augustine's text, recurrent images, themes and allegories, the

³ Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, xv n.2.

⁴ A long tradition of scholarship views the final four books of the *Confessiones* as "quite unrelated" to Augustine's personal "experiences" (Downs, *Books*, 154), a "radical departure from the story of his life contained in the preceding nine books" (Vance, "Poetics of the Law," 2). What has been called the "passage from autobiography to exegesis is the passage beyond 'the book of the life of each man'...to the Book of God" (Vance, "Poetics of the Law," 28), a transition in which Augustine "displace[s] the narrative of the particular self and center[s] his text instead on the arch-narrative of the Author-of-all," forgetting "the origins of self...for the origins of the universe" (Vance, "Grammar of Selfhood," 13 and 17). Rather than seeing both the origins and developments of self in that universal Genesis, and particularly in Augustine's intensively personalized reading of it, this school of thought sees the "philosophy and exegesis" of the final books of the *Confessiones* as unfolding "without autobiography" (James W. Earl, "The Typology of Spiritual Growth in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Notre Dame English Journal* n.s. 13 (1981):16), which is, in any case, only one of the many discourses which make up the *Confessiones* (see Vance's discussion in "The Functions and Limits of Autobiography," *Poetics Today* 5 [1984]:399-409). Even Courcelle, *Recherches*, 21, who clearly sees the *Confessiones* as autobiography, places himself at the edge of this tradition by seeing the Books of Augustine's text as "morceaux disparates," though he admits that it is "une erreur de s'imaginer que l'ouvrage ne procède d'aucune vue synthétique."

influence of divine providence--,⁵ but while all of these pay tribute to the synthesizing power of Augustine's rich textualization, few concentrate upon the autobiographical urgency of the *Confessiones*.⁶ Robert McMahon presents an intriguing argument for the design and unity of the *Confessiones* by viewing them as an ongoing prayer, an intimate and dynamic one-sided "dialogue with God,"⁷ a formalist approach which overcomes the notion that the *Confessiones*, as a literary text, are "badly composed."⁸ From this perspective, the structural key to the *Confessiones* lies in the voice of the author, and that autobiographical voice, as we have seen, is an original intertextual composite of the many texts of Augustine's experience, texts woven into the body of the *Confessiones* in order to attain, express and inspire spiritual self-understanding. In the allegorical exegesis of the final books of his autobiography, Augustine continues to textualize his internal self in the same manner, only now he discusses a person in whom the Word has become incarnate through the re-creation of textual conversion; thus, while he continues to write the word into the personal record of his life, he also writes that now redeemed personal history into the Word that was in the beginning: to assimilate the Word so deeply that he can become an individual part of that which literally is

⁵ See McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, xi-xii, for a brief, but excellent summary of the debate "regarding the formal coherence of Augustine's *Confessions*" (xi); see also Courcelle, *Recherches*, 20-26.

⁶ Even Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion*, who claims that the whole of the *Confessiones* constitute Augustine's "complete autobiography" (xv n.2), deals with only the first nine books in his discussion of the text.

⁷ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 1-21; although others have noted the central role of prayer in the *Confessiones*, the point is argued in a particularly effective and fruitful manner by McMahon, who also sees the "return to origins" theme as central to the unity of Augustine's autobiography (xviii).

⁸ See McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 2, 9 and 23, Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 92, Courcelle, *Recherches*, 20, and the discussion in Chapter Three above.

existence has indeed, he recognizes in retrospect, been the goal of his internal progression all along.

But as the Ostia experience with which this thesis opens has made clear, complete, unmediated and lasting union with the eternal Word is not possible in this mortal life on earth where humanity is restricted to the use of physically manifest communication. Words, in all their complexities and inadequacies, are therefore necessary, and there can be no better words than those of Scripture, "the place where God's countenance was to be found, but with the *oculus mentis*, not the *oculus carnis*."⁹ As Augustine "first finds and then tells his story as a chapter, a verse, a sentence in the universal already told story of God's creation moving and struggling in time towards Him,"¹⁰ he enacts the "last phase of a spiritual itinerary that involves the passage from the outward Law of the Letter...to another inner Law, a universal Law 'written' in the...heart."¹¹ Applying the meditative and allegorical reading techniques illuminated by Ambrose earlier in his spiritual journey, Augustine reads Genesis figuratively with "the eye of the mind," meditatively highlighting its spiritual truths for him personally, writing the realities of his internal self into both the eternal Word and the origin of all temporal existence even as he incorporates and individualizes those in his autobiography. Thus the allegorical exegesis which harbours "a secret principle of autobiography"¹² overcomes the limitations of human language through the metaphorical signification of that language, and as the essence of Biblical textuality, as "the essence of

⁹ Peters, "Aenigma Salomonis," 64.

¹⁰ Byrne, "Self and Narrative Structure," 29.

¹¹ Vance, "Poetics of the Law," 10.

¹² Harpham, "The Fertile Word," 244.

[Augustine's] life as a bishop,"¹³ as the essence of Augustine's textual self-expression of internal individuality, it makes the final "books of his *Confessions*...in many ways the most strictly autobiographical part"¹⁴ of a work which reveals the author's progressively allegorical individuality, a work united precisely by the textual and intertextual expression of its autobiographical vein.

Examples of this intricate autobiographical interweaving of historical self and divine text are found throughout the last four books of the *Confessiones*. Indeed, even before the commentary upon Genesis formally begins, Augustine allegorically perceives and expresses the autobiographical labour in which he searches his memory and soul by means of the curse placed by God upon fallen man in Genesis 3:17 and 19:

I certainly, Lord, labour in this matter [his meditation upon memory] and I labour in myself: I have become for myself a soil of difficulty and excessive sweat. For we do not now investigate the zones of heaven or wonder at the distances between stars or seek the balancing weights of the earth: I am [the one] who remembers, I am the mind. Thus [it is] no wonder if whatever I am not is far from me: but what is nearer to me than myself? (X.16)¹⁵

Now able utterly to reject superficial secular knowledge¹⁶ in favour of personal spiritual knowledge, Augustine finds his intellectual abilities--his reason alone--bound by the

¹³ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 262.

¹⁴ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 262.

¹⁵ "Ego certe, domine, laboro hic et laboro in me ipso: factus sum mihi terra difficultatis et sudoris nimii. Neque enim nunc scrutamur plagas caeli aut siderum interualla demetimur uel terrae libramenta quaerimus: ego sum, qui memini, ego animus. Non ita mirum, si a me longe est quidquid ego non sum: quid autem propinquius me ipso mihi?"

¹⁶ Augustine's "zones of heaven" appropriately recall pagan literature: Ennius' *Scenica* and Cicero's *De Divinatione* and *De Re Publica*; see Chadwick, *Confessions*, 193 n.19.

restraints of his fallen mortal nature.¹⁷ The labour that these restraints necessitate for the highly linguistic Augustine who would know himself and his God is the personal textual labour of *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio* we have explored at the heart of Augustine's self-progression, self-understanding and self-expression throughout the *Confessiones*, the "bold labor of self-understanding" which creates the profound "parallels between autobiography and allegory,"¹⁸ self and text, found at the heart of every book of the *Confessiones*. Much as he has viewed and expressed himself through the classical *Aeneid*, the parable of the prodigal son, the pagan philosophy of Plotinus and the sophisticated allegories of Solomon, Augustine now turns to the text of Genesis, to a time before the fall, for the spiritual self-knowledge and unified identity he seeks.

Augustine is clearly thinking of his own early experience with reading the Bible when he discusses materialist interpretations of God and the Word in the opening verses of Genesis 1 as characteristic of the spirituality of "very small creatures" (*parvula animalia*) and the prideful rejection of the Bible's "most humble kind of words" (*humillimum genus verborum*) as bringing about one's own spiritual downfall (XII.27).¹⁹ And the interpenetration of Biblical allegory and personal autobiography is certainly not limited to brief passages: for instance, the allegory of Book XIII, which

¹⁷ One of the central messages of Book IX, over much of which I have unfortunately passed in silence while hastening on to other things, is the fact that conversion has not spiritually elevated Augustine above the physical and temporal limitations of the world. The humbling realization that the "chain" ("uinculum") of earthly habit--indeed, of physical mortal existence--exerts its power "even against the mind which is not now fed with a deceitful word" ("etiam aduersus mentem, quae iam non fallaci uerbo pascitur:" IX.12) is as important an aspect of Augustine's spiritual progression as was the discovery of his spiritual self.

¹⁸ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 114.

¹⁹ Chadwick, *Confessions*, 267 n.24, also acknowledges the autobiographical nature of this passage when he assumes that "Augustine has himself in mind."

sustains the technique of Biblical "text-work" with an "intensity and difficulty" which is "unusual" even in the *Confessiones*,²⁰ can be seen as a kind of "paradigm for the plan of the whole *Confessions*."²¹ In particular, "Augustine discriminates nine divine acts in the week of Creation; his allegory on these proves parallel to the nine books [of the past narrative] of his autobiography."²² An especially interesting example of this structural technique is Augustine's allegory of God's fifth creative act, the creation of the "lights in the firmament" ("in firmamento luminaria:" XIII.18; Genesis 1:14-17), which corresponds to the important textual events narrated in Book V of the *Confessiones*.²³ Both are structurally central: the heavenly lights are created on the fourth of seven days and are the fifth of nine acts; Book V lies at the center of both the nine books of past narrative and the young Augustine's progression. More importantly, both are transitional, representing a transformation from spiritual darkness to spiritual illumination. The lights in the firmament, which Augustine has already metaphorically equated with Scripture,²⁴ are the faithful who adhere meditatively to the "word of life" ("uerbum uitae"), enlightening the world with their acts of charity, and passing from worldly matters "into the delights of contemplation" ("in deliciis contemplationis:" XIII.18). More specifically, the heavenly luminary bodies are metaphorically understood as the

²⁰ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 35.

²¹ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, xvi.

²² McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, xvi.

²³ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 74-81, presents a detailed discussion of the parallels between Book V and the fifth act of Creation; my discussion here has profited greatly from his. See also the treatment of Augustine's textual progression through the encounters of Book V in Chapter Two above.

²⁴ XIII.15: "Our God, you made for us a firmament of authority over us in your divine Scripture" ("deus noster, fecisti nobis firmamentum auctoritatis super nos in scriptura tua diuina").

linguistic gifts of the Spirit, with the "greater light" ("luminare maius") of Genesis 1:16 representing the "speech of wisdom" ("sermo sapientiae") and the "lesser light" ("luminare minus") representing the "speech of knowledge" ("sermo scientiae:" XIII.18). Augustine's allegory recalls the spiritual textuality of the apostles through a complex engagement of the words and images in which the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in Acts 2:2-3 is described:

for behold, as if God were saying: "Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven," suddenly a sound was made from heaven, as if a violent breathing were borne, and divided tongues were seen as if fire which sat upon each one of them, and lights holding the word of life were made in the firmament of heaven. (XIII.19)²⁵

As McMahon points out, in the Bible the fiery tongues of spiritual inspiration are followed immediately by "the first post-Resurrection sermon, when Saint Peter 'spiritually' [reads and] interprets several Old Testament texts as prophesying the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The creation of 'lights in the firmament,' therefore, is explicitly linked with the spiritual or allegorical reading of Scripture and with the preaching of its truth."²⁶ And the allegorical reading and teaching of the Bible is the particular gift the young Augustine receives from the inspired *meditatio* and *compositio* of Ambrose in the illuminating transition from Manichaean materialism to Christian

²⁵ "Ecce enim tamquam deo dicente: *Fiant luminaria in firmamento caeli*, factus est subito de caelo sonus, quasi ferretur flatus uehemens, et uisae sunt linguae diuisae quasi ignis, qui et insedit super unumquemque illorum, et facta sunt luminaria in firmamento caeli uerbum uitae habentia." Because my discussion can hardly do justice to Augustine's sophisticated Biblical "text-work," a task which would require pages, the reader may want to compare the words of Acts 2:2-3: "and suddenly a sound was made from heaven as if of a violent breath coming near and it filled the whole house where they were sitting and there appeared to them divided tongues as if fire and it sat upon one of them at a time" ("et factus est repente de caelo sonus tamquam aduenientis spiritus uehementis et replevit totam domum ubi erant sedentes et apparuerunt illis dispertitae linguae tamquam ignis seditque supra singulos eorum"). Besides the reference to the Genesis text he is expounding, Augustine also engages Philippians 2:15-16 and I John 1:1 in this brief passage.

²⁶ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 76.

spirituality we have already explored in Book V. Ambrose, adhering to the Scriptures and aspiring to contemplation, is indeed "a true spiritual descendent of the apostles" and "a genuine spiritual luminary,"²⁷ whose penetrating spiritual speech contains both the "wisdom" and the "knowledge" Augustine discovered were wholly lacking in Faustus' eloquence. Augustine, meditating upon text and self together, thus finds the spiritual speech of the New Testament apostles and the spiritual reading so essential to his personal progression toward Christian re-creation in the Old Testament text of Creation, and he does so through the meditative reading and personal composition learned from God's luminary, creating a Biblical allegory of self. The intellectual and literary intricacy with which Augustine intertwines Old with New Testament texts is matched by the intricacy with which he interweaves both with the spiritual meaning and allegorical textualization of his own life. Thus the reader of the *Confessiones* finds not only a rich and illuminating figural reading of Genesis for personal meditation, but also an allegorical autobiography in which Biblical textuality functions as the authoritative interpreter of the mysterious text of the self, revealing new facets of Augustine's spiritual progression and progressive self-awareness, new apostolic dimensions within his internal self and its textual talent,²⁸ new ways in which to apply both autobiographical and Biblical textuality to one's own experience. Augustine's *Confessiones*, then, function as an authoritative model for the establishment of a learned and allegorical individuality within Christian life and humility.

And as Augustine teaches through textualizing, he redeems

²⁷ McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, 78.

²⁸ Augustine's textual gift has already been associated with the fiery imagery of Biblical prophecy in Book VI.7, when the metaphorical words of his teaching penetrate Alypius' heart and inspire him to abandon his love of the circus games; see the discussion in Chapter Three above.

his own divine "similitude" through the very linguistic medium, now properly used, which both led to and symbolized his past "dissimilitude." Through his rumination and composition of God's creative Word, Augustine has indeed been transformed into that Word, as God's voice so long ago predicted he would,²⁹ but personal history, self-expression and individuality certainly have not been lost, or forgotten, or annihilated, as the intensely personal and autobiographical reading of Genesis above demonstrates. Indeed, Augustine emphasizes in the course of his exegesis the validity of individual responses, of differing personal readings, meditations and compositions regarding the spiritual textuality of the Bible. Each reader should personally engage Scripture and determine its particular meaning for him or her by weighing it against the "truth" ("ueritas") which exists "within" each individual "in the house of thought" (XI.3).³⁰ All individuals who read "from a pure heart and a good conscience and a faith not feigned,"³¹ with the intention to perceive and justify the Christian law of apostolic "charity" ("caritas") lying beneath the text of I Timothy 1:5 Augustine engages in these words, do so with justice, with a spiritual validity arising purely from their individual existence, and the truth of God, as it is designed for them alone, will be their reward (XII.18). Biblical textuality, in particular that of Moses, is, in Augustine's opinion, woven to be engaged in just such a personal and expansive way:

the narrative of your dispenser, [which] was to benefit many discussions with a small measure of speech, gushes forth flowings of clear truth, from which each may draw for himself (or herself) that truth which he (or she) can from these things; this [person], that [truth], that

²⁹ "You will be changed into me;" see VII.10, and the discussion in Chapter Two above.

³⁰ "Intus in domicilio cogitationis;" see also the discussion of Christ as the true teacher within the soul in the Introduction above.

³¹ "De corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta."

[person], that [truth], through longer windings of words.
(XII.27)³²

Augustine naturally uses this argument both to justify his own extremely original and highly figurative meditations and compositions upon the opening verses of Genesis, and to support the personal and universal truth of his autobiographical *Confessiones*. If he were asked which of the many and various spiritual interpretations which may be (and indeed have been) drawn forth from Genesis was actually intended by their author, Augustine claims "these are not the speeches of my confessions, if I do not confess to you: 'I do not know'" (XII.30).³³ Thus, both Augustine's personal exegesis of Genesis and his personal autobiography are individually and spiritually true, and, as with all of God's truth (for all truth is from God), the rightful and common property of all, "since your truth is not mine or his or hers, but all of ours whom you call publicly to His communion, admonishing us terribly so that we do not keep it private, lest we be deprived of it" (XII.25).³⁴ Augustine the bishop, following in the inspired footsteps of the apostles, must share the autobiography of personal textual development which reveals the truth of God working in the life of the individual, and he must do so in the sincere voice of personally assimilated yet widely shared textuality, touching with the allegorical and individual language of his heart the hearts of those who read meditatively, with the "eye of the mind," the "inner-words" of Augustine's spiritual self. For

³² "Narratio dispensatoris tui sermocinaturis pluribus profutura paruo sermonis modulo scatet fluenta liquidae ueritatis, unde sibi quisque uerum, quod de his rebus potest, hic illud, ille illud, per longiores loquellarum anfractus trahat." The passage introduces a chapter which, as I have emphasized above, is extremely autobiographical in many ways.

³³ "Non sunt hi sermones confessionum mearum, si tibi non confiteor: 'Nescio.'"

³⁴ "Quoniam ueritas tua nec mea est nec illius aut illius, sed omnium nostrum, quos ad eius communionem publice uocas, terribiliter admonens nos, ut eam nolimus habere priuatum, ne priuemur ea."

the *Confessiones* demand such a faithful, intimate and reflective reading from their audience; without reading allegorically and intertextually and with a preoccupation with interiority, for instance, one could not penetrate the essence of Augustine's self-knowledge and self-expression, and thus not penetrate to a knowledge of his or her own self: "a spiritual interpretation...alone 'gives life'"³⁵ to this intimately engaging autobiographical *magister* of personal individuality.

In such textual "contemplation," (*contemplatio*), though "still in signs and in times and in days and in years,"³⁶ Augustine recommends we aspire and rest on earth; he, however, is discussing not his own, but God's "book" (*liber*), the whole of the scriptural "firmament" (*firmamentum*: XIII.18) in which he and his work are but one light. Indeed, Augustine's personal and self-reflective *compositio* demands the personal and self-reflective *meditatio* of God's eternal Word in the Bible from each of its readers, and with even more urgency than it demands such an intimate engagement for itself. Augustine wishes to inflame the souls of his readers to read deeply and self-reflectively, "to confess" ("confiteri:" XI.2) their individual experiences and internal selves to their Creator, "to meditate" ("meditari:" XI.2) actively and personally upon God's Word, to compose that Word deeply into their souls and their spiritual selves intimately into that Word. For throughout his own past meditative progression, from his examination of the external universe to his reflection upon the "recesses" ("recessus") of his "memory" (*memoria*), Augustine is aware that God was always "teaching and commanding" (*docens ac iubens*) him, and in his frequent and delightful personal meditations as a bishop in the present,

³⁵ O'Connell, "A Plotinian Key," 370.

³⁶ "Adhuc in signis et in temporibus et in diebus et in annis."

the only "safe place" (*tutus locus*) for his "soul" (*anima*) is God (X.40). The only true resting place in this world for Augustine is found in a personally informed meditation of God's Word, an intellectual and emotional weaving together of individual and Scriptural textuality in an autobiographical composition, both within and without, of the spiritual self. And it is therefore with the passionate plea for such a personal engagement of the Word itself that the *Confessiones* come to rest, a plea which itself engages and personalizes Matthew 7:7-8 and Luke 11:9-10 (the plural *vos* has been changed to the singular *tu*), and returns, prodigal fashion, to the theme of spiritual understanding central to the opening chapter of the *Confessiones*:

what man gave to man [the ability] to understand this [the eternal nature of God]? What angel to angel? What angel to man? From you it may be requested, in you it may be sought, at you it may be knocked: thus, thus it will be received, thus, it will be found, thus it will be opened. (XIII.38)³⁷

Appropriately, then, the spiritual autobiography of the man whose authority in the Middle Ages was second only to the Bible and who is "best described as 'the discoverer of the restless heart'"³⁸ could hardly be said to rest in the minds of its medieval readers. For Augustine's *Confessiones* were engaged and cited, imitated, assimilated and integrated with an enormous frequency and tireless enthusiasm throughout the Middle Ages by spiritual writers who wished to express matters of internal or spiritual concern to the individual. From Paulinus of Pella in the fifth century to Petrarch in the

³⁷ "Hoc intellegere quis hominum dabit homini? Quis angelus angelo? Quis angelus homini? A te petatur, in te quaeratur, ad te pulsetur: sic, sic accipietur, sic inuenietur, sic aperietur."

³⁸ Gray, "Augustine and Medieval Literature: I," 39.

fourteenth,³⁹ Augustine's audience enacted and recorded the details and progression of their own individual search for spiritual fulfillment along the complex allegorical and textual lines of Augustine's *Confessiones*. Learned readers of the *Confessiones*, like those educated and living within monastic communities in the Middle Ages, assimilated the Biblical exegesis at the heart of their spiritual life along with the powerful individuality of Augustine's textual authority, finding justification in the intertextual words of Augustine's inner self for both the ascension to God and the assertion of self.

Thus, a new autobiographical "genre" was created, a genre existing alongside and within the monastic ideal of textual ascension, a genre alive with "the new sense of a coherent and growing and conflictive self through time, the recognition of the need not merely to recall but to interpret and structure one's experiences, the quest for continuity not only through recollection of the past but through discovery of an authentic destiny."⁴⁰ In the *Confessiones* which, as we have seen, present self-reflective meditative reading as a viable means of progressing spiritually toward the knowledge and synthesis of self and God, and do so in the learned and eloquent intertextual language of Augustine's personal introspection and internal individuality, the continuity, conflict and comprehension of the inner self are expressed through textuality which synthesizes self, words and Word, lending the power of traditional authority to the personal autobiographical project. Thus Augustine's most personal text becomes for the Middle Ages a powerful spiritual authority

³⁹ For many particular examples of Augustine's complex and varying autobiographical influence in the Middle Ages, see the excellent exploration of the issue by Courcelle, *Les Confessions*, particularly Part II: "La postérité des *Confessions*," 199ff; for the discussion of Paulinus of Pella, see 207-211; for the discussion of Petrarch, see 330-348.

⁴⁰ Eugene TeSelle, "Augustine as Client and as Theorist," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1986):92.

which demands the intensely personal involvement of each reader, and creates a set of literary conventions which are necessarily intimate and sincere, necessarily autobiographical. As those medieval readers and writers who engage the textual authority of the *Confessiones* in their own personal journeys through spiritual *lectio*, *meditatio* and *compositio* reveal, it is the "intense autobiographical vein,"⁴¹ "the deep personal probing" of the spirit which is the "true essence"⁴² of both Augustine's *Confessiones* and medieval Augustinianism.

⁴¹ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 169.

⁴² Sticca, "Augustinian Tradition," 12.

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Appendix I

Figure 1: "Historiated 'M' of the Two Augustines" from the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 253 *Confessiones*, eleventh century, folio 1^r.

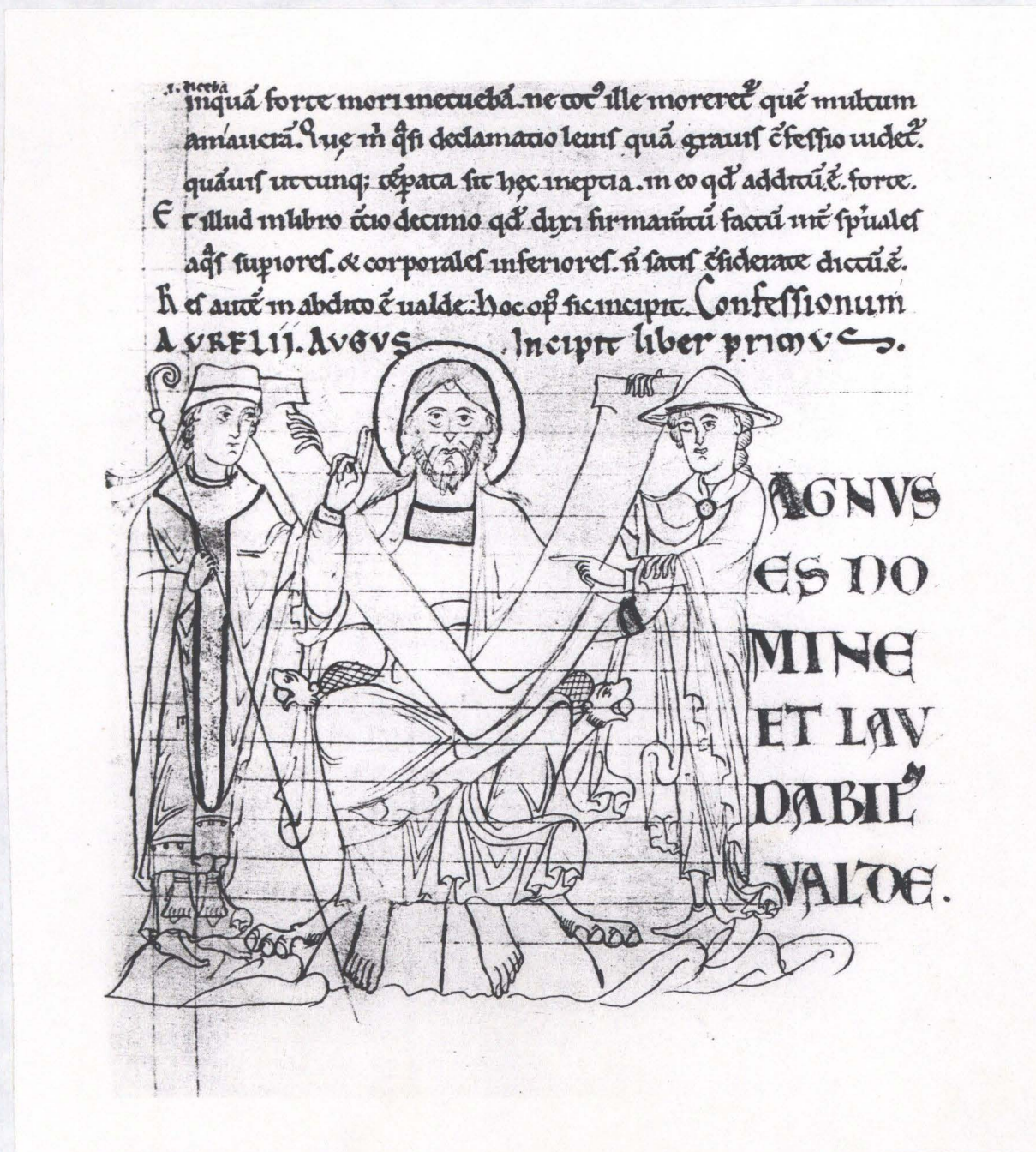


Figure 2: "Augustine Meditating by Himself" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 28.

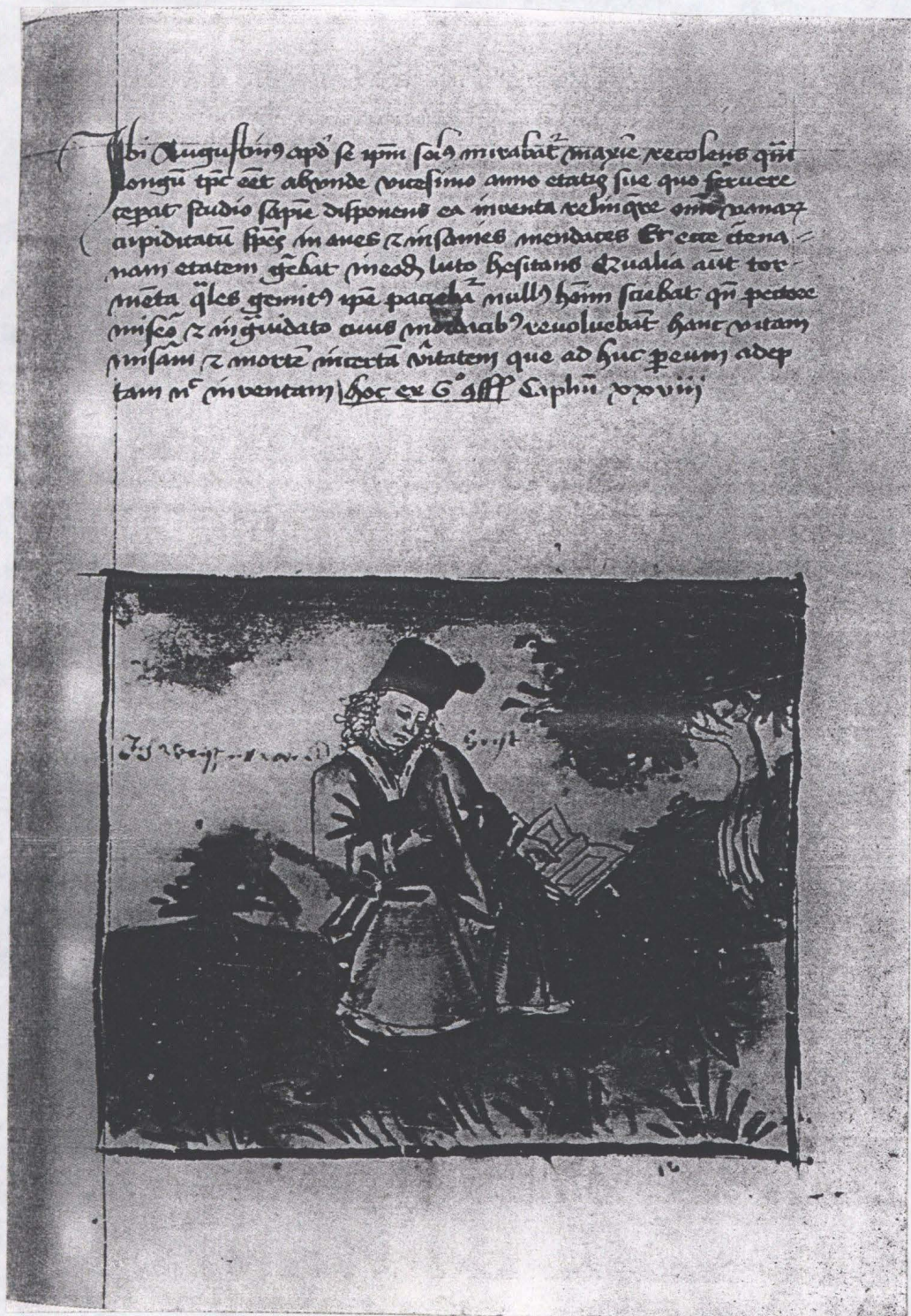


Figure 3: "Augustine Discovers Himself in the Regio Dissimilitudinis" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 29.

Si Augustinus lectis quibusdam platonicoꝝ libris admonitus est redire
ad semetipsum inuenit et uidit duce deo quousq; oculis aie sue sup
mento sua luce incommutabilem reuerentem infirmitate affe
tus sui radens in eum uehementer et confirmavit amore et
horeore et tunc inuenit se longe esse a deo in regione dissimilitu
Dnis tamq; audiret uocē dei de excelsis Libus sum grandium
cessu et manducab me nec tu me mutab mte sed tu mutabis
in me Constat igitur exptis est tunc nō esse mix q palato non
sano pena ē pms qui sano est suauis et odis egris odiosa lux
est que p̄is est amabilis Sic q; deū agnouit certissime uidit
q; invisibilia di p̄ea q; f̄ta s̄nt intellcā cōficiunt semp̄na quocq;
uolū et diuinitas sed adhuc acaem fige n̄ uoluit et repulsa reddidit
ē solus Non ei f̄ca fecerat nisi amantē mēorūq; et q̄i olfacta
desiderante q̄ comedē nō dū posses hoc ex A gfff Cap. xxix.

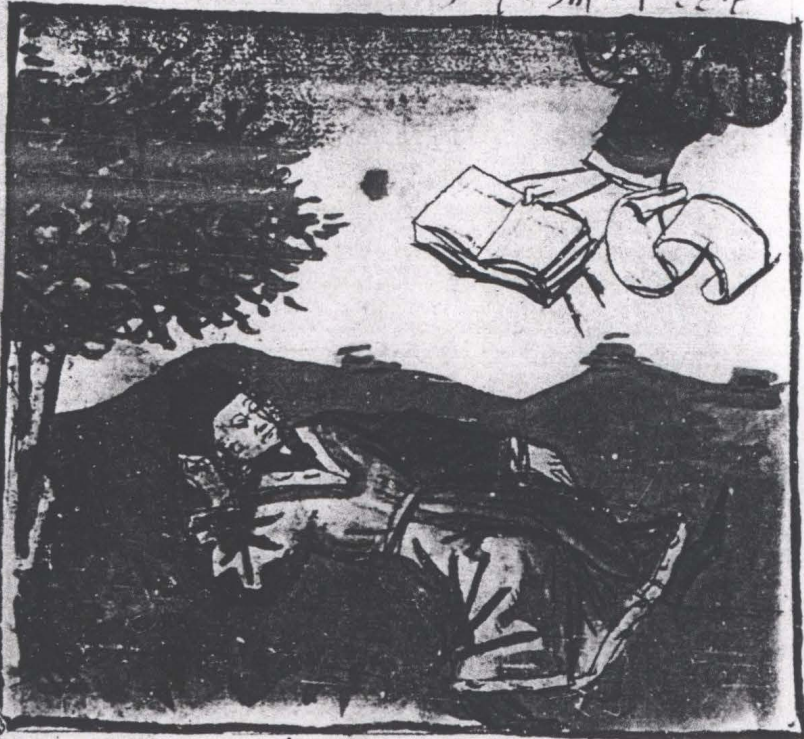


Figure 4: "Augustine's Conversion and Disclosure to Alypius" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483, *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 33.

Si Augustinus cum quibusdam discipulis suis in monte et congregatis
 cum odore multis unius massa miseriae suae relicto alypio
 aliquantulum remotus recessit et sub quodam figi se gressu ac la-
 mentabiles voces dabit dicens Et tu domine usque quoniam diu
 creas creas Quare non morbo Quare in hac fuit turpitudinis
 mee Dum non habet et hinc filia dicit ac amarissima cordis sue
 pitea fiet repente audit uocem cum repetitum eorum credendum
 lante Tolle lege tolle lege Apuitque codice aplice et quietis
 oculis ad primam capitulum legit Induunt dominum ihesum christum et carnis
 cum non fecerit in desidio et seruo qui in fusa luce scitatur ab eo
 od dubietat tenet diffugit et tranquillo iam vultu iudica alypio
 qui legisset Et alypio perfractis quid uult quod ipse legerat hęc tunc
 inuenit et legit in firmu aut infide suscipite quod alypio ad
 se recedit et sic cum Augustino ad fidem quibus e hoc ex 8 comst
 Cap xxxiii



Figure 5: "Monnica's Prayer and Prophetic Dream" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 14.

Ibi itaq; b'ra monica vidua casta & sobria & pia ieiunijs
 iustis vigilis assiduis orationibus acerbis cu' gemitibus & lac
 rimis deu' p' filio suo augustino deprecabat' ut dignaretur
 eu' a suo errore auertere & ad unitate fidei catholice reducere
 Cuius preces & uota deu' non desperxit & tale responsum
 h'c ei' inuenit esto scia q' ubi tu ibi ille ad illa continuo
 uidit se stare q' in quadam regla lignea & filiu' suu'
 iuxta se stare uidit h'c ex 1^o aff' Caplin 2^{um}



Figure 6: "Monnica Prays and Readmits Augustine to her Table and Conversation" from the Boston Public Library MS 1483 *Vita Sancti Augustini*, second half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 13.

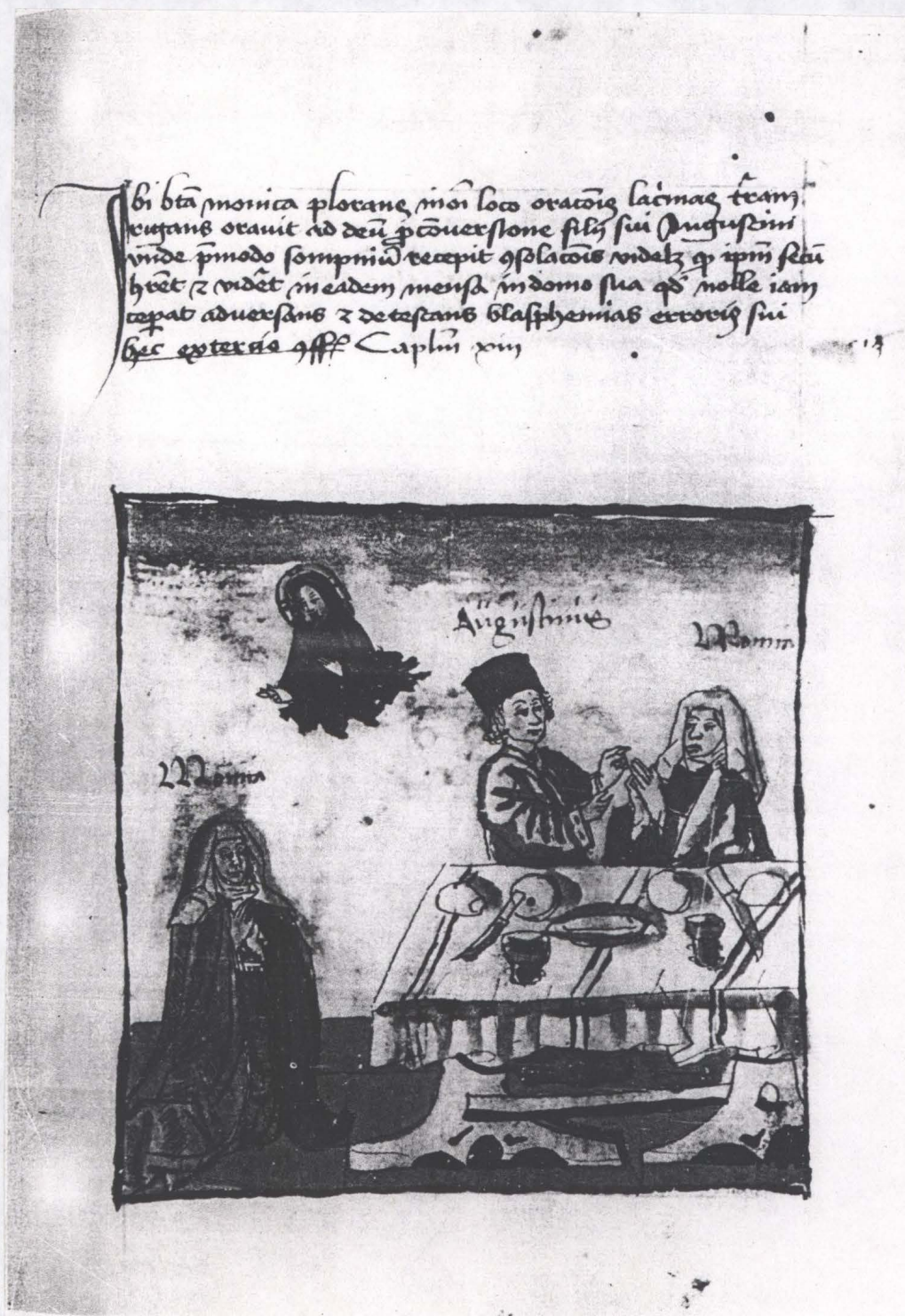


Figure 7: "Augustine's Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion"
from a relief on the tomb of Saint Augustine, circa
1380.



Figure 8: "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting, circa 1380.



Figure 9: "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting by Fra Angelico, circa 1425-1430.



Figure 10: "Augustine's Experience with Ambrose, Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion" from a miniature, circa 1433.



Figure 11: "Augustine's Conversion and Toothache" from a drawing by Benozzo Gozzoli, circa 1460.



Figure 12: "Augustine's Conversion" from a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli, 1464-1465.



Figure 13: "Augustine's Conversion" from a miniature, end of the fifteenth century.



Figure 14: "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting, circa 1490.



Figure 15: "Augustine in the *Regio Dissimilitudinis*" from a miniature, fifteenth century.



Figure 16: "Augustine's Conversion" from a stained glass window, circa 1300-1310.

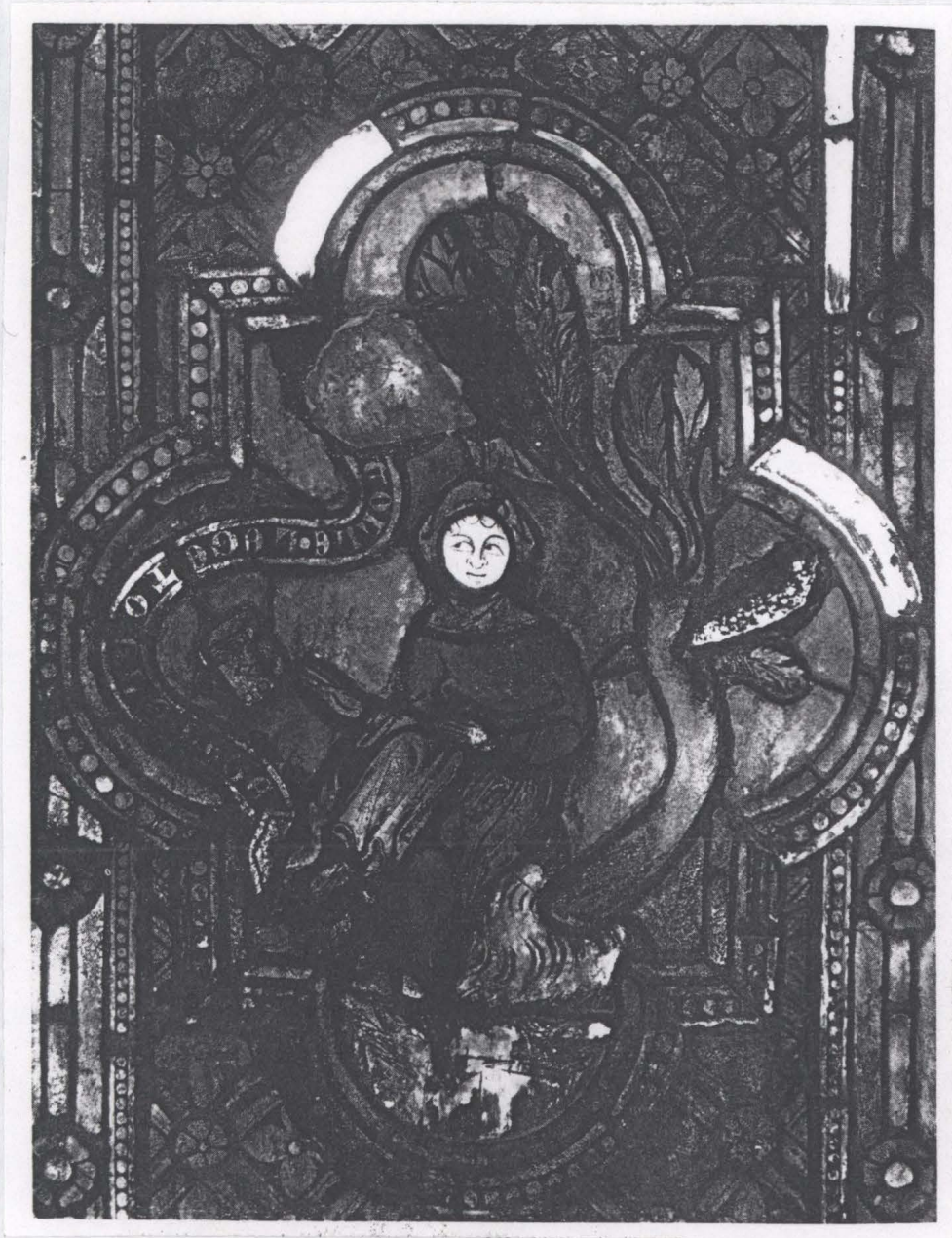


Figure 17: "Augustine's Experience with Ambrose, Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion" from a fresco by Guariento, 1338.

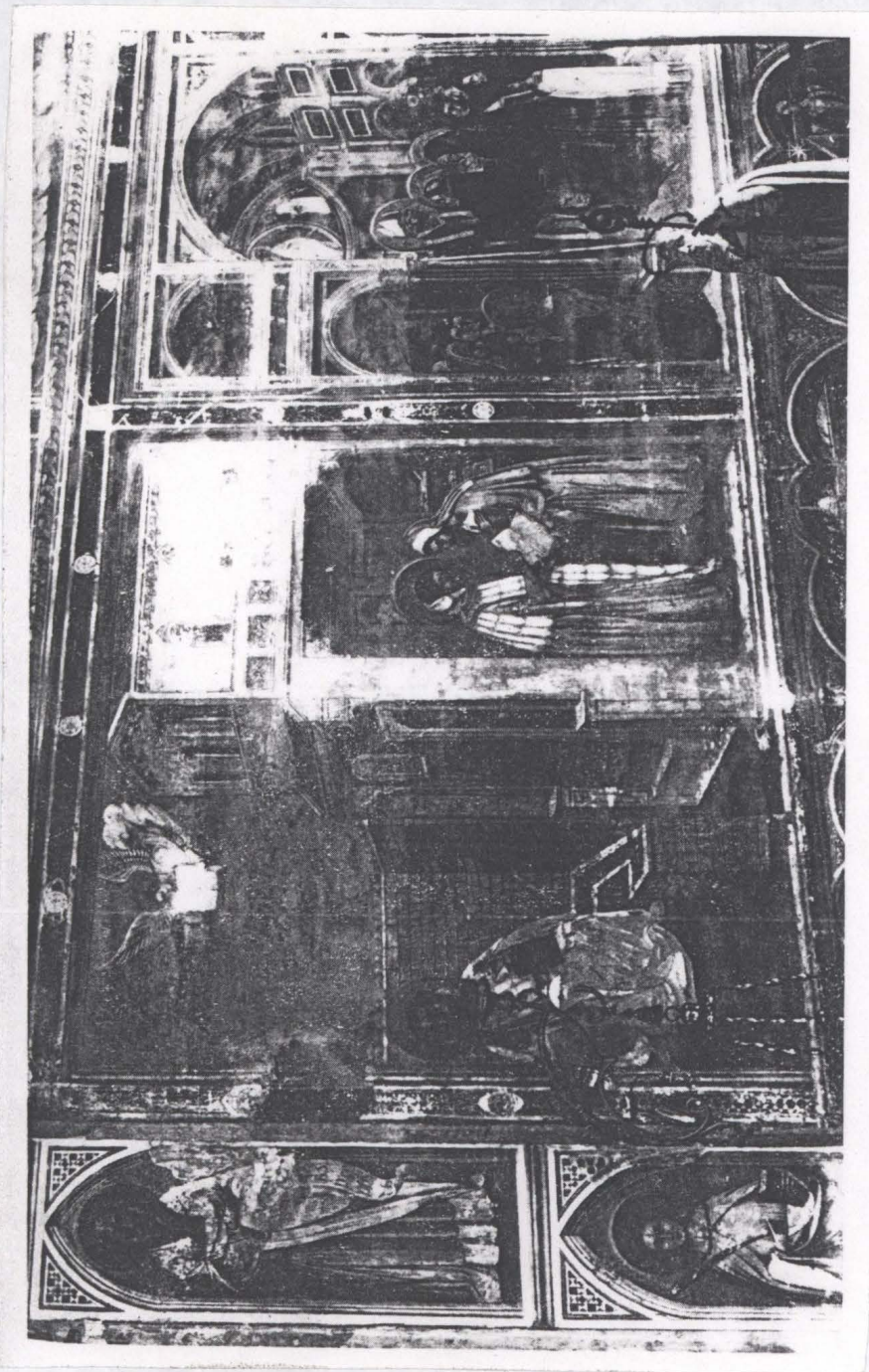


Figure 18: "Augustine's Visit to Simplicianus and Conversion"
from a fresco by Ottaviano Nelli, circa 1400.



Figure 19: "Augustine's Conversion" from a miniature by Zanobi Strozzi, middle of the fifteenth century.



Figure 20: "Augustine's Conversion" from a panel painting, circa 1460.

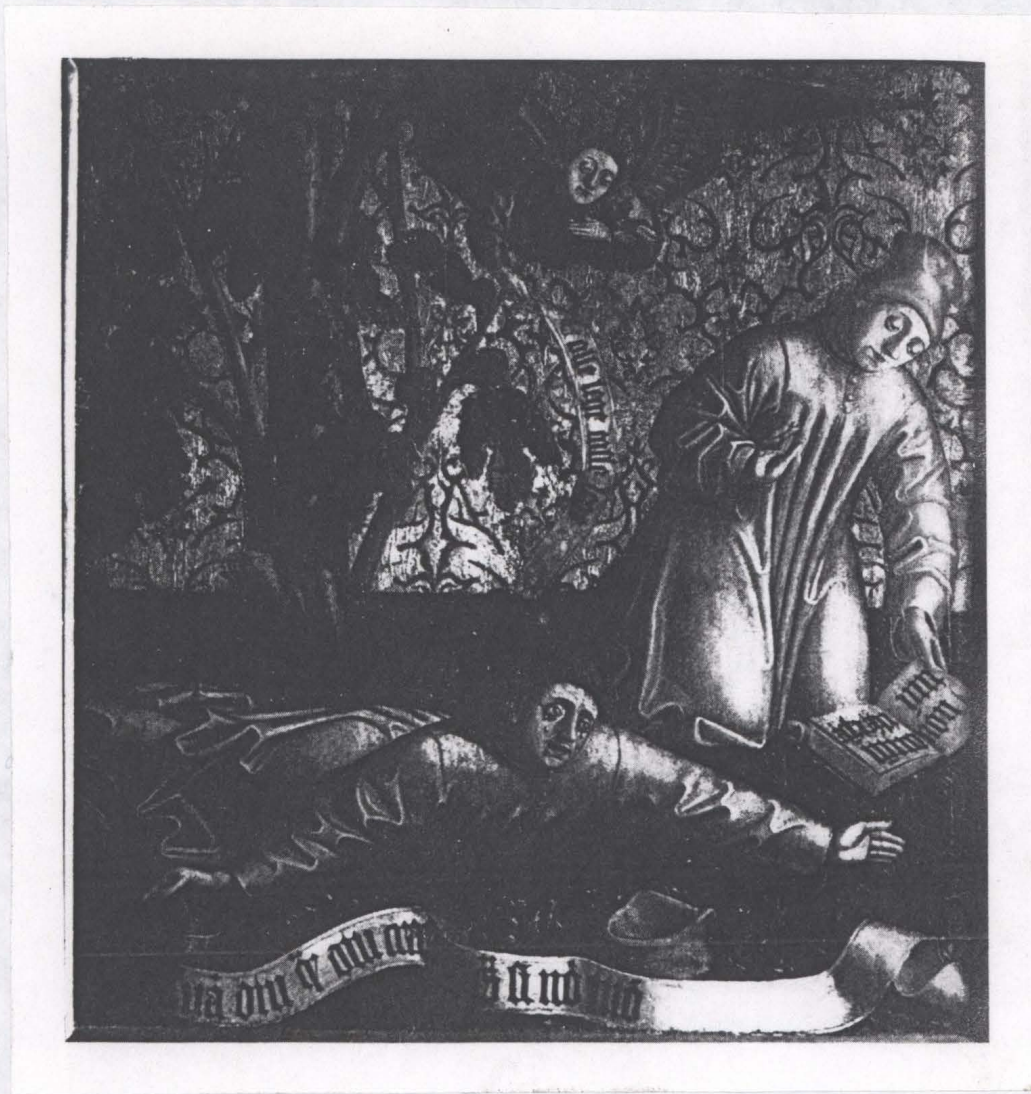


Figure 21: "Augustine and Alypius in the Garden Meditating on Hermits" from a panel painting, circa 1490.



Vita

Surname: Olson

Given Names: Linda Anne Dawn

Place of Birth: Victoria, B.C.

Date of Birth: September 13, 1962

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1990 to 1993
University of Bristol	1989 to 1990
University of Victoria	1985 to 1989
Okanagan College	1984 to 1985

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours) University of Victoria 1989

Honours and Awards:

Howard E. Petch Research Scholarship 1991/92
The Mairi Riddel Memorial Book Prize 1991
University of Victoria Fellowship 1990/91, 1991/92
The Sam and June Macey Graduate Student Award 1990/91
Commonwealth Scholarship for the U. K. 1989
Queen Elizabeth II B. C. Centennial Minor Scholarship 1989/90
University of California Regents Special Fellowship 1989/90
(offered)
University of California Interdisciplinary Humanities Center
Fellowship 1989/90 (offered)
The Governor General's Silver Medal 1989
The Martlet Chapter, IODE, Cuthbert Holmes English
Honours Essay Contest 1989
T. S. Mcpherson Scholarship 1985/86, 1986/87, 1987/88, 1988/89
British Columbia Post-Secondary Scholarship 1986/87, 1987/88
R. T. Wallace Commemorative Scholarship 1986/87

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Self-Expression in Augustine's *Confessiones*

Author:



(Signature)

LINDA ANNE DAWN OLSON
(Name in Block Letters)

September 1, 1993
(Date)