ABSTRACT

Transcending The Garden:
The Role of the Sign of The Garden in Augustine's Confessions

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Augustine's *Confessions* is a complete and unified document. Augustine utilizes sign to bridge apparent textual gaps and to establish an intimate relationship with his reader. Specifically, I assert that Augustine establishes a three tiered movement in the *Confessions* in which a sign is introduced, transcended, and reflected on. To confirm this movement, I trace the development of a specific sign, that of the garden, throughout the text. I begin with an examination of the introduction of the sign, which focuses on Books II and VIII. The garden events spanning these books serve to introduce the garden sign to the reader, as well as introduce a variety of possible signified objects. After successfully introducing the garden sign to the reader, Augustine begins to distance the text from certain signified objects. Augustine transcends preconceived notions of the garden sign to direct the reader toward a specific signified object, the divine. After encountering the divine, Augustine directs the reader back to the previous signified objects. This allows the reader to contemplate these possible signified objects in light of the true signified object. This

results in a new understanding of the signified objects, and a deeper appreciation of the true signified. My final step in this project is to engage similar unity theory project.

Transcending the Garden:
The Role of the Sign of the Garden in Augustine's Confessions

by

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To Carl Vaught

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Age, domine, fac excita et revoca nos, accende et rape, fragra, dulcesce: amemus,curramus.
—St. Augustine, *Confessions* (VIII.4.9)

In the preface to *The Journey toward God in Augustine's Confessions*, Carl Vaught makes an important observation about the nature of Augustine's autobiography. He states, "Augustine's *Confessions* is a difficult book. For many readers, there are too many prayers, too much self-flagellation, and too much philosophy."[1] The text is further complicated by its structure. Augustine brings together biography, philosophy, and scriptural analysis. The result is a text that appears complicated, convoluted and inconsistent. William Stephany describes a possible reader reaction when he states that "[the reader]is likely to feel that it [the *Confessions*] is a patch-together affair, its three major sections comprising three separate units, assembled after the fact, none of which properly belong together."[2] Vaught and Stephany are among several contemporary Augustinian scholars who explore and evaluate the text as a unified work. Already, it has been proposed that the events, metaphors, and philosophies that appear throughout the *Confessions* are unified through Augustine's expressions of beauty, images of the sacraments, prayer,

[1]Carl Vaught, *The Journey Toward God in Augustine's Confessions: Books I-VI* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003).

[2]William Stephany, "Thematic structure in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustinian Studies* 20 (1989):129.

and sin.[3] These approaches serve as a launching point of my project, providing interesting and important revelations about the work. However, because of concerns about the goals of existing scholarship, further scrutiny of the text is required. It is this project's goal to show that Augustine's *Confessions* is a unified and cohesive work detailing the fall, conversion, and redemption of one of Christianity's greatest thinkers. The cohesiveness of the text is revealed by tracing the development of a particular sign throughout the work. Specifically, I assert that the introduction, transcendence and return to the image of the garden provide a cohesive structure to the text.

Entering into this project, I assume that a proper theory of textual unity of the *Confessions* possesses several key components. Primarily, a discussion of cohesiveness should include and engage the entire text, not just the relationship between the first nine books and Augustine's initial sin, fall, addiction, and redemption. The events described in these first nine books present to the reader a personal history of Augustine and an introduction to Christianity, Platonism, and other key influential texts and schools of thought. The chronological and biographical structure of these first nine books provides a self-contained story. Likewise, the exegesis on the opening chapter of Genesis in Books XII-XIII appears to be a complete, yet separate, conversation, with little relevance to any of Augustine's autobiography. Often, the text is divided into autobiographical (I-IX), philosophic (X,XI), and exegetical (XII,XIII) elements. In the *Retractations*,

[3]This is nowhere near exhaustive. I provide these specific examples from Stephany, Michael Foley, Robert McMahon, and Leo Ferrari to reveal the diversity of unity theory in contemporary Augustine scholarship.

Augustine divides the text into two distinct groups. He states, "The first ten books were written about myself; the last three about Holy Scripture, from the words: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth" as far as the Sabbath rest."[4] The challenge and goal of any unity theory is to 'bridge' these apparent divisions in the text. At the same time, a unity theory should maintain the distinctive nature of certain portions of the text. There are rhetorical and philosophical differences between the different 'segments' of the *Confessions*. Ignoring these differences denies the complexity and richness of Augustine's project. So the task of any theory of cohesiveness is to balance the search for unification with preservation of textual distinctiveness.

Secondly, a theory of textual unity should engage Augustine's utilization of a variety of religious, cultural, and philosophical images and concepts. Many contemporary unity scholars focus their projects on a single influential authority or school of thought. While this approach does provide depth to their projects, it can also fragment the text. For example, examining exclusively the sections of text relevant to the Manichean perspective detracts from the Christian, Platonic and Academic aspects of the work. A theory of textual unity should not focus solely on Augustine as a Christian patriarch, a Platonist, or a man of his culture; it should also explore how each of these facets are introduced to the reader, how they relate to each other, and how engagement and interaction between these influences provide connections throughout the whole text.

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[4]Augustine. *The Retractions*, trans. Maryline Bogan (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968). http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=98659573 (Accessed March 27, 2008).

Third, a unity theory should enhance the reader's understanding of the text. As suggested above, the initial reader of the *Confessions* might perceive the work as a grouping of separate efforts, instead of a whole project. As the *Confessions* is revealed as a cohesive unit, the reader begins to comprehend a unified document. It 'transforms' in front of the reader, changing from a patchwork of life events into an evolving, expanding, and circling event. The unified structure drives the reader toward some ultimate goal. As Robert McMahon states in his closing remarks in *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, "He [Augustine] understood the literary form of his *Confessions* to address not only their [the readers] deepest conceptions but also their very nature and deepest desire, as souls in exile from the true patria."[5] Augustine intended the reader to actively engage his work and to grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually because of it. Augustine introduces a similar developmental process in the introduction of *De Doctrina*. There he states:

> It is just as if they were anxious to see the new or the old moon, or some very obscure star, and I should point it out with my finger: if they had not sight enough to see even my finger, they would surely have no right to fly into a passion with me on that account. As for those who, even though they know and understand my directions, fail to penetrate the meaning of obscure passages in Scripture, they may stand for those who, in the case I have imagined, are just able to see my finger, but cannot see the stars at which it is pointed. And so both these classes had better give up blaming me, and pray instead that God would grant them the sight of their eyes. For though I can move my finger to point out an object, it is out of my power to open men's eyes that they may see either the fact that I am pointing, or the object at which I point.(Preface, 3)[6]

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[5]Robert McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

[6]Augustine. *On Christian Teaching,* trans. R. P. Green (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Within this example of the pointing finger, Augustine intends the viewer to undergo three distinct stages of understanding. First, the viewer must first successfully recognize the sign. As Augustine describes, a failure to understand what is presented prohibits any further development. Secondly, after the reader has successfully perceived the sign, he must look beyond it. In terms of the finger example, the agent must follow the line the pointing finger creates. Finally, the agent must focus on the object being signified. The finger pointing and the line the finger creates possess no real meaning if the agent is unable to focus on the distant star. Augustine clearly develops a three stage process in the above passage. This progression of establishing a sign, moving beyond that sign, and perceiving the object signified is the heart of the *Confessions'* cohesiveness. Given that the *Confessions* and the first three books of *De Doctrina* were written at approximately the same time,[7] it is not difficult to assume that overlapping ideals and themes are found in the texts.

By focusing on Augustine's development of a particular sign these three criteria can be satisfied, and the text can be better understood as a planned, unified entity. I understand "sign" to mean "an image or object that indicates or identifies another object." I do not assert that only one sign is capable of unifying the text. Instead, my project develops a process which can be applied to many of the *Confession*s' recurring signs. While I believe that analyzing the development of several signs can satisfy the three requirements stated above, my project will focus on

[7]*De Doctrinia* was started in 396 while the Confessions were finished around 401. I find the proximity of these dates particularly important when considering Augustine, because of the difference in his early and later work. James O'Donnell, "Augustine: Elements of Christianity" http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/twayne/aug2.html (Accessed September 22, 2006).

a single one, the image of a garden. By "garden" I mean a "plot of land in which the natural is cultivated and maintained by man." Admittedly, this is a broad definition, and would include everything from the orchard in Book II to the garden at Ostia in IX. Further, it would seem that Latin advocates a stricter definition of the term. "Hortus", for example, usually only pertains to small household gardens or parks. However, when dealing with the biographical and exegetical elements of the *Confessions*, a broader definition of 'garden' is necessary. Augustine draws on the events and images of the Garden of Eden as well as the Garden of Gethsemane, and neither location would be considered a "hortus".

I limit my focus to gardens because of its symbolic importance to a variety of different philosophical and religious traditions. Besides its recurring role in the Christian tradition, the image of the garden was utilized by Virgil, Plotinus, Epicurus, and Cicero. Augustine regularly refers to these authors throughout the first nine books of the text. These references bring together the early Christian tradition as well as Academic, Stoic, and Platonic philosophies. Augustine incorporates these sources for both intrinsic and extrinsic motives. On the surface, the use of these authors enhances the rhetorical quality of the text. However, Augustine includes these texts to produce something far deeper than rhetorical beauty. By recounting the various uses of the garden, Augustine establishes a two-fold dialogue in the text. First, the reader is able to engage the authors in light of each other. When he encounters a reference to Platonism, he can compare and contrast it to Cicero or scripture. Augustine utilizes this sign to create a dialogue between many philosophies. Secondly, Augustine develops these signs to establish a relationship between the text

and the reader. By citing a variety of sources, Augustine reaches out from a range of reader backgrounds. Augustine appeals to a wide audience. After connecting to the reader through the establishment of the garden, Augustine moves the reader away from the initial sign, and toward a focus on the highest good, specifically God.

To fully explore the development of the text, this project will consist of four chapters. Chapter Two, "Establishing the Sign," will focus on the garden events of Books II and VIII. Augustine uses these two garden settings to draw the reader's attention to the significance of the garden. I begin the chapter by exploring the connection between the pear theft incident of Book II and the conversion experience of Book VIII. While contemporary scholarship has firmly established a connection between the two books, there is some disagreement about the nature of the relationship. Many scholars identify a common sign between the two books. Marjorie Suchocki and Leo Ferrari, for example, both identify the image of a tree as an important sign that establishes a connection between the two books. However, there is little agreement as to what the sign is signifying. This divergence leads to a series of core problems.

After identifying concerns with relevant contemporary scholarship, I will examine the philosophical and cultural implications of the image of a garden. Specifically, I will demonstrate that the garden serves as an important image in the writings of Cicero, Virgil, the Platonists, and Scripture. Further, Augustine utilizes these writers regularly throughout the first nine books of the text. When Augustine recounts his education in Book I, he describes his memorization of the *Aeneid*. He references Cicero's speeches concerning Catiline in Book II and his love of the

Hortensius in III.4. Further, Augustine draws parallels between his fall and Plotinus's vision of the dirty soul. By identifying and exploring his "wallowing" and "foul" nature, Augustine draws on the description of the unclean man in I.6 of the *Ennead*. Finally his actions during the pear theft mirror those of Adam's own fruit theft from the tree of good and evil.

It seems clear that Augustine's description of the pear theft draws from and is embedded with a variety of philosophical and cultural sources. When the reader encounters the pear theft in Augustine's garden, he also has the opportunity to identify and engage Cicero's writings on friendship, Virgil's poetry, Plotinus' understanding of the soul, and Adam and Eve's fall in Genesis. Each of these texts establishes a powerful interpretation of the garden sign. When Augustine steals pears with his friends, the reader encounters the theft in relation to Cicero's views on friendship, he 'profanes the sacred oak' (II.230) with Virgil's Laocoon, he takes the bite of the forbidden fruit beside Adam and Eve.

Engaging these different sources does provide two important benefits. First, Augustine gives the reader many opportunities to connect to the text. While a reader might not initially recognize a particular reference, the number and variety of sources provide multiple avenues of entry into the text. The devout Christian, the Academic, the Skeptic, the Platonist, and the poet can all determine the consequences of young Augustine's violation of the pear tree. Secondly, the use of these sources adds depth to a seemingly mundane event. One mistake a first time reader can make is to ignore or devalue the pear theft. It's tempting for the inexperienced reader to judge Augustine as overreacting to a simple childhood event. By incorporating these other

writers, Augustine adds credibility and depth to this event. Further, the garden is established as a sign that signifies several objects. This creates a type of philosophical nexus, in which questions can be compared and examined in light of multiple perspectives.

Chapter Three of the project focuses on Augustine's use of the Ostia vision to direct the reader away from the initial conceptions of the garden sign. The chapter, "Transcending the Sign," focuses on the systematic rejection of many of the possible signified objects established during the events of Books II-VIII. Chapter Two of this project proposes that Augustine uses a variety of garden references to engage readers from a variety of backgrounds. However, this practice comes at a significant risk. By incorporating several world views into his text, one could think that Augustine dilutes his message or that he adopts a universalist attitude. However, after his conversion in Book VIII, Augustine begins to distance his thoughts from previously encountered authors. He does this both in his final biographical chapter, and in Book X[8]. The reader observes a tactical distancing from Cicero through his resignation at Milan and his abandonment of professional rhetoric. Plotinus' splendors of the soul, which he refers to as Zeus's garden, are replaced by descriptions of "morbid curiosity" and "monstrous sites." Augustine describes the soul as a "vast forest, filled with snares and dangers" (10.35.56). Lofty crags and quickened streams detailed in the Georgics

[8]Admittedly, this process actually starts occurring prior to the conversion in 7.21 with Augustine's final comments on the writings of the Platonists. He states, "All this those writings of the Platonists do not have. Their pages do not have this face of piety, the tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humbled heart. . ." (7.21.27). I plan on referring to this section when discussing the separation from the Platonists.

(VI. 505-520) are considered distractions that cause men to pass themselves by (10.8.15).

I do not assert that Augustine uses Books IX and X to refute or deny these authors. His affirmation of the Platonists in Book VII and his thoughts on pagan writing in *De Doctrina* affirm that he finds some value in these texts. However, this stage of the *Confessions* is intended to provide the reader an opportunity to transcend these pagan sources. As stated in *De Doctrina*, it is impossible to force the learner to correctly perceive the signified object; the instructor can lend aid by providing some type of clarification. Separation and clarification are not intended to abolish the efforts of the pagan writers, but fulfill them.

Chapter Four, "Contemplating the Sign," considers the relationship between the exegesis of Genesis in Books XII and XIII and the rest of the preceding text. The chapter begins by exploring two possible reasons for the inclusion of the exegesis of Genesis. These two positions, the exegesis as refutation and exegesis as telos are examined and critiqued. The third section proposes a third approach: the exegesis as an act of contemplation. Understanding the text in this new light allows the reader not only to engage the signified object, but also to reengage previous possible signified objects. Augustine leads the reader back to the previous eleven books, encouraging him to reflect on the other perspectives in light of the true signified object. The result is a deeper appreciation of the text, a new understanding of old signs, and a means to evaluate other possible signified objects. By encountering Augustine's intended signified object, God, the reader can affirm or reject other perspectives based on the compatibility with the truth of the Christ.

Chapter Five, *The Garden as Unity in Relation to Contemporary Scholarship*, attempts to insert this project into similar existing conversations. While I do not believe my effort is the final word describing the cohesiveness of the text, I do believe that it considers several questions, most particularly non-platonic/Christian influences that many contemporary scholars do not. Currently, much of the cohesive theory scholarship can be grouped into three general categories. The members of the first group establish the cohesiveness of the text by focusing on Augustine's development and use or rejection of a particular perspective. Such efforts usually trace a single influence throughout the text, and, by doing so, bridge the textual 'gaps'. For example, Annemaré Kotzé's project, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience*[9], supposes that the *Confessions* serves primarily as refutation of the Manicheans. She concludes that the attack on the Manicheans begins as early as the opening prayer of I.1. Augustine's rejection of Manichean thought reappears throughout the text, culminating with the exegesis of Genesis. The biographical, philosophical, and exegetical elements of the work are brought together by Augustine's adamant rejection of the Manichean heresy. The second group of unity scholarship I address in this final chapter is the structural theories. These interpretations recognize literary and rhetorical patterns, and use them to bring together the different elements of the work. David Leigh identifies a chiastic structure found in the biographical books. The third general group addresses the development of a particular sign. The signs vary greatly, as scholars have traced

[9]Annemaré Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (London: Brill, 2004).

Augustine's use of trees, sacraments, and love. This project relies heavily on this branch of unity scholarship, and is intended to dialogue predominately with this approach to the text. However, I believe that this project does speak to concerns identified by all of these general unity approaches. Further, this dissertation successfully avoids fundamental problems found in other approaches to the text. The projects discussed in this final chapter are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the existing unity scholarship, but rather a sampling of major approaches to the text.

This effort lends itself well to contemporary discussion of the *Confessions*' cohesiveness. While utilizing a particular imagery to detail the unified text is not absolutely unique, I believe that the process detailed in *De Doctrina* can be applied to the *Confessions* and clarify its cohesive nature. While there are definite 'stages' of the text, these divisions are part of a single intent that spans the entire work. Once the reader sees that the *Confessions* is intended to be encountered as a developmental process, the cohesive nature of the whole text is revealed. I believe my effort will enhance contemporary Augustinian scholarship.

CHAPTER TWO

Establishing the Sign: The Garden in Books II and VIII

It is just as if they were anxious to see the new or the old moon, or some very obscure star, and I should point it out with my finger: if they had not sight enough to see even my finger, they would surely have no right to fly into a passion with me on that account.
—St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana[1]

The image of the pointing finger detailed in the preface of *De Doctrina* is presented in three distinct stages. First, the sign is identified by the observer. As Augustine suggests in the passage above, those who cannot grasp the sign will encounter difficulty in grasping the object signified. Second, the observer who has successfully perceived the sign must then ascend beyond it. In terms of the finger, the observer must follow it upward toward the distant star. Finally, the distant object must be observed. The finger pointing and the line the finger creates possess limited meaning if the agent is unable to focus on the distant star. Without glimpsing the star, the finger is just a sign pointing to 'something'. It is only when the observer perceives the distant object that his knowledge of the pointing finger changes into something deeper. Instead of simply perceiving the finger as an indicator of an unknown object, the finger becomes intimately connected to the object being signified. This three-stage process of establishing a sign, moving from sign to object signified, and observing the object signified provides a structure of unity that extends throughout the *Confessions*. This opening chapter will examine Augustine's efforts to

[1]Augustine. *On Christian Teaching,* trans. R. P. Green (USA: Oxford University Press, 1999).

establish a clear sign pointing to an, as yet, unidentified signified thing. While Augustine utilizes many signs to identify a particular signified thing, the focus of my efforts will center on the use of a particular sign. Specifically, this chapter will focus on the gardens found in Book II through the conversion experience in Book VIII. Augustine uses these garden settings to establish a connection between the events of Books II and VIII. He also uses the events of the garden to focus the reader toward a particular sign that appears throughout the remainder of the text. The initial section of this opening chapter will secure a firm relationship between the events of Books II and VIII. Relying on recent unity theory scholarship, as well as key passages within the text, I will show that the active reader should consider the garden events of the books as related to each other philosophically, religiously, and culturally. The second stage of this chapter will focus on Augustine's use of commonly recognized imagery. The garden events of Books II and VIII draw from a wealth of other sources including philosophy, scripture, and rhetoric. While these references are not essential in grasping the message of the work, they do add richness to the text and provide extra points of engagement for readers familiar with Plato, Virgil, Epicurus, and Cicero. Augustine uses the two garden settings of Books II and VIII to establish a sign that he will utilize in subsequent books of the *Confessions*.

An Examination of Books II and VIII

The first step in identifying this sign is to develop a clear connection between the events of Book II and Book VIII. As suggested above, recent scholarship examining the unity of the *Confessions* has explored many avenues that seem to

connect these two books. One such approach considers a connection in terms of 'misuse' and 'proper use'. This approach assumes that Augustine establishes many key concepts, such as friendship and love, and utilizes many important texts, such as the *Categories*, in the early books of the text. These early references are generally negative, and often related to a particular sin or vice. For example, consider William Stephany's description of the function of friendship in Book II in his "Thematic Structure in Augustine's *Confessions*". He states:

> In Book 2, Augustine says that he boasted about committing fictional sins in order to impress "the companions with whom I walked the streets of Babylon," and when he considers the possible motives for the pear theft, the best solution he can devise is that he did it because of the companionship involved[2].

Stephany asserts that the events of Book II are actually a series of corruptions or misuses of friendship. He continues by asserting that Book VIII serves as a type of return to friendship. In Book VIII, Augustine presents the reader with a proper, pure form of friendship. Stephany continues, "In Book 8, too, friendship is central, but here it is a friendship that leads to salvation and liberation, not to damnation and guilt. We find here a network of episodes in which one person's experiences and actions lead another from error to the true faith."[3] While Stephany never specifically

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[2]William Stephany, "Thematic structure in Augustine's *Confessions,*" *Augustinian Studies* 20, no. 129 (1989): 133.Specifically, Augustine states in 2.9.17, "This [the theft] would have pleased me not at all if I had done it alone; nor by myself would I have done it at all. O friendship too unfriendly!" All translations of the *Confessions* are taken from John K. Ryan's translation of the text, unless otherwise noted. Augustine. *The Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960).

[3]Ibid.

refers to the events of II and VIII as being an example of misuse and reuse, he does assert that Book VIII serves as an act of redemption of many of the key sins established in Book II.

Stephany identifies a key relationship between Books II and VIII. The vicious friends (2.9.17), budding sexual desires (2.3.8), and acts of theft and vandalism (2.4.9) described at length in Book II are contrasted to the friendship of Anthony (8.6.15), vows of celibacy (8.12.30), and acts of self-sacrifice (8.12.29) in Book VIII.

It should be noted that this process of detailing a misuse, then later returning to a description of proper use is not isolated to Books II and VIII. Recent efforts of Michael Foley have examined the misuse/proper use transition in philosophical works as well. Foley suggests that Augustine misuses Aristotle's *Categories* in 4.16.28, only to allow the text to "silently reemerge several times later in the *Confessions* to be better utilized by an older and wiser Augustine."[4] Foley suggests that Augustine returns to the philosophy of Aristotle in several instances in Book XI and XII. Further, Foley affirms this pattern of abuse/proper use when he states, "What is true for people in Augustine's life is also true for external goods: things that are dismissed in the earlier part of the *Confessions* as occasions or instruments of sin have a strange tendency of reemerging later in the work in a more positive light."[5]

So far, we have attempted to understand the relationship between Books II and VIII only in terms of abuse and proper use. The efforts of Stephany suggest that

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[4]Michael Foley, "Augustine, Aristotle, and the *Confessions,*". *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 615.

[5]Ibid, 613.

this trend is found in many key concepts between these two books, while Foley's explorations of Augustine's use of Aristotle's *Categories* suggest that this abuse/use process is not limited to the garden events of II and VIII. However, there are other efforts that further confirm the relationship between these two Books. David Leigh is one of many scholars who describe the relationship between Books II and VIII as a chiastic structure. This analysis of the *Confessions* asserts that the first nine books of the work are a series of parallels where the events of an early book correspond directly to the events of a later book. The result is a "v" pattern to the text where Books I and VIII, II and VII, III and VI are each paired together. Book V serves as a transition or fulcrum between the two halves of the text. For example, the story of Augustine's birth and childhood in Book I are related to rebirth in baptism and the death of Monica found in Book IX. The parallel books are understood as a continuous effort, rather than just a return to an abandoned, misused concept. In this light, the conversion events of Book VIII are understood as a completion of a particular thematic thread that began in Book II. David Leigh identifies several of these threads throughout the two books. Two particular threads important to future discussions are the allusions to the Prodigal Son and to several gardens found in scripture. Leigh says:

> After his crime, Augustine has no use for the fruit and throws it to the swine. . .. In the reference to swine, as well as in other allusions beginning in Book II and continuing in Book III, clear references to the story of the Prodigal Son. These, too, are answered in Book VIII, 3 where Augustine recalls the joy of hearing the gospel which tells us how the younger son "was dead and has come to life again, he was lost and is found[6].

[6]David Leigh, "Augustine's *Confessions* as a Circular Journey," *Thought* 60, no. 236 (1985): 73.

Book II and VIII serve as the beginning and end of a single biblical reference. Augustine assumes the role of the Prodigal Son with his act of theft, and concludes his engagement of the parable with a description of his own family reunion (8.12.30). It should be noted that Leigh does not claim that these threads are the only type of connection between Books II and VIII. He, like Stephany, identifies the reoccurrence of several thematic elements including friendship, celibacy, emptiness, and isolation. Admittedly, there is often a significant difference between the ways these elements are presented in each of the two books. However, Leigh does not identify the differences between the elements as 'misuse' and 'use'. Instead, he describes the variations as a "series of contrasting phrases." He continues, "*Recordari volo transactas foeditates meas. . . deus meus* becomes *Deus meus, recorder in gratiarum actione tibi et confitear misericordias tuas super me.* The sensual *amare et amari* of II, 2 is answered by the higher form of love (*dilectio*) of VIII, 1."[7] The sensual *amare* is not replaced by *dilectio*. Instead, there is a movement that is established, where the initial feelings of *amare* are developed, through divine help, into a higher form.

As these two approaches to textual unity suggest, there are many themes, concepts, and events that are paralleled between Books II and VIII. We have seen how two distinct approaches to the text have attempted to summarize the relationship between the books in terms of broad concepts. Augustine introduces conversations about love, sin and friendship in Book II, only to return these same issues in Book VIII. It is not my intent, at least at this stage in my discussion, to

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[7]Ibid.

label this return as an act of replacement or a conclusion of a single movement. Instead, I intend my discussion to describe many similarities between topographical elements found in Books II and VIII.

There is one more pertinent approach describing the unity of Books II and VIII that must be discussed. Scholars examining the unity of the text have also attempted to explore the relationship between Books II and VIII by focusing on a particular sign or image. Many scholars indicate that the presence of a tree image in the two Books provides a significant link. The presence of the tree in each event represents a different significant scriptural event. Leo Ferrari describes the importance of the two trees when he says:

> The drama of Augustine's pilgrimage from sin to salvation as recounted in the *Confessions* would seem to be polarized between two trees – the pear tree from which the famous theft occurs as recounted in the second book and the fig-tree in the eighth book under which tree Augustine casts himself down as he weeps the tears of repentance which precede his climatic conversion. Moreover, my proposed explanation claims this polarization is patterned upon a like polarization present in the Bible, where again there are two trees – one associated with the Original Sin (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Paradise) and the other, the very symbol of salvation (the Tree of the Cross) upon which the Saviour is crucified.[8]

In this passage, Ferrari presents two important traits about the image of the tree found in Books II and VIII. The first trait is Ferrari's suggestion that the sign of the tree serves to connect the drama of Augustine's journey. Ferrari seems to suggest that it is possible for the entire scope of the *Confessions* to be traced back and connected to the events surrounding a particular sign. So, even minor sinful events,

[8]Leo Ferrari, "Symbols of Sinfulness in Book II of Augustine's *Confessions,*" *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971): 93.

such as the attraction to the underage betrothed in 6.13.23, are intimately connected to the tree of the pear theft.

Secondly, Ferrari's discussion of the tree image suggests that a single sign can represent several signified objects. In the above passage, Ferrari states that the image of the 'tree' presented in Book II is intended to represent the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. However, by simply changing some key qualities of the environment, the image of the 'tree' represents the Tree of the Cross. Both of these signified objects (the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of the Cross) were important to the Christian tradition. Ferrari continues, "The mystical tree has played a vital, even if unobtrusive, role in the western Christian tradition down through the centuries. As regards to the Bible, the arboreal polarization has long been appreciated. . .."[9] It would seem that Augustine is using a well recognized sign to add depth to his efforts. The Christian reader observing young Augustine stealing the pears views that event in light of the sin of Adam. By establishing a connection between the sin of the young man and the sin of the first man, Augustine drives home the seriousness of his theft. A childhood prank is held in contrast with the condemnation of humanity and in establishing that relation between his theft and Adam's fall, Augustine emphasizes the gravity of his falling away.

It should be noted that there is often a problem with examining a single image found in a text. Recall that Ferrari's efforts described the two trees of Books II and

[9]Ibid.

VIII as the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Cross, respectively. Consider the following discussion from Marjorie Suchocki.

> The structure of *The Confessions* is centered on the two trees of the Garden of Eden: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, represented through the pear tree in Book II, and the tree of life, depicted in Book VIII as the fig tree. At the pear tree Augustine came to an experiential knowledge of good and evil; under the fig tree, he received the power to obey what he took to be the command of God: "Take up and Read".[10]

Notice the variation between the comments of Ferrari and Suchocki. While both generally agree on the nature of the pear tree in Book II, their interpretations of object signified by the tree of Book VIII differ significantly. Ferrari's Tree of the Cross is Suchocki's Tree of Life. This difference does create some interesting problems. Ferrari's movement from Genesis to the cross can be interpreted as a type of linear movement. The events of the *Confessions* move from a point of origin and progress through a series of events. Man lives a life directly connected to God in paradise. Man falls from grace and enters a life of sin. Man repeatedly fails in his attempts at redemption. Christ is born as a man and dies on the cross. Christ's sacrifice redeems man. The conclusion of these trials is connected to, but different from, the initial event. A redeemed man looking at the cross is connected to Adam in his paradise, but his redeemed life is not identical to the life of pre-fall man.

Comparatively, Suchocki's movement from the Tree of Good and Evil to the Tree of life implies a circular movement. Here, the goal of the fallen man is to return to his pre-fallen state. Man lives a life directly connected to God in paradise. Man falls from grace and enters a state of sin. Man repeatedly fails in his attempts at

[10]Marjorie Suchocki, "The Symbolic Structure of Augustine's *Confessions,*" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 3 (1982): 365.

redemption. Christ is born as a man and dies on the cross. Christ's sacrifice redeems man. By recognizing Christ's sacrifice, man eats of the fruit of life. Man reconnects to God in paradise. Suchocki's interpretation invites a journey that possesses an identical beginning and ending point. Man begins in the garden with God and ends in the garden with God.

While both of these approaches can describe the fall and redemption of man, there are enough differences that bring to light an interesting problem. Both Suchocki and Ferrari assert that the image of the tree serves as a framework for the entire crux of the *Confessions*. Both assert that the image of the tree is important to the history of western Christianity. Yet, each scholar assumes that the tree of Book VIII represents a different specific biblical image. I believe this is the primary flaw in approaches similar to Suchocki and Ferrari's. By presenting these events as acts of basic replacement[11] (at worst) or as references to a single object signified (at best[12]), the reader is presented with an extremely limited text. Further, it is wrong to assume that Augustine expects his readers to gravitate to a specific interpretation of a sign.[13]

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[11]By acts of replacement I mean that the reader is supposed to convert the events detailed in the *Confessions* directly into their Biblical counterpart. For example, when I encounter Augustine stealing the pears in Book II, I should reflect only on the fall of Adam. I believe such an approach devalues Augustine's own comments about his childhood and creates a shallow text.

[12]This is the approach that both Ferrari and Suchocki have embraced. Both scholars allow for reflection and comparison between the biographical events and the Biblical objects signified. However, by stating that the sign of the tree only points to a particular signified object, they have unnecessarily opened themselves up to the possibility of error.

[13]By this I mean very specific interpretations. Suchocki's assertions about textual unity, for example, hinge on the reader recognizing and accepting that the

By spending much of the early books describing his education, rhetoric skills, and reading of philosophical treatises, Augustine seems to open the door for many different interpretations of a specific sign, both biblical and philosophical.

At this point of the discussion, it would seem that there are several clear points of contention. First, I have shown different approaches to textual unity of the *Confessions*. While these approaches vary, they all establish and affirm a relationship between the events of Book II and Book VIII. Second, I have shown that Augustine uses well-recognized signs to enhance his biographical efforts. By paralleling textual events to signs such as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Cross, Augustine allows the reader to reflect on and connect with key biblical events. Finally, I assert that establishing a connection between a sign and a *single* signified object proves problematic for two reasons. First, it presents the *Confessions* as a limited tale where one life event corresponds directly to a specific section of scripture. Second, it provides a weak foundation for textual unity. If a reader does not recognize the sign as representing the specific signified object, or interprets the sign as identifying a different object, the textual unity theory surrounding that specific signified object will not be cohesive.

Augustine's Use of Non-Christian Sources

The second section of this discussion begins with a return to my last two assertions; first, that Augustine uses biographical events and settings as signs to

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events of Book VIII are directly related to the tree of life. If a reader instead gravitates toward Ferrari's image of the cross or other Biblical references to the garden such as Luke 21:29, Joel 2:22, or Nahum 3:12 her argument struggles.

signify other objects; second, that isolating a single signified object proves difficult when considering the garden events of Books II and VIII. It is with these points that I propose a variation to the approach established by Suchocki and Ferrari. Like them, I assume that examining a particular sign provides the text with a unifying structure. However, instead of assuming that the events of Books II and VIII serve as the focal point of the entire text, I assert that the two garden settings are simply a beginning for a larger project that encompasses the entirety of the *Confessions*. At this stage, Augustine utilizes several unique signs to point to a variety of signified objects. Augustine does this to connect to a variety of readers. Instead of simply appealing to the Christian audience, we find that Augustine uses the opening biographical books to invite Skeptics, Academics, pagans, and Platonists to encounter his confession.

The first step in understanding Augustine's references to gardens as an effort of inclusion is to identify the importance of the garden sign. I will show that the garden served as an important sign for a variety of philosophers, poets, and religious figures and events. I begin, though, with Christianity. I assert that the sign of the garden can identify a variety of signified objects in the Christian tradition. A garden can represent the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2), the Garden of Gethsemane (Mathew 26:36), the grave of Jesus (John 19:41), an object of delight (Isaiah 58:11), or a force of destruction (Lamentations 2:6). At times, it seems that Augustine does direct the reader toward a particular signified object. The events of Book II provide an example

of this. Augustine's closing remarks of the book[14] mirror God's casting out Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.[15] To this extent both Suchocki and Ferrari seem correct in their interpretations of the text. However, I do not see evidence of Augustine limiting the sign to *only* the Garden of Eden. For example, the closing remarks of the book also bear a striking similarity to the admonition found in the first chapter of Isaiah[16]. Instead of creating a reference to a single section of scripture, I see Augustine utilizing a variety of signified objects from the Christian tradition to detail and enhance the description of his sin. So, when a Christian reader encounters the garden events of Book II, he can compare those events to both Genesis and Isaiah. By including both sources, Augustine enhances his biography. Augustine's childhood disgrace is held in relation to the destruction of the Israelites as well as the fall of man. This relation makes it difficult to consider Augustine's behavior as simply 'child's play'.

Likewise, it seems that Augustine's description of the conversion experience of Book VIII refers to variety of significant biblical signs and events including both the

[14]"I fell away from you, my God, and I went astray, too astray from you, the support of my youth, and I became to myself a land of want." (2.10.18)

[15]"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:17-1)

[16]"You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen. You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water. The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark; both will burn together, with no one to quench the fire" (Isaiah 1: 29-31)

tree of life and the tree of the cross. It also establishes a connection between Augustine's submission to God[17] and the sacrifice of Christ[18]. However, the careful reader notices that Augustine does not attempt to limit the sign to a particular signified object. The conversion experience of Book VIII directs the Christian reader to reflect on the events of Eden, to consider the sacrifice of Christ, to rejoice as the children of Israel become the children of God again[19]. Each of these scriptural events is held in relation to Augustine's biography. In doing so, Augustine inserts himself, as well as the reader, into the Christian tradition.

It seems clear that Augustine signifies a variety of scriptural objects and events when he presents the sign of the garden. However, as I suggest at the beginning of this second section, I believe that Augustine also uses the sign of the garden to signify many non-Christian objects. Specifically, I believe that Augustine has deliberate echoes of Cicero, Virgil, the Platonists, and the Skeptics. I believe it is necessary to include these other sources for two primary reasons. First, the events of

[17]"I flung myself down, how I do not know, under a certain fig tree, and gave free reign to my tears. The floods burst from my eyes, an acceptable sacrifice to you." (8.12.28)

[18]"Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there." (John 19:40-42)

[19]"For the Lord will ransom Jacob and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they. They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord—the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow." (Jeremiah 31:11,12)

the garden are infused with, and surrounded by, direct references to these authors and perspectives. The pear theft of Book II is preceded by Augustine describing his education in Book I. During this introductory Book he recounts both his memorization of and love for the works of Virgil. He states:

> I was required to learn by heart I know not how many of Aeneas's wanderings, although forgetful of my own, and to weep over Dido's death, because she killed herself for love, when all the while amid such things, dying to you , O God of my life, I most wretchedly bore myself about with dry eyes. (1.13.20)

Later in that same chapter he continues:

> Therefore, as a boy I sinned when I preferred these inane tales to more useful studies, or rather when I hated the one and loved the other. But then, "one and one are two, and two and two are four" was for me a hateful chant, while the wooden horse full of armed men, the burning of Troy, and Cruesa's ghost were most sweet but empty spectacles. (1.13. 22)

These two sections of text reveal two important qualities. First, they identify Augustine's extensive knowledge of Virgil. As he suggests, the writings of the poet filled his later education, with the young man gladly memorizing large sections of the *Aeneid*. Secondly, the careful reader should notice that Augustine equates his improper affection for the *Aeneid* with an 'empty spectacle'[20]. This desire for emptiness also seems to be directly connected to the pear theft of Book II. At the end of chapter 4, Augustine again describes seeking emptiness. He states, "Base in soul was I, and I leaped down from your firm clasp even towards complete destruction, and I sought nothing from the shameful deed but shame itself" (2.4.9). It would also

[20]I amend the general notion of 'affection' with the modifier of 'improper'. Augustine's own clarification of 'or rather' seems to indicate that his distaste for his actions stem from an obsession with the Aeneid. He was so interested in Virgil that he despised other things. If anything, this early focused behavior serves as a precursor to Augustine's later sexual addiction.

seem that there are some similarities between the description of the conversion in Book VIII and several key events of the second book of the *Aeneid*.

The first similarity is between the appearance of Lady Continence to Augustine and the appearance of Venus to Aeneas[21]. Both figures appear to their respective observers during periods of emotional crisis. Prior to the arrival of continence, Augustine is besieged by the temptation to sin.[22] Aeneas also entertains a temptation prior to his encounter with his mother.[23] For both men, a desirable female personification appears to dissuade them from their sin. Augustine does describe continence as desirable, although virtuously so. He refers to her as "alluring", "serene," and "joyous". She is to be desired, but is not an object of lust.

Secondly, the careful reader can observe a similarity between the two authors and their use of children as divine signs. Augustine encounters the voice of children immediately prior to his conversion. He states:

> I heard from a nearby house, a voice like that of a boy or girl, I know not which, chanting and repeating over and over, "Take up and read. Take up

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[21]It is not my intention to assert that these events are intended to be identical. Augustine actually creates several differences between his vision of Continence and Aeneas's interaction with Venus. One of the more obvious of these is the way Augustine describes continence as possessing a 'chaste dignity'. Few with an understanding of Venus would ascribe to her the quality of chastity. Instead, I assert that Augustine does create several similarities between the two events so that they can be held in relation to each other.

[22]"For an overpowering habit kept saying to me, "Do you think that you can live without them?" (8.11.26)

[23]"For though there is no glorious renown in punishing a woman and such victory gains no honour, yet I shall win praise for blotting out villainy and extracting just recompense; and it will be a joy to have filled my soul with the flame of revenge and satisfied the ashes of my people" (II. 583-587)

> and Read.". . . I checked the flow of my tears and got up, for I interpreted this solely as a command given to me by God to open the book and read the first chapter I should come upon. (8.12.29)

This command from a child prompts Augustine to engage in a two-fold movement. The first movement is a physical movement; he stops his tears and moves to the scripture. The child also moves Augustine spiritually, causing him to undertake the final steps of conversion. This passage allows the reader to observe an emotional progression in Augustine. Augustine exists, prior to the command of the child, in a state of despair. The divine directs Augustine to move, physically and spiritually, toward a state of peace and rest.

There is a similar child-sign found in the *Aeneid*. Virgil writes:

> For between the hands and faces of his sad parents, from above the head of Iulus alight tongue of flame was seen to shed a gleam and, harmless in its touch, lick his soft locks and pasture around his temples. . . my father Anchises joyously raises his eyes to the skies and uplifts to the heavens hands and voice: 'Almighty Jupiter, if you are moved by my prayers, look upon us . . .' (Book II 680-690)[24]

Prior to Iulus's head flame, Aeneas and his family are filled with despair. Anchises refuses to leave his home, and Aeneas has vowed to leave not his father, and to fight to the death for his family. Everyone present expects a forthcoming death. This melancholy changes with the arrival of the head flame. The fire is the first in a series of symbols that direct Aeneas and family away from Troy and toward a new life. It seems clear that we have a similar two-fold movement here as well. The sign from the child directs Aeneas to move physically from Troy and to spiritually move from

[24]Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans.H.R Fairclough ed. G.P Goold, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

depression to hope. It is necessary to stress again that these signs are not intended to be identical. Instead, it seems that Augustine constructs the conversion experience in a unique way. The movement from despair to new life that is caused by divine intervention through a child is a motif that would be familiar and recognizable to pagans who were familiar with the works of Virgil.

Besides directly citing the works of Virgil, throughout the *Confessions* Augustine also explicitly articulates his deep connection to Cicero. Augustine describes an odd connection to the orator, asserting first that *Hortensius* "turned my prayers to you, Lord, and caused me to have different purposes and desires. All my vain hopes forthwith became worthless to me, and with incredible ardor of heart I desired undying wisdom" (3.4.7). Augustine concludes the next chapter by stating, "When I first turned to that Scripture, I did not feel towards it as I am speaking now, but it seemed to me unworthy of comparison with the nobility of Cicero's writings" (3.5.9). It would seem that the writings of Cicero receive a similar treatment to the writings of Virgil. Augustine does not describe either author as evil or stupid (as he tends to describe the Manichees). Instead, Augustine seems to criticize his own reaction to the writers. In fact, as the above passage suggests, Cicero actually leads Augustine to desire God, while his pride causes him to value the writings of Cicero over Scripture.

Further, it seems that Augustine indirectly refers to Cicero in his discussion of sin in Book II. In 2.5.11 Augustine states, "Therefore, not even Catiline himself loved his crimes, but something else, for the sake of which he committed them." The name and actions of Catiline are deeply connected to the orator Cicero. Cicero's

condemnation of Catiline's conspiracy is emotionally brutal and tactically brilliant. I argue that Augustine's reference to Catiline intends, in part, to draw the reader toward the writings of Cicero. Although Cicero is never mentioned by name or title explicitly in Book II, it would seem that Augustine desires the reader to consider the orator's efforts as he encounters the pear theft.

The events of Book VIII are also surrounded by direct references to non-Christian sources. Most notably, the book is preceded by Augustine's intellectual conversion in Book VII. It is in book VII that Augustine describes encountering the writings of the Platonists. He states:

> Therefore, by means of a certain man puffed up with most unnatural pride, you procured for me certain books of the Platonists that had been translated out of the Greek into Latin. In them I read, no indeed in these words but much the same thought, enforced by many varied arguments, that "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . ." (7.9.13).

Augustine uses the writings to the Platonists to glean several truths about God including His existence[25], His connection to man[26], and His coeternal relation with Christ[27]. Admittedly, while Augustine does refer to the efforts of the Platonists throughout Book VII, he brings to light their limitations as well. I believe the

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[25]The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made. What was made, in him is life, and the life was the light of men. (7.9.13)

[26]I read that the soul of man, although it gives testimony of the light, is not itself the light, but the Word, God himself, is 'the true light, which enlightens every man that comes into this world . . . (7.9.13)

[27]Again, I read there that the Word, God, was born not of the flesh, nor of blood, 'nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.' (7.9.14)

inclusion of statements such as "those writings the Platonists do not have" are actually the beginnings a series of deconstructions in which Augustine begins to discount and eliminate possible interpretations of the garden sign. For this stage of my endeavor, however, it is enough to understand that Augustine includes a direct reference to the Platonists prior to his garden conversion.

Augustine's description of his encounter with the Platonists is preceded by a brief discussion of Epicurean philosophy. He states in the final chapter of Book VI, "I disputed with my friends Alypius and Nebridius concerning the final causes of good and evil, and Epicurus would have won the palm within my soul if I had not believed that after death there remains for the soul life and rewards and punishments, which Epicurus refused to believe" (6.16.26). Although Augustine does not describe the Epicureans as favorably as he does the Platonists, the inclusion of this passage does guide the reader back to the sign of the garden. It does so by first referring to a philosopher whose school was known as 'The Garden'. But beyond that initial reference, it seems that Augustine is also utilizing the reference to Epicurus both to return the reader to the discussion of pleasure found in Book II[28] and to prepare the reader for the examination of sacrifice and joy found in Book VIII.

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[28]Specifically, I believe that Augustine is drawing the reader back to 2.4.9 and 2.6.13 where he states, "Foul was the evil and I loved it. I loved to go down to death. I loved my faults, not that for which I did the fault, but that I loved my fault itself," and "Thus the soul commits fornication when it is turned away from you and, apart from you, seeks such pure, clean things as it does not find except when it returns to you." The pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain detailed in the philosophy of Epicurus are both denied and (somewhat) affirmed in these passages. Augustine asserts that the 'fault' of 2.4.9 was a loved lesser thing. He goes so far as to refer to the theft as "*nihil*" in 2.8.16. The careful reader must then compare the pursuit of pleasure advocated by Epicurus to Augustine's confession that pleasure can be found

The Garden as a Philosophical Nexus

So far, we have seen that Augustine includes specific references to non-Christian authors. These references often occur immediately before (Virgil in Book I, the Platonists of Book VI) and after (Cicero of Book III) the garden events of Books II and VIII. We have also seen that Augustine uses these references to guide the reader back to the garden events (the inclusion of Epicurus returns the reader to the pleasure-seeking young Augustine) as well as to prepare the reader for certain garden moments (the truths found in the Platonic texts prepare Augustine for the deeper truths found in the Book VIII conversion). The garden events of Book II and VIII are surrounded by these pagan references. Furthermore, the authors that Augustine references all utilize images similar to events described in Books II and VIII. In the writings of Cicero, Virgil, and Plotinus the reader observes images of the garden, discussions of the quality soul, and even prophetic children. The next step in my initial examination is to reveal how each of these authors uses the image of the garden in their own efforts.

I will begin with Cicero. The corpus of Cicero's writings contains several references to '*hortus*'. For the purposes of this discussion, I believe that focusing on two of Cicero's efforts will suffice[29]. I have already addressed the first in the previous

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in absolute absence. However, Augustine does seem to agree with Epicurus in that man pursues pleasure. For Augustine, this search can only provide benefit when the agent seeks God.

[29]There are well over 80 references to 'hortus' and its variants found in Cicero's efforts. He often uses the garden as a setting of important meetings and an indication of innocence. One statement ascribed to Cicero states, "I look upon the pleasure we take in a garden is one of the most innocent delights in human life."

section of this project. Augustine describes his affection for the *Hortensius* in Book III. Besides serving as an exhortation of philosophy, the work's title proves noteworthy. "*Hortensius*" means "grown in gardens" or "belonging in a garden". It would seem that the sign of a garden is at least somewhat related to the love and pursuit of wisdom. Secondly, Cicero uses a garden setting for the opening of the *Laelius*. He states:

> To return to Scaevola the augur: Among many other occasions I particularly remember one. He was sitting on a semicircular garden-bench, as was his custom, when I and a very few intimate friends were there, and he chanced to turn the conversation upon a subject which about that time was in many people's mouths.

In the *Laelius*, Cicero uses the garden setting to establish the qualities and importance of friendship. It would seem then that Cicero uses the garden as a setting which represents innocence, friendship, and the love of wisdom.

The garden also serves as an important sign for the poet Virgil. Virgil uses several works to describe the benefit of agriculture and nature. In the *Georgics* he describes the manipulators of the soil as both "blessed"[30] and "happy beyond measure"[31]. He ascribes groves to virginity in Eclogue X, stating "What groves, what glades were your abode, your virgin Naiads, when Gallus was pining with

[30]"Blessed is he who has succeeded in learning the laws of nature's working, has cast beneath his feet all fear and fate's implacable decree, and the howl of insatiable Death. But happy, too, is he who knows the rural gods, Pan and aged Silvanus and the sisterhood of the Nymphs. Him no honours of the people give can move, no purple worn by despots, no strife which leads brother to betray brother…" (II.490-497)

[31]"O farmers, happy beyond measure, could they but know their blessings! For them, far from the clash of arms, most righteous earth, unbidden, pours forth from her soil an easy sustenance . . . the peace of broad domains, caverns and natural lakes, the cool vales, the lowing of oxen, and the soft slumbers beneath the trees-all are theirs." (II.548-470)

unrequited love?" (X; 11,12). It would seem that Virgil uses nature to represent peace, simplicity, providence, and innocence. Virgil also seems to assert that those who violate nature meet a violent fate. When describing the death of Laocoon and the Trojans' reaction to it, Virgil states, "They all say that Laocoon has rightly paid the penalty of his crime, who with his lance profaned the sacred oak and hurled into its body the accursed spear." (II. 228-230).

Finally, a reader of Plotinus would also recognize the garden as a sign. In the third *Ennead*, Plotinus uses the garden to describe a level of enlightenment as well as divine illumination. He states:

> This means that the Reason-Principle upon 'the birth of Aphrodite' left the intellectual for the soul, breaking into the garden of Zeus. A garden is a place of beauty and a glory of wealth: all the loveliness that Zeus maintains takes its splendour from the Reason-Principle within him; for all this beauty is the radiation of the Divine Intellect upon the Divine soul, which it has penetrated. What could the Garden of Zeus indicate but the image of his Being and the splendours of his glory? And what could these divine splendours and beauties be but the Reason-Principles streaming from him? (III.5)[32]

Here the reader observes Plotinus describing the garden as a place of 'beauty', 'glory' and 'wealth'. These traits stem from a divine figure whose use of reason and intellect produces these positives. Later in that same tractate, Plotinus identifies the soul with the garden of Zeus. He states, "The splendours contained in the soul are thought of as the garden of Zeus with reference to their existing within life; and Poros sleeps in this garden in the sense of being sated and heavy with its produce" (III.5). Here we see that the garden of Zeus is equated to the life of the soul and connected to the god of plenty. The right-minded person, for Plotinus, is like a well-tended garden. There

[32]Plotinus, *Enneads*. trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Penguin, 1991).

springs from him life, beauty, and plenty of beneficial fruit. The discussion of the intellectual garden found in the third *Ennead* is an interesting contrast to Plotinus' earlier description of the impassioned soul. In the first *Ennead*, Plotinus describes the corrupted soul thus:

> An unclean thing, I dare to say; flickering hither and thither at the call of objects of sense, deeply infected with the taint of the body. . .If a man has been immersed in filth or daubed with mud, his native comeliness disappears and all that is seen is the foul stuff besmearing him: his ugly condition is due to the alien matter that has encrusted him, and if he is to win back his grace it just be his business to scour and purify himself and make himself what he was. (I.6)

Plotinus presents two distinct visions of the soul using natural terms. The healthy soul is like a well-tended, divine garden. The soul focused on desire is like an untended or disheveled garden. He is surrounded by an aura of chaos, disease and death.

It is evident that Virgil, Cicero, and Plotinus each used the garden as a sign in their works. For each, the garden is a relatively positive sign. It represents friendship, philosophy, harvest, wisdom, intellect, holiness, and purity. The violation or abandonment of the garden results in corruption, filth, and death. Augustine's inclusion of these authors in the *Confessions* raises an interesting question. What if Augustine intended the reader to consider his garden in light of the garden signs used by these pagan authors?

The answer to this question is an interesting one. Consider the signified objects originating from the Christian tradition that we have already seen through the sign of the garden of Book II. Young Augustine's theft of the pears directs the reader to the fall of Adam, the abandonment of Israel, and the disgrace of sin. If we include poets and philosophers in this examination, the theft of the pears also directs the

reader toward the filth of the passionate soul described by Plotinus, Cicero's admonishment of Catiline, and Laocoon's denouncement of the Trojan horse. Similarly, the redemption of Augustine in Book VIII directs the reader to the redemption of Christ, but also to the innocence and friendship described in Cicero's garden, the blessed state of Virgil's farmers, and the glory of the garden of Zeus.[33]

If one can accept that the garden events of Books II and VIII signify objects found in a variety of philosophies, traditions, and religious systems, two interesting traits of the *Confessions* emerge. Firstly, it becomes clear that the text possesses a deeper richness. When initially confronted with a situation like the pear theft, the reader must decide whether the event is simply a biographical telling, a sign pointing to a signified object, or both. To understand the difference between understanding an event as a historical 'thing' and 'sign', I again turn to *De Doctrina*. The introduction provides the sign (the finger), the object signified (the distant star), and the ascension from the sign to the signified object (following the finger to the star). In Chapter 2 of the first book of *De Doctrina*, Augustine details the difference between a thing and a sign. He states:

> I now use the word "thing" in a strict sense, to signify that which is never employed as a sign of anything else: for example, wood, stone, cattle, and other things of that kind. Not, however, the wood which we read Moses cast into the bitter waters to make them sweet, nor the stone which Jacob used as a pillow, nor the ram which Abraham offered up instead of his son; for these, though they are things, are also signs of other things. There are signs of

[33]In my claims about signified objects, I am not asserting that Augustine intends these signified gardens to be understood as equal. Certainly, Augustine values the Tree of the Cross or the Garden of Gethsemane far more than the myth detailed by Virgil. In subsequent chapters, I will show how Augustine confirms the primacy of the Christian interpretation of the garden sign. For this initial exploration, however, it is only my intention to suggest the consideration of these other signified objects.

> another kind, those which are never employed except as signs: for example, words. (I.2)

Given this distinction between 'thing' and 'sign' that Augustine establishes, the reader must consider the nature of the garden. He must decide if Augustine considered the garden event a 'thing' or a 'sign'. The answer to this dilemma is a relatively simple one when the reader engages the passage above. When describing a 'thing' Augustine provides three exceptions to an item being only a 'thing'; the wood of Moses, the stone of Jacob, and the ram of Abraham. These items would normally be considered only historical 'things', but because of their religious significance they become 'signs.' The garden events of Books II and VIII serve as signs. As signs, they point to larger truths that are recognized by a variety of important philosophical and religious traditions. When all of the signified objects are considered, the quality of the text becomes evident. The garden events of Book II and VIII become more than parts of a biography, more than the efforts of a Platonist, more than the thoughts of a classically educated man, and more than the considerations of a rhetorician. All of these signified objects are important for Augustine, and important for establishing the unity of the work as a whole.

Secondly, the inclusion of the other signified object creates more opportunities for the reader to gain new understanding. For clarification, I return to the shared assumption of Ferrari and Suchocki. Both assumed that the pear theft of Book II referenced the fall of Adam in Genesis. However, it is possible that a portion of Augustine's initial readers were not familiar with the signified object. Pagans reading the *Confessions* would have limited knowledge of the Fall of Adam. If the pear theft

only represented the fall of Adam, the pagan reader would not necessarily be able to recognize the garden as a sign. However, if the garden events of Book II and VIII also signify the efforts of the aforementioned authors, it allows for a broader variety of readers to grasp the importance of the events. A reader only familiar with the writings of Virgil could connect Augustine's "bitterness of remembrance" (2.1.1) with the "piteous song filled all around with plaintive lamentation." (*Georgics* IV: 516)[34]. It is not my intent to assert that Augustine is adopting an universalistic approach to Christianity. Instead, Augustine uses these early garden events to establish a 'common ground', a sign that is familiar to many readers from a variety of backgrounds. I will show in Chapter Three of my project that Augustine uses later images of the garden to discount many of the pagan interpretations that he established in Books II and VIII. Augustine attempts to move the reader toward the divine. However, he wants as many readers as possible to recognize the sign, before he moves their thoughts upward.

In conclusion, I propose that these two garden events serve as an introduction to a pattern that encompasses the entire *Confessions*. Augustine uses events of Book II and VIII as signs that direct the reader to signified objects from several traditions. Augustine does this to affirm and enrich his own assertions, as well as to open his work to a larger scope of readers. These two events, Augustine concerns himself with firmly establishing the garden as a sign. In terms of the finger pointing to the distant star, Augustine uses the garden events of Books II and VIII to focus the reader

[34]Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. H.R Fairclough, ed. G.P Goold.(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

toward the pointing finger. As I will discuss in my second chapter, after establishing this garden sign Augustine begins to move the reader toward the object signified. As we will see, this movement begins to strip away some of the perceived signified objects established in II and VIII.

CHAPTER THREE

Transcending the Sign: The Ostia Garden

And those who have studied and learned these precepts and still do not understand the obscurities of the Holy Scriptures think that they can see my finger but not the heavenly bodies which it was intended to point out. But both of these groups should stop blaming me and ask God to give them a vision. Although I can lift my finger and point something out, I cannot supply the vision by means of which either this gesture or what it indicates can be seen.

—St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana [1]

Some things are to be enjoyed, others to be used, and there are others that are to be enjoyed and used. . .Those things which are to be used help, and as it were, sustain us as we move toward blessedness in order that we may gain and cling to those things which make use blessed. If we. . .wish to enjoy those things which should be used, our course will be impeded and sometimes deflected, so that we are rewarded in obtaining those things which are to be enjoyed, or even prevented altogether, shackled by an inferior love.

—St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana [2]

As described at the beginning of Chapter Two, the pointing finger detailed in the preface of *De Doctrina* describes a process of establishing a sign, an act of transition from that sign to a signified object, and finally observing that signified object. This three-tiered movement from sign to signified object provides an interesting structure that lends itself well to discussing *the Confessions* as a unified text. I detailed in the preceding chapter how Augustine's utilization of two garden events both enhance the richness of his text and provide an entry point for a variety

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[1]Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson (Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing: 1958).

[2]Ibid.

of readers. By using a sign familiar[3] to Platonists, Christians, poets, orators, Epicureans, and Academics, Augustine provides readers from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to engage the text.

This second chapter examines the transition from sign to signified object. This movement between sign and signified begins with the critique of the Platonists[4] in Book VII and concludes with the beginning of the exegesis of Genesis found in Book XII. It is during these dramatic moments that the reader encounters yet another image of a garden, this time at Ostia. The first part of this chapter will focus on the significance of this specific sign, both as a continuation of the garden motif and ascension beyond that motif. To reveal these two qualities of the Book IX garden, I will first show the Ostia garden as a type of continuation of a particular sign. Augustine embeds many striking similarities into the garden events of Books II, VIII and IX. He brings to light these similarities in order to establish a type of movement. Augustine creates a process in which the description and detail of the gardens mirror Augustine's own transition from a state of sin to mystical enlightenment. At the

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[3]It must be stated again that I do not assert that the sign of the garden is the 'only' well-recognized sign Augustine uses in *the Confessions*. Certainly Augustine uses images of birth, education, death, passion, maleness, and femaleness throughout the text. However, for the purposes of this project, I am choosing to limit the scope of my exploration. I certainly think it would be possible to apply this same three tiered process to the signs listed above as well as signs that scholars have already examined, such as images of the sacraments, trees, and prayer.

[4]Several times throughout this chapter I will refer to both Platonists and Platonism as a whole group, usually in context of Augustine's analysis of the Platonists in Book VII. I do this fully realizing that Augustine is only replying to and considering a select group of authors and works. This approach follows Augustine's own treatment of the documents and authors. In Book VII Augustine reflects on the whole of Platonism, and does not distinguish between authors or text.

same time, these similar garden events are intended to remain distinct. The Ostia garden is a return to a sign familiar to Augustine's audience as well as part of a distinct development. However, Augustine changes the way in which the sign is used. Instead of serving as an 'entry point' for readers, the events of Book IX transform the garden into a sign indicating a transition of ascent. In this light, Augustine's mystical experience at the garden of Ostia serves as a guide for a reader's own spiritual/intellectual ascent, toward a specific, yet still incompletely defined, signified object. The final focus of this chapter will examine Augustine's process of revealing this signified object. It is here that I will discuss how Augustine begins to distance the focus of his inquisition away from the Platonists, Academics, Stoics, poets and eventually even himself. It is clear that this second use of the garden is to move the reader toward the Christian God.

Community and the Ostia Garden

As we begin to examine the signified object, it is important that we follow the movement established in *De Doctina*. Specifically, we begin our glance upward with an examination of the garden at Ostia. The events described in IX.10 serve as an interesting nexus of both literary form and philosophical content. Most noticeably, the garden at Ostia provides the reader with a firm textual connection between the mystical events found in Book IX and the previous events in II and VIII. By 'textual connection' I simply mean that by establishing the vision at Ostia in relation to a garden in Book IX, Augustine draws the reader back to his Adam-like fall of Book II and his spiritual rebirth of Book VIII. While the mere presence of another

garden might provide an opportunity to return to the events of II and VII, Augustine is careful to strengthen the connection by providing several commonalities between the three garden events. One of the most notable similarities is the presence of community at each of the three garden events. Young Augustine is part of a group of 'very bad youngsters' who commit vandalism. Augustine adamantly contends that the group helped to cause the pear theft saying in II.8, "Yet alone, by myself, I would not have done it- such I remember, was my state of mind at that time- I would never have done it." The conversion of VIII is also surrounded by a community[5]. Alypius enters into the garden with Augustine, and following the conversion Alypius, Augustine, and Monica are together and blessing the name of the divine.

Besides connecting each garden event to a type of community, Augustine goes further by marking each garden with a first person plural modifier. Consider the three passages that introduce the garden in Book II[6], Book VIII[7], and Book IX[8]. The gardens are identified by their location in relation to 'our vineyard', 'our lodging', and

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[5]Admittedly, the conversion itself is not communal, as Augustine gets up and leaves Alypius prior to his conversion. He also mentions that he 'was no less alone' (VIII.8.19) with Alypius present. However, regardless of Augustine's feelings of isolation, the small size of the garden coupled with Augustine's own assertions that Alypius *was* there tend to convince me that the friend's presence was vital.

[6]"arbor erat pirus *in vicinia nostrae vineae*, pomis onusta, nec forma nec sapore inlecebrosis" (II.4.9, italics mine)

[7]"hortulus quidam *erat hospitii nostri*, quo nos utebamur sicut tota domo: nam hospes ibi non habitabat, dominus domus." (VIII.8.19, italics mine)

[8] "unde hortus intra domum, *quae nos habebat*, prospectabatur, illic apud Ostia Tiberina, ubi remoti a turbis post longi itineris laborem instaurabamus nos navigationi" (IX.10.23)

'our house'. Although the parties that comprise the 'our' change slightly[9], there is a 'constant' appearance in each of the three events by two specific figures. Augustine and Monica are present during the introduction of the garden events. When looking carefully at the descriptions of the three gardens, the presence of the pair becomes clear. Immediately prior to the description of the pear theft, Augustine describes Monica's reaction to his struggle with sex. He states:

> The mother of my flesh, who had fled from the center of Babylon, but lingered in other parts of the city, just as she warned me against unchastity, so also had some concern over what her husband had said about me, to restrain within the bounds of married love, if it could not be cut back to the quick, what she knew to be a present disease and future danger. Yet she took no final care for this, because of fear that my prospects would be hindered by the impediment of a wife (II.3.8).

II.3 describes three ways that Monica was 'present' to Augustine. First, she was physically present to her son. Augustine's studies are interrupted due to lack of funds, and Augustine is forced to return home and live with his parents (II.3.6). Second, Monica is emotionally present to her son. By 'emotionally present' I mean that Monica was able to observe Augustine's emotional development into manhood. Evidence of her presence is found in her regular warnings against fornication (II.3.7), unchastity (II.3.8), and adultery (II.3.7). Further, as the passage above suggests, she was able to recognize Augustine's views toward sex as 'pestilentiosum' and 'periculosum' . Third, Monica is present to her son as a fellow sinner. The passage above provides two distinct affirmations of this third presence. The first indication of

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[9]By this I mean that there are often several parties involved in the first person plural. The 'nostrae' of the pear theft incident would presumably include Augustine's full family, including his father. The 'nostri' of the events of Book VIII would include Alypius, and the "Nos" of Book VIII would only include Augustine and Monica.

Monica's sinfulness is found in the metaphor of Babylon. Babylon represents idolatry and vice, and Augustine describes his younger self as running about the streets of Babylon, wallowing "in its mire as though in cinnamon and precious ointments!" The fallen city is an image of debauchery, sin, and gilded cages. While Monica has escaped the center of the city, she still 'lingers'[10]. Monica has not fully escaped the trap of sin, and remains stuck with her son. Second, the passage above includes Augustine's description of Monica's parental negligence. As suggested by the emotional presence discussion, Monica recognizes Augustine's problems with sexuality. Instead of addressing it directly, Monica 'takes no final care' in Augustine's attitudes toward sex. Instead of steering her son away from sin, she 'loosens the reins'(II.3.8)[11], allowing young Augustine even more freedom. Monica's selfish desires for her son, combined with her failure to curb his addiction firmly place Monica in the bondage of sin, trapped with her son. Augustine's description of Monica immediately precedes his entry into the Book II garden. While Augustine's mother is not physically present for the theft, questions concerning her behavior still remain. Augustine invites the reader to ask, "what if Monica had stopped him?"

When viewing the other events of Books VIII and IX, the connection between Augustine and Monica is relatively clear. This can be seen immediately following his conversion in VIII.12, when Augustine states, "inde ad matrem ingredimur". If we

[10]Augustine does a wonderful job hinting at this type of 'hanging on' in his description of Monica's alcoholism in Book IX. Monica sneaking sips of wine digressed into drinking full 'little' cups. Augustine describes her addiction in IX as 'morsum' while his own early acts in II are 'pestilentiosum'

[11]"Meanwhile, the lines of liberty at play were loosened over be beyond any just severity and the result was dissolution and various punishments."

understand "ingredimur" to mean 'entering' or 'going into' it could be understood that Augustine simply entered the house that he was staying in to deliver news to his mother. Book XI's connection to Monica's presence is evident, since mother and son share in a mystical experience.

It should be clear that the three garden events of II, VIII, and IX are united by both the general concept of 'community' along with the presence of the specific community of Augustine and Monica. Along with Monica, the readers, as part of a community, bear witness to and share in the guilt of Augustine's fall, the joy of his salvation, and the power of the mystical at Ostia. However, besides being linked by the presence of community and Monica, the three garden events also share a unique connection as stages of a specific development. By 'development' I simply mean that Augustine seems to present the gardens in a progressively detailed manner. As the reader moves through the text, the gardens become more complex in literary detail. Further, the careful reader finds a psychologically healthier Augustine each time he encounters the garden. In this light, all three garden events are linked together as stages in a developmental process.

The Ostia Garden and its Relation to Books II and VIII

This movement begins with the introduction of the garden of the pear theft in Book II. As I state in the introduction, I recognize that it might be challenging to accept that the garden of the pear theft is, in fact, a garden. Augustine does not include any term to describe the location of the pear tree, except its proximity to a vineyard and his normal 'stomping grounds'. However, as D.W. Robertson notes,

the presence of a single tree was often enough to signify the presence of some 'type' of garden. He states, "Many gardens are little more than groves of trees, and still others have a tree as a central feature."[12] Although the garden of Book II is not very detailed, the presence of the tree, along with its connection to the Garden of Eden[13] should be enough for Augustine's contemporary reader to recognize that a garden motif is being used. Although I do assert that the garden of Book II is a garden, it is a garden that is only given a limited description by Augustine. I would argue, especially in light of the other two events, that Augustine intentionally crafts the pear theft garden in a nondescript manner. The reader is not told a specific location of the garden, its size, or any distinguishing feature save the presence of the pear tree. The only information provided to the reader is that the tree is next to a family vineyard, that it was close enough to the city that Augustine and his corrupt friends could incorporate the theft into their "nocte intempesta", and that he entered the garden to satiate the desire to commit a forbidden act[14]. It is the single tree, and that tree's connection to Adam's fall that gives the first garden event its 'garden-ness'.

Compare the information provided about the first garden event to the description of the second. Augustine states, "Attached to our lodging there was a

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[12]D.W. Robertson, "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens: A topical Approach through symbolism and Allegory," *Speculum*, 26, no. 1 (1951): 24-49.

[13]As shown by the work of Ferrari and Suchocki cited in Chapter Two of this project. Although both scholars differed in their interpretation of the garden event of Book VIII, both agreed that the theft of Book II shows some remarkable similarities to the garden of Eden.

[14]"We did this to do what pleased us for the reason that it was forbidden" (II.4.9).

little garden; we had the use of it, as of the whole house, for our host, the owner of the house, did not live in it" (VIII.8.19)[15]. The second garden's description is filled with details when compared to the enigma of the first. The reader is told a general location of the garden in relation to the house, the garden's size, and the state of the garden's owner. Augustine also specifically uses "hortulus" which indicates a general type and size of the garden. The "hortulus" is literally a "small garden". Where the first garden depended on a tree to affirm its identity, the Book VIII garden is given a specific term (hortulus), a specific location (it was attached to the house), and a specific reason both the house and garden were being used (the owner was not present). Like the pear theft garden, the reader is also presented with Augustine's mindset when entering the garden. He states, "Suffering from a most fearful wound, I quaked in spirit, angered by a most turbulent anger, because I did not enter into your will and into a covenant with you, my God" (VIII.9.19). It is important to note the similarities in Augustine's entrances into these two garden events. Augustine is angry, distraught, and misguided. He enters the gardens of II and VIII tumultuously.

Augustine continues this trend of increasing the detail of a garden's description when he introduces the garden at Ostia. He states, "and I stood leaning out from a certain window, where we could look into the garden within the house we had taken at Ostia on the Tiber, where, removed from the crowds we were resting up, after the

[15]hortulus quidam erat hospitii nostri, quo nos utebamur sicut tota domo: nam hospes ibi non habitabat, dominus domus.

hardships of a long journey, in preparation for the voyage" (IX.10. 23).[16] This initial description of the Ostia garden provides the same type of information as the Book VIII garden introduction. The reader is presented with a specific location, a specific motivation for using the house/garden, and a specific term to describe the garden. However, there are some important details that Augustine has added in this garden examination. First, Augustine refers to the garden as a "hortus". While the garden of VIII was considered small garden, the Ostia garden is not. Second, the reader is provided with a detailed description of Augustine's location in relation to the garden. The reader is treated to a detailed description of the house and grounds, including both its specific city and geographic location. Further, the reader is presented with a picturesque vision of Augustine's relation to the garden. Instead of being told that Augustine 'rushes into the garden', as was described in Book VIII, the reader encounters Augustine describing a specific window that allows him to look out on the whole garden. Finally, we should take note of Augustine's motivation behind encountering the garden at Ostia. As stated above, Augustine encounters the previous two garden events filled with pride (II) and then in a state of self-awareness and self-loathing (VIII). However, this third garden is observed for rest and preparation. When recounting the previous mentions of rest, we find that Augustine highly values it[17]. It would seem then that Augustine's third encounter with a garden is motivated by a greater goal than the previous two. Much like the movement of

[16]See footnote 9 for the Latin.

[17]Book I thoroughly affirms this necessity of rest when Augustine states, "for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in you," (I.1.1) and "who will give me help, so I might find rest in you? (I.5.5)

vague to specific found in the descriptions of the three gardens, the reader encounters a similar three stage development in Augustine's motivation. The sin of pride that caused Augustine to first enter the garden in II is overcome by the pain of redemption in VIII, which leads to search for rest in IX.

The Ostia Garden as an Unique Experience

I have set the groundwork for two distinct reasons for why the gardens of Books II, VIII and IX should be viewed as linked together in a progressive movement. On a literary level, Augustine provides greater detail and insight into each subsequent garden event. The tree of book II is dwarfed by the little garden of book VIII, which in turn gives way to the full 'hortus' of IX. Augustine provides a greater glimpse into each subsequent garden scene. Besides the literary movement, there is also a progression of intent for encountering the gardens. Augustine's motivation changes from pride to despair to seeking rest. The reader is presented with something better, larger, and more important with each appearance of the garden motif. Augustine clearly intends the three garden events to be held in relation to each other. By establishing common threads of a community, the mother/son relationship and providing a clear movement from one garden to the next, Augustine expects the reader to return to and reflect on the gardens of II and VIII when he engages the vision at Ostia.

While crafting a connection between these garden events Augustine is careful to maintain the vision garden's uniqueness. There are several key differences between the first two representations of the garden and the one depicted in IX. As already

cited, one of the most obvious differences is motivation. Augustine enjoys the Ostia garden as a source of peace[18]. There is little peace to be found in the theft of the pear or in Augustine's conversion pains. Besides intention, there are several key details that distinguish the IX garden from the others. Unlike the previous two garden events, Monica is actually present during the vision at Ostia, and the two undertake a conversation that is both tender and kind.[19] It should also be noted that the character of Monica lends itself well to the discussion of progression mentioned earlier. The pear theft garden only subtly mentions Monica (she is part of the family that owns the vineyard). The Book VIII garden brings Monica closer to the transpiring events, having her present in the house, but not present during the conversion. The Ostian garden has Monica as a present participant. The movement from vague reference to proximity to actual presence is similar to the increase of literary images and to the improvement of motivation.

Another subtle, but significant, difference between the first two garden scenes and Book IX's events lies in Augustine's physical location in relation to the garden. The gardens of II and VIII each involve young Augustine physically entering them. However, Augustine does not specifically enter the Ostia garden. Instead he views

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[18]Augustine's initial peaceful experience in the Ostia garden points to the garden sign's final purpose. As I will discuss in later in this chapter, and more extensively in Chapter Three of this project, Augustine uses the garden sign to reveal the peace and rest found in the divine. At Ostia, the reader catches a glimpse of a deeper, richer sign.

[19]Admittedly, Augustine's state of mind does change significantly after VIII.12.29. He is described as acquiring 'a peaceful light into my heart'. Yet, when looking at the mindset of Augustine when he entered, the difference between the two gardens is clear.

the entire garden from a window. While this might first appear to be a minor difference, careful examination of the Ostia event reveals two key traits. First, while the Ostia garden is to be viewed in relation to the previous events, it is not intended to be identical to them. As suggested above, the garden is another stage in a movement of increased detail and peace. The Augustine of Book IX is significantly better off than the adolescent of II or the tormented man of VIII. Secondly, the differences between the garden events should also herald a change in the way in which Augustine uses the garden motif. Prior to the actual conversion of VIII, the gardens have served as an entry point for a variety of readers. The first two gardens to connect themselves well to Plato, Epicurus, Virgil, and Cicero. However, at the point of conversion, these links begin to change. Certainly, these figures and philosophies are still present in the Ostia garden. However, Augustine's understanding of them has significantly changed. Augustine the convert views these authors in a different light than Augustine the Manichean, Augustine the skeptic, or Augustine the Platonist does. Redeemed Augustine is connected to, but distinct from his sinful past. Augustine's failure to physically enter the garden represents this beautifully. By standing in a window, Augustine can observe the garden (and its previous connections), but by not entering the garden his 'new' self remains distinct from the 'old'. This is not to say that the garden sign is synonymous with the notion of the 'old self''. On the contrary, the exegesis of Genesis in Books XII and XIII identifies an intimacy between the redeemed self and the garden image. By distancing himself from the garden, Augustine invites the reader to adopt a similar approach to the Ostia garden. While the garden is observable, the reader must embrace the garden's 'new' nature. The

garden can no longer be understood as 'just' an intellectual nexus. Instead, it must also be seen as a sign of spiritual ascension, a movement from 'old' to 'new' self.

This new use of the garden is clearly detailed in Augustine's description of the mystical event. The event at Ostia consists of three major stages: the initial discussion of creation via the senses, the discovery of inward thought, and finally the transcendence of the self toward the divine. Each of these stages proves important in the process of ascension, and it will be the next stage of this project to examine each. I begin with the initial discussion of creation. Augustine describes this initial stage of the mystical event when he states:

> We were alone, conversing together most tenderly, forgetting those things that are behind, and stretching forth to those things before. 'We inquired of one another 'in present truth,' which truth you are, as to what the eternal life of the saints would be like, 'which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of a man.' But we were straining out with the heart's mouth for those supernal streams flowing from your fountain, 'the fountain of life,' which is 'with you,' so that, being sprinkled with it accordingly to our capacity we might in some measure think upon so great a subject. (IX.10.23)

Here the reader is introduced to two important concepts. First, Augustine returns to the three types of 'presence' established in Book II. Mother and son are physically present to each other. Monica is clearly next to her son, conversing with him. While this may seem like an asinine observation, the act of physical presence establishes mother and son as two separate and distinct creatures. This particular understanding of presence is described in Carl Levenson's *Distance and Presence in Augustine's 'Confessions'*. Levenson comments about this opening vision when he states:

> Augustine, here arrives at the truth he seeks. Things announce their contingency ('we did not make ourselves') and then cease to speak and are silent. . . There is a final resurgence of presence, since Augustine and

> Monica enjoy a moment of perfect intimacy- a conversation 'joyful and serene.'[20]

The exchange of dialogue between mother and child provides evidence of intimacy (both in the mother/son relationship and in the fact that the conversation was 'tender') and individuality (conversation requires at least two participants). Secondly, Monica is emotionally present to her son. The tender conversation and the reaching out of the heart's mouth indicate a strong emotional bond between the two participants. Monica is also spiritually present to Augustine. Unlike her spiritual presence of Book II, which was clouded by sin, Monica's presence in IX is one of redemption. Instead of sharing the mire of Babylon's vice, the two are flowing toward the fountain of life.

Mother and son are also present to the garden they are overlooking. As stated above, Augustine overlooks the garden, but is not a part of it. Thus, Augustine maintains his distinction from the garden. At the same time, when the reader considers the events that Augustine previously endured in a garden (a garden being the location of one of his initial falls and the site of his eventual redemption), it does

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[20]Carl Avren Levenson, "Distance and Presence in Augustine's *Confessions*," *The Journal of Religion*, 65 no.4 (1985). 500-512. Levenson suggests that the *Confessions* are best understood as a series of acts of distance and presence. Much of his effort mirrors a chiastic structure of the text, with each book corresponding to a different group/person that Augustine is present to/distant from. An example of this is Book II and VIII, where each book describes a different set of companions that Augustine is present to. At the same time Augustine creates a type of distance in each Book as well, separating himself from a community of faith in II, and sinners in VIII. While I think Levenson's approach is interesting, he encounters several problems associated with a chiastic understanding of the *Confessions*. A longer discussion on the difficulties of a Chiastic unity theory can be found in Chapter Five of this project. Further, Levenson completely ignores Books X-XIII. For my present purposes, however, I do think Levenson lends himself well to the notion of presence that I'm trying to establish.

not seem unreasonable to assume that Augustine possessed an intimate connection to the garden motif. The final presence is the Divine itself. Augustine and Monica's desire for 'streams flowing from your fountain' suggest a deeply longed for (intimate), but currently unattained (distinct), being. The Divine presence is different from the previous instance of presence in that it is the motivational force that drives Augustine toward higher events. The beauty of the garden and the conversation with Monica provide Augustine with the groundwork needed to begin his ascension, but it is his desire for further intimacy with God that draws him upward.

Augustine also uses this first stage of the event to detail a movement away from the past. We see this in the above passage when he talks about 'forgetting things that are behind, and stretching toward things that are before.' This movement away from past lesser things is affirmed in paragraph 24. Augustine continues:

> When our discourse had been brought to the point that the highest delight of fleshly senses, in the brightest corporeal light, when set against the sweetness of that life seemed unworthy not merely of comparison with it, but even of remembrance, then, raising ourselves up with more ardent love to the Selfsame, we proceeded step by step through all bodily things up to that heaven whence shine the sun and the moon and the stars down upon the earth. (IX.10.24)

Augustine, again, presents the reader with a clear vision of movement away from something. In this case, the best perceptions of the senses are dwarfed by the love experienced by contemplating God. Brian Stock describes the Ostia movement in this way:

> Ostia is not only a scene of remembering: it is the other side of reminiscence. Fixing their gaze on things to come, he and Monica leave behind them the past of their bodily lives while they rediscover a state of mind that has been forgotten since Eden. Conferring sweetly with each other, they inquire into

> the perpetual life of the saints. It is in this sense that they drink at the fountain of everlasting life.[21]

The key to this first stage of the Ostia vision is found in Stock's assertion of leaving behind their past while moving toward a new state. As Augustine and Monica move inward and eventually upward, the reader is encouraged to follow a similar path.

The first stage of the vision consists of transcending two important limitations. Augustine and Monica move beyond the scope of physical sensation and transcend their previous conceptions of the physical world. The second part of the Ostia ascension involves exploring the inner self. Again, Augustine states, "We ascended higher yet by means of inward thought and discourse and admiration of your works, and we came up to our own minds" (IX.10.24). After moving beyond the physical world, mother and son begin to contemplate themselves. Augustine describes the inward turn as "venimus in mentes nostras". They 'come into' or 'arrive' at their minds. Augustine's placement of the examination of mind provides two important qualities to the vision experience. First, it establishes an important mental component. As we will find in subsequent discussion, the mental component of the vision is important for understanding Augustine's movement beyond the sign of the garden. Specifically, by describing the deepest part of the mind as a 'higher' step toward the divine, Augustine affirms several of the thinkers established in the previous incarnations of the garden. Second, while the arrival at 'mens' does signal an important achievement, it is clear that Augustine did not intend the mind to be a final destination. Augustine says immediately after, "et transcendimus eas". The

[21]Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996).

mind, and by extension the self, become just another step toward the divine. And like the previous steps (creation, sensory information, other beings), Augustine moves beyond the 'mens' as well.

The final movement of the Ostia vision is an act of transcendence toward the divine. Augustine states, "We attained to the region of abundance that never fails, in which you feed Israel forever upon the food of truth, and where life is that Wisdom by which all things are made, both which have been and which are to be". By transitioning beyond the physical world, beyond the self, Augustine connects to the eternal. Stock affirms this in his own examination of the Ostia event. He states:

> Augustine and his mother are led from their senses to beyond their mental capacities while they pass from a temporal to a temporary eternal experience. This is what they will know of wisdom and nothing more. . . The nontemporal otherness of the otherworld is emphasized: it is the 'region' in which God dwells[22]

Again, Stock affirms this notion of movement within the vision. Augustine and Monica move from sense perception to mind to God.

The relevance of the garden motif to this sensory, intellectual and mystical ascension might appear remedial at first. One could simply perceive the garden as the rudimentary starting point for the vision. Augustine looks out on the garden, uses it to get the conversation going, and soon abandons it for 'higher' things. If we assume that the garden is 'only' a garden, viewing the Ostia garden as a 'nice starting place' would have some credibility.[23] However, if we accept the assertions put forth in

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[22]Ibid.

[23]I do believe that the actual garden at Ostia as a physical 'thing' is this type of instigator. Looking out over the garden Augustine and Monica are able use the

chapter 1 of this project, it is not possible to view Ostia garden as 'only' a physical thing. Viewing the garden as a nexus of thoughts, philosophies, and religious beliefs the reader returns his thoughts to Plato, Cicero, Virgil, and Christ. Yet now, Augustine confronts the reader with a changed image. The garden of IX is no longer just a motif that invites readers to engage Augustine. Instead, the garden is a part of a spiritual ascension, where the sensory world and intellect are each distinctly introduced, used to their fullest extent, and then left behind[24] as mother and son continue to seek the Selfsame. The reader is encouraged to undergo a similar process. Augustine invites the reader to consider the philosophy of Plato, the beauty of Virgil's gardens, the strength of Cicero's rhetoric, and the power of scripture in light of this garden ascension. In doing so, Augustine encourages a similar process of introduction, use, and ascension. It is important to note that 'use' does not have a negative connotation in Augustine. Augustine says in Book I of *De Doctrina*, "To use something is to employ it in obtaining what which you love, provided it is worthy of

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garden as a starting point for an examination of creation as a whole. However, I do believe that looking at the Ostia garden as 'only' a physical garden ignores the previous signs Augustine establishes, and limits the depth of the text.

[24]As I will show in Chapter Four of this project, this transcendence beyond the sensory world and intellect are only temporary. After encountering the signified object, Augustine returns the reader to the mind and the world of sights and sounds. However, these 'worlds' are now perceived by an agent who has encountered the signified, an experience that changes both the agent and the sign significantly.

love" (1.4.4). To properly use something you must understand that the thing you use is not worthy of enjoyment[25] and you must utilize it to reach the loved 'thing'.

The Ostia Garden as Ascension

This act of contemplation is not undertaken by the reader alone. Augustine begins to subtly engage the philosophies, religions and authors found in previous garden events. As early as Book VII, Augustine evaluates philosophies, artistic visions, and religious tenets, analyzing them to decide if they are something to be used or something to enjoy. By doing this, he focuses the reader toward the specific signified object while still maintaining the garden as a well-recognized sign. While such a process may seem to make the movements of the text and the changes to the garden motif more of a challenge to recognize, I assert that beginning the second stage with the analysis of the Platonists in Book VII leads to a stronger understanding of the *Confessions* as a unified text. As I will discuss in Chapter Five of this project, one of the fundamental problems with many attempts at unity theory is the creation of further textual division. An example of such division is David Leigh's[26] *Augustine's Confessions as a Circular Journey*[27]. Leigh's effort asserts that the first nine books of the text are best understood as a series of four pairs. Books I and IX are related because of their focus on birth and death. Books II and VIII are related due to their

[25]'Enjoyment' for Augustine is "to cling to it with love for its own sake" (De Doctrina 1.4.4)

[26]I hesitate to discuss Leigh's approach extensively here, as Chapter Five of this project will provide a broader examination to his approach to the text.

[27]David Leigh, "Augustine's Confessions as a Circular Journey," *Thought* 60, no. 236 (1985):73.

subjects of perversion and conversion, III and VII due to their discussion of intellectual birth and rebirth, IV and VI due to the examination of mortality and worldliness. Book V serves as a midpoint or transition between the first and second halves of the couplets.

While Leigh's approach does provide some interesting insight into the structure of the text, it does not lend itself well to a discussion of the text's overall unity. While Leigh does establish convincing parallels between pairs of books, he does not sufficiently explain how these pairs relate to each other. He describes his effort in his conclusion when he states, "Thus his *peregrinatio animae* was not a random odyssey but a V-shaped aeneid [sic] in which in which our study has shown, an event in an early book raises a question that is to be answered by a parallel event in a later book."[28] Leigh spends little time discussing how the questions of birth, established in Book I, relate to the questions of worldly pursuits, established in Book IV. Likewise, Leigh seems to conclude that the answers found in the later books apply most directly, and almost exclusively, to their corresponding questions. For example, the problems and issues surrounding Augustine's childhood and early sin found in Book I are only 'fully' addressed and completed when the reader examines the death and redemption Book IX. Leigh's discussion isolates chapter pairs. With Leigh's approach, the reader sees Book IX as the direct response to Book I, instead culmination of the events between Books I-VIII.

[28]Ibid, 86.

Leigh does allow for some movement in the text when he states, "Augustine was quite flexible in his incorporation of other literary devices within this basic framework."[29] However, Leigh's framework does not fully capture the unity of the text. It does provide an interesting approach to understanding the structure of the *Confessions*, but it ignores the 'natural breaks' of the text[30], while establishing a different type of division between books. In contrast, I advocate a theory that embraces a subtle movement between sections of the text, with each subsequent stage beginning before its predecessor is fully completed and articulated. This minimizes the number of sharp divisions in the text, and better conveys the text's unified structure.

I hope my motivation for beginning the ascension well within the first stage is evident. Augustine begins the process of evaluating garden philosophies, religions, and images as he continues to introduce others. By doing this, Augustine prominently maintains the image of the garden while avoiding any sharp divisions in the text. As suggested above, Augustine tests each of these philosophies in an attempt to understand them as things to be 'used' or 'enjoyed'. Remember, following his assertions in Book I of *De Doctrina*, an 'enjoyed' thing must be clung to and loved for its own sake. A 'used' thing directs and motivates the agent toward the 'enjoyed' thing.

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[29]Ibid.

[30]Here I mean the division Augustine recognizes between Books I-X and XI-XIII or the I-IX,X,XI-XIII division mentioned previously.

Augustine's examination of Platonism in Book VII provides a clear analysis of Platonism's usefulness. Chapter 9 of Book VII states:

> You procured for me certain books of the Platonists that had been translated out of the Greek into Latin. In them I read, not indeed these words but much the same thought, enforced by many varied arguments that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God All things were made by him, and without him nothing was made. What was made, in him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.' I read that the soul of man, although it gives testimony of the light, is not itself the light, but the Word, God himself, is 'the true light, which enlightens every man that comes into this world,' and 'he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not'. (VII.9.13)

Augustine identifies several fundamental truths of Platonism that are also held in Christianity. Both believe a divine force created existence, a divine force reveals itself through humanity and creation, and that humanity can fail to know to that divine force. In short, both Christianity and Platonism believe in God. While Augustine affirms several tenents of Platonism, he carefully maintains a distinction between the philosophy of Platonism and the religion of Christianity. Augustine states later in Book VII:

> What shall an unhappy man do? Who shall deliver me from the body of this death," unless it is by your grace, 'through Jesus Christ, our Lord," whom you have begotten coeternal with yourself, and created in the beginning of your ways, in whom the prince of this world found nothing worthy of death, and yet killed him? And the handwriting of the decree that was against us was blotted out. All of those writings of the Platonists do not have. Their pages do not have this face of piety, the tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humbled heart, the salvation of your people, the city that is like a bride, the pledge of the spirit the cup of our redemption. In those books no one sings: 'shall not my soul be subject to God? For he is my God and my savior, my protector. I shall be moved no more.' In them no man hears him calling to us: 'Come to me all you who labor.' They scorn to learn of him because he is meek and humble of heart. 'For you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to the little ones. (VII. 21.27)

This powerful discussion provides the reader with two important criticisms. First, the absence of divine grace, failure to understand the importance of humility, and lack of a redemptive figure are all blatant problems for Augustine. While the philosophy does allow for the existence of a divine being, they do not successfully understand the means necessary to commune with that being. Christianity, through Christ, provides a clear means to reach that communion. Secondly, while Augustine does assert that Platonic writes he engages do present a flawed image of the divine, he does not ascribe them any negative titles. They are not a 'snare of the devil'[31], 'acts of demons'[32] or 'deceitful'[33]. Instead, it is an important and intelligent perception of a divine figure that is missing the means necessary to rest with that figure.

The Establishment of a Single Signified Object

A reader might be confused with the direction of Book VII. Augustine spends much of the Book affirming the writings of several unspecified Platonists, describing their writings as allowing him to "clearly see your invisible things which 'are understood by the things that are made" (VII.20.26). Only a few paragraphs later, however, Augustine asserts that these beliefs are missing several important characteristics. The motive behind this apparent bipolar approach is simple; Augustine expects these texts to be used, not enjoyed. As a 'used' thing, the

[31]As he refers to Faustus in 5.5.3.

[32]As he calls the wreckers behavior in 3.3.6.

[33]As he declares his own teaching to be in 4.2.2.

documents become a tool[34] that aid the obtaining of the 'enjoyed' but it itself is not the thing enjoyed. We see in Book VII a similar pattern developed in the Ostia garden where Augustine details the introduction (Augustine encounters the writings), use (Augustine is able to enter into his innermost being), and ascension beyond (Augustine returns to the scriptures).

A similar process occurs for Cicero. The careful reader should remember that Augustine did find spiritual worth in the *Hortensius*, with Augustine stating that the text "changed my affections. It turned my prayers to you, Lord, and caused me to have different purposes and desires" (III.4.7). As much as Augustine affirms the *Hortensius*, he is careful to identify flaws of the author and his rhetoric. Augustine begins his analysis of Cicero as soon as the orator is introduced. Augustine states, "a certain Cicero, whose tongue almost all men admire but not his heart" (III.4.7). Augustine furthers his distance from Cicero in Book IX when he describes his slow withdrawal from teaching rhetoric. His distancing from rhetoric begins early in IX.2 when he states, "In your sight I resolved not to make a boisterous break but gently to withdraw the service of my tongue from the language arts. Thus youths who did not meditate on your law, or your peace, but on foolish lies and court quarrels would no

[34]Notice, this is not 'the' tool. Platonism, as well as the other garden signs are not solely responsible for directing the agent toward the 'enjoyed' thing. Augustine uses Platonism, like he uses Cicero, Virgil, and even his own mind to reach the signified object. These devices, like the garden at Ostia itself, like the tender conversation, like the presence of Monica are all used to drive Augustine, and the reader, upward. It is not my intent to describe these signs as having equal importance for Augustine. Certainly, Augustine's experiences in VII indicate Augustine's dependence on Platonic ideals and practices. However, as the conclusion to VII indicates, Platonism is not ever intended to be the final goal for the agent. It is also not in the scope of this project to 'rank' the signs in order of significance. I only assert that these events are signs, and are thus 'usable' not 'enjoyable'.

longer pry from my mouth weapons for their madness." The reader should notice that Augustine does not critique rhetoric or Cicero, but rather their misuse. Augustine continues, "When the vintage vacation was ended, I sent word to the citizens of Milan that they should arrange for another seller of words for their students. This was both because I had chosen to serve you and because I was no longer equal to that profession. . ." (IX.5.13). Augustine provides no condemnation of the writings of Cicero or of rhetoric. Although both Cicero and rhetoric are often misused, when they are utilized properly, they allow the reader to focus on the divine.

Continuing the trend of garden authors, the reader finds a similar process in the treatment of Virgil. Augustine details his love of the poet early in the biography. However, after his conversion, Augustine reminds the reader that by heeding "the dawning spring when icy streams trickle from snow mountains, and the crumbling clod breaks at the Zephyr's touch"[35] he will "pass himself by"(10.8.15).[36] Augustine, even in his harshest self-critiques does not discount the poet, nor his affirmation of nature. Like the others, Virgil becomes a tool, a device to use while seeking the thing to be enjoyed.

Augustine provides similar treatments of Plotinus, Virgil, and Cicero. Each author is intimately connected to the garden events of II and VIII, and Augustine takes special care to examine the effect each thinker has on his personal development.

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[35]*Georgics* 1. 43-45

[36]"Amazement seizes me. Men go forth to marvel at the mountain heights, at huge waves in the sea, at the broad expanse of flowing stars, but themselves they pass by."

While Augustine affirms each of these authors, he is quick to note imperfections in their thought, style, and motivation. By balancing a series of affirmations and critiques, Augustine establishes each author, and their respective perspective, as a thing to be 'used'. When Augustine returns to the garden in Book IX, he describes the process of using external 'things' (the garden, creation, the words between himself and Monica) in order to begin an ascent toward the divine. When Book IX concludes with Monica's death and burial, the text seems to change. Instead of focusing on biography, Augustine turns his analysis to the inner self, memory, and the mind. Initially, these issues might seem distant from the historical material found in earlier chapters. Many unity theories[37] end when Augustine pleads for prayers from readers for Monica in IX.13.37 or gloss over the philosophical Books of X and XI. However, a proper approach should discuss the unity of the entire *Confessions*. One of the easiest ways to establish a firm connection between the biographical and philosophical books is to return to the garden motif. As stated earlier in this chapter, the garden Ostia is different from the previous incarnations of II and VIII. It possesses more detail about the surroundings, has a clear presence of Monica, and is described as an actual 'hortus'. This 'nearly' ideal garden[38] serves as foundation for Augustine and Monica's spiritual ascent. It is identified, used, and transcended by the pair. The second stage of the Ostia vision is one of self-examination. This process has a similar form. Augustine identifies inner thought, uses that tool to ascend

[37]Most notably, theories that stress unity based on the classic chiastic structure.

[38]The ideal garden, the Garden of Eden, being engaged in XII and XIII of the text.

higher, and eventually transcends it. Augustine uses Books X-XI to mirror this second stage. Consider the following assertions found in Book X and XI: "I will pass also beyond this power of my nature, and ascending by steps to him who made me, I come into the fields . . .of my memory." (X.8.12); "Great is the power of memory! An awesome thing my God, deep and boundless and manifold in being! And this thing is the mind, and this am I myself: what then am I, O my God? What is my nature?"(X.17.26); "I will stand and be firm in you, in your truth, which is my mold" (XI.30.40). Augustine seeks the presence of the greater truth in and beyond the self. Augustine describes the challenge of this act in X.16 when he states, "Lord, I truly labor at this task, and I labor upon myself. I have become for myself a soil hard to work and demanding much sweat" (X.16.25). Augustine is actively seeking the inner self. The stages of the vision at Ostia suggest that self-exploration is 'higher' than exploration of the rest of creation. It, however, is not the final goal. To prove this, Augustine begins a process of self-examination that mirrors his treatment of the garden philosophies. He affirms the value of his thought, identifies its faults, and establishes it as a thing to use. In doing so, Augustine establishes the self as a sign of the divine. As a sign, the mind points beyond itself, directing the agent toward the 'enjoyed' thing.

Although Augustine is often seen as self-degrading, Books X-XI contain several affirmations of his inner self. Augustine's astonishment of the power of memory, his willingness to confess his knowledge to God (X.2.2)[39], and the blazing

[39]"For a long time I have burned to meditate on your law, and therein to confess to you both my knowledge and my lack of wisdom." This particular passage is

mind seeking understanding (XI.22.28)[40]; each of these affirm Augustine's intellect, desire, and emotional strength. The mind, and all it is comprised of[41], is a beneficial thing that leads an agent toward God. At the same time, the mind is full of limitations. Augustine describes these faults through a series of self-critiques. The faults listed in X-XI are significantly different from previous personal examinations. Unlike the reflections of the earlier Books, Augustine analyzes his current meditations. In his examination, Augustine discusses his secret groans (X.38.63)[42] and his mental weakness (XI.9.11)[43]. One of Augustine's greatest discussions of his own limitations comes when he recounts his continued problems with sin. He states:

> There remains the pleasure of these fleshly eyes of mine, concerning which I voice confessions to which the ears of your temple, ears devout and brotherly, may listen. Thus may we conclude the temptations arising from concupiscence of the flesh that still assail me, groaning and "desiring to be clothed upon with my habitation that is from heaven. The eyes love affair and varied forms and bright and beauteous colors. Let not such things possess my soul: may God who made these things good, yea, very good, may he possess it. . . Each day they affect me all the while I am awake. No rest from them is granted to me . . . (X.34.51)

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a wonderful example of Augustine's balance between affirmation and critique. Augustine grasps the power of his knowledge, but at the same time is very aware of his shortcomings.

[40]"My mind is on fire to understand this most intricate riddle. O Lord my God, good Father, I beseech you in the name of Christ, do not shut off these things, both familiar and hidden, from my desire."

[41]By this I mean the passions, the intellect, reason and the will.

[42]"I am a better man so long as by secret groans I displease myself and seek your mercy, until my defect is made over again and is made whole again, unto that peace which the proud man's eye does not perceive."

[43]"I fall down because of that darkness and under the load of my punishments. For thus is my strength weakened in poverty, so that I cannot support my good."

Augustine mingles self-affirmation with degradation. The mind is a powerful, complex thing, but it is not perfect. As the preceding passage suggests, Augustine is still tormented by addiction, desire, and imperfect will. Because of these faults, the mind should be treated similarly to the other 'used' things. Reason, the passions, and the will are all tools that aid the agent in his search for the highest good. I am not saying that Augustine believes the mind, or any of its parts are equal to a nearby bird or garden. Certainly, Augustine believes that the mind is a higher thing that provides a clearer glimpse of the Divine. In the end, however, it is just another step used in his ascension.

The first two steps detailed in Augustine's Ostia ascent consist of establishing the value of a particular object, using that object, and finally transcending that object. I've argued that Augustine masterfully establishes a similar process for many of the philosophies established in the previous garden encounters. Plotinus, Cicero and Virgil are potent authors who lend themselves well to a spiritual ascent. However, as Augustine notes, each author's understanding of the world is incomplete. Further, Augustine adopts a similar analysis of the self. The inner self is one of the highest things humanity can experience, but it too is plagued by imperfections. The self, the physical world, philosophies and authors are all respected by Augustine, but only insofar as they are usable in the search for the 'enjoyable'.

What then, is the thing to be enjoyed? A brief return to the garden nexus provides the answer. Augustine incorporates Platonism, Christianity, self-gratification, poetry, and rhetoric into the gardens of Book II and VIII. The only unaddressed concept is Christianity. While the *Confessions* are filled with

affirmations of God, Christ, and the Divine city, Augustine omits any type of critique for these images of faith. This absolute confirmation of God and communion with him through Christ, point to the "region of abundance that never fails" discussed in the final stages of the vision. Augustine's regular pleas and prayers found throughout the text clearly indicate that God is the enjoyed 'thing'. From the opening lines of I.1.1[44] to the final paragraph of Book XIII[45] Augustine affirms the Divine.

This third chapter has detailed a significant change in the garden motif. The gardens of Books II and VIII serve to establish a firm beginning for subsequent discussions. The Ostia vision changes the garden as intellectual nexus into the garden as ascension. To affirm this change, Augustine undertakes a beautiful process of affirmation and degradation. He identifies garden components as 'usable' things. These are tools used by an agent in order to commune with the 'enjoyed' thing. By identifying Plotinus, Virgil, Cicero, and even himself as good but not perfect, Augustine reveals the distant star, the Divine.

The fourth chapter of this project will examine the final appearance of the garden motif. When the reader encounters the Garden of Eden in Book XII, he does so as an agent who has already encountered the signified object. Again, we find that the garden changes. It returns to the state of being a of communal nexus. However, this nexus is significantly different that the one encountered in Chapter Two. Now it is a place where all used objects are seen in light of the signified.

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[44]"You are great, o Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom there is no limit."

[45]"But you, o one good God, have never ceased to do good."

CHAPTER FOUR

Contemplating the Sign: Books XII and XIII

Now, should we admonish all of our brethren not to teach these things to their children because the apostles filled in a single moment with the Holy Spirit, spoke in the languages of all peoples? Or, when such things do not come to anyone, are we to conclude that he is not a Christian or that he has not received the Holy Spirit? Rather, those things which can be learned from men should be learned without pride. And let anyone teaching another communicate what he has received without pride or envy.

—St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana [1]

Chapter Two of this project introduced a three-tiered process found in Augustine's *Confessions* that provides a unifying structure to the text. The first stage of the movement consists of establishing a specific sign with a variety of possible signified objects for that sign. For clarity, I chose to limit the scope of my examination to a single sign, the image of a garden[2]. In terms of that sign, Augustine uses the gardens found in Book II and VIII to introduce a number of possible signifiers. As stated previously in the project, the garden was an important sign for pagans, Christians, Academics, Platonists, poets, Epicureans, and Academics. Further, Augustine invites exploration of these various groups and contemplation of their philosophical and spiritual worth by including references to the perspectives themselves or specific philosophers/religious figures/advocates of that particular

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[1]Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*, trans D.W. Robertson (Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1958).

[2]It must be stated again that it is not my intent to assert that the garden is the only sign that lends itself to this three stage process. Augustine's use of signs related to the Sacraments, marriage, friendship, community, personal identity, along with others, lend themselves well to this process.

perspective[3]. I argue that Augustine uses these instances to serve as a type of intellectual/philosophical/religious nexus. By referring to a variety of possible signifiers, Augustine provides a way for readers from a variety of backgrounds to engage the text.

Chapter Three of this project detailed the second stage of the process. The vision at the garden of Ostia in Book IX reveals Augustine and Monica undertaking an experience of ascent. Mother and son begin by contemplating the familiar physical world and slowly move their examination inward. This introspection leads to an explosion of revelation, in which Augustine and Monica "attain to the region of abundance that never fails"(9.10.29). I assert that Augustine uses Books VII through XI to undertake a similar journey with the reader. Beginning with the evaluation of the platonic writings in Book VII, Augustine analyzes the various signified objects introduced by the garden events of II and VIII. Augustine identifies most of these potential signs as things to be 'used', as opposed to being things to be 'enjoyed'. Urging the reader beyond external signs, Augustine moves the reader inward. By exploring questions surrounding memory and time, Augustine drives the reader toward a process of contemplating the self. In this discussion Augustine identifies the self an object to be 'used'. Augustine moves beyond the sign, beyond many potential signifiers, and even beyond the self. By Book XI Augustine has begun to direct the reader toward a specific signified object. It is this object alone that Augustine identifies as something to be 'enjoyed'.

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[3]The pear theft of Book II is a wonderful example of this. Augustine surrounds the theft with references to Adam's fall/original sin (Book II), Cicero (Book III), poetry and theatre (Book III) and Manichaeism (Book III).

In terms of the example of the pointing finger found in the preface of *De Doctrina*, Augustine has clearly identified the pointing finger (the sign) and used the sign to direct the reader's gaze toward the distant star. With Augustine's assistance, the reader has focused on the distant star and it (as signified object) has been identified. So, what happens now? Initially, the discussion would appear to be over. The signified object has been recognized and Augustine seems to provide no immediate 'next step' in the *De Doctrina* example[4]. However, when looking at the text of the *Confessions*, the reader should note the text does not conclude with, "You 'lift up them that are cast down,' and they do not fall down, whose place aloft is you" (XI.31.41). Instead, the final two books of the text provide an exegesis on Genesis 1:1-2:3. This fourth chapter of the project will consider the purpose of these final two books and their relationship to the previous eleven. I will explore the connection between the Genesis chapters and the rest of the text in three stages. The initial stage will explore two possible explanations behind Augustine's scrutiny of Genesis. These positions, the exegesis as refutation and the exegesis as a final telos, have been proposed by contemporary unity theory scholars. Although both approaches contain convincing elements, I find that neither approach can adequately explain Augustine's efforts in the final two books. The second section of this fourth chapter will bring to light several important critiques to these two approaches. Finally, I will propose a third type of explanation, the exegesis as contemplation. This approach to the text

[4]Admittedly, the text of De Doctrina does provide a 'next step' to this process, the fourth book of the text. However, the sign of the pointing finger itself does lack any sort of specific next step. I fully admit that Augustine does seem to assert that the agent does need to continue to labor, seeking the Divine (4.31.64)

integrates several of the important benefits of the previous two theories. Understanding Augustine's exegesis as an act of contemplation provides a further benefit as well. By returning to previous signs, Augustine leads the reader back through the previous eleven books. Through a careful meditation of Genesis, Augustine returns the reader, a reader who has encountered the Divine, back to the previous garden signs. This allows the reader to develop a deeper connection to the text, gain a new understanding of the old signs, and evaluate previous possible signified objects.

The Garden as Telos Approach to the Genesis Exegesis in Books XII and XIII

Recent unity theory scholarship has provided a plethora of discussions on Augustine's exploration of the first chapter of *Genesis*. To limit the scope of the discussion, I have narrowed my focus to two general interpretations. I have chosen to focus on these approaches because each provides a unique vision of Books XII and XIII. Further, each of these approaches is broad enough to incorporate, or at least engage other approaches not considered here. For the purposes of my examination, I will begin with the exegesis as a telos of the text. Broadly speaking, this approach understands the final two books as a culmination of philosophical thought, religious discovery, passionate contemplation, and careful ascent. The trials and temptations of Augustine's childhood, his youthful spiritual searching, his conversion at the brink of adulthood, and his concerns about losing his memory as he ages all lead to a consideration of the scriptures and the opening of the Old Testament. Carl Vaught, in

his final book on Augustine's *Confessions*, summarizes his approach to the exegesis as telos when he states:

> Augustine's interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis correlates it with the metanarrative that makes his journey toward God possible and reflects the structure of his experience at the distinctively reflective level. This metanarrative begins with creation, moves toward the fall, points to salvation, and culminates in fulfillment.[5] (151)

Augustine's considerations of his own life follow a similar pattern. He is created (Book I). He moves toward a fall (Book II). He points to, and embraces salvation (III-VIII) and finally reaches out toward fulfillment (XII-XIII). In this interpretation, the final two books serve to demonstrate the soul reaching out toward the divine in an attempt to find eternal rest.

The result of this reaching out is not universally agreed upon. Some scholars, such as Vaught, assume Augustine's final discussion of Genesis serves as promise of rest rather than an actual discovery of rest. Vaught states:

> His (Augustine's) life has been filled with turmoil, and though he finds peace in the garden in Milan (8.12.29), he is under no delusion that final peace will ever come as long as he is still engaged in the quest for fulfillment. Thus, in this cosmological summary of his situation from an escatological point of view, Augustine calls our attention to the fact that the whole creation will pass away when its purposes have been fulfilled, making it possible for the world to move from creation to fulfillment (13.35.50).[6] (225)

Vaught's interpretation denies the possibility of Augustine's exegesis as an eternal encounter of divine rest. For Vaught, finding eternal rest is impossible until the agent has been created as a new being after death. In this light, the *Confessions* conclude in

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[5]Carl Vaught, *Access to God in Augustine's Confessions*: *Books X-XIII* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005).

[6]Ibid.

a somewhat modest manner for the speaker. The reader views Augustine the speaker stretching upward waiting for the day in which he can finally be made new. Becoming a new creation still appears to be some far future event, and this can lead the reader to interpret the text in a rather pessimistic manner. Augustine could appear to resemble a Christian Sisyphus; continually toiling and striving, but never really getting anywhere.[7]

However, although Vaught portrays the final act of the speaker as a man in waiting, he does extend the Divine's promise of rest to the entirety of creation. The end of the quest for rest is not only the goal of intellectual agents, but of the whole of creation as well. All things are made new, and all of creation returns to its 'good' state established on the first six days of creation. The speaker waits to be made new, and in turn assumes his role as part of divine creation. Vaught keenly connects the waiting of creation to the final words of the *Confessions* in which Augustine says, "At your door let us knock for it. Thus, it is received, thus it is found. Thus is it opened for us."[8] Man, and all of creation, wait and knock at the door of God, in hopes of being made into something new.

Robert McMahon, on the other hand offers a different interpretation of the final Books as a type of Telos. Where Vaught focused on man's wait for divine

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[7]This is, of course, a broad generalization and a worst case scenario. I certainly do not want to imply that Vaught assumes that the reader will adopt such a position. Instead, I simply suggest that understanding the exegesis as only indicating continued searching can lend itself to such assertions.

[8]"a te petatur, in te quaeratur, ad te pulsetur: sic, sic accipietur, sic invenietur, sic aperietur."

presence, McMahon identifies several stylistic changes that suggest that Augustine the speaker has already encountered the divine. McMahon's claims begin with his analysis of the change in the general tone of the final two Books when he states:

> The speaker of the *Confessions* is, suddenly, a changed man. We are meant to believe, I suggest, that God's grace surges within his prayer in a radically new way. He no longer questions patiently and prays for guidance because he no longer needs to. He possesses a vibrant, new conviction about the text. We are meant to understand that God's Spirit is suddenly alive within him in an extraordinary way. Augustine the speaker is inspired. Hence, his sublime assurance in the spiritual allegory he expounds.[9] (25)

McMahon continues with his observations concerning Augustine's writing. He describes chapter twelve of Book XIII when he says:

> Consistently dense with biblical quotations, difficult in its leaps of thought, the writing authoritatively expounds a complex and deeply allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1. As the writing changes so does the man who is speaking his *Confessions*. His sublime assurance tells us that he feels possessed of certain truth in what he utters. He no longer speaks of himself in the singular, but in the plural. His oracular style, imbued with scripture, is meant to suggest that he is possessed by certain truth in his interpreting. After pondering the Trinity in chapter 11, Augustine the speaker is infused by a grace that inspires a wholly new understanding of Genesis 1.This enables him to begin his interpretation anew and to complete it swiftly. He completes it in precisely twenty-seven chapters, a perfect Trinitarian number (3x3x3) for a divinely inspired allegorical exposition.[10] (32)

Both of McMahon's observations identify a speaker that has actively engaged and encountered the divine presence. Augustine begins the final two books by changing his tone and the structure of his presentation. In doing so, he conveys the internal change that has occurred within Augustine the Author. The effects of this change

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[9]Robert McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

[10]Ibid, 32.

culminate in Chapter 12 with Augustine speaking directly to his faith (XIII.12.13) and instructing it to sing to God. For McMahon, Augustine has asked, sought, and knocked and God has responded by opening the door to his creation. McMahon's interpretation is a powerful culmination and conclusion in which Augustine encounters the divine and finds the rest he has sought for so long. McMahon believes that Augustine has reached fulfillment, as he states:

> God guides the speaker's *Confessions*, just as he has guided, and does guide, Augustine's life. We can now see that both arrive at fulfillment. God's grace brings the young Augustine to the 'peaceful light' (*luce securitatis*, VIII.12.29) of conversion. Divine inspiration fulfills the speaker's desire to consider all of Scripture. And the *Confessions* ends where Augustine the author aspires to be, the fulfillment of God's eternal *quies*.[11] (37)

It is important to notice the different types of fulfillment at play in McMahon's discussion. Augustine's life finds a type of fulfillment through grace. Augustine the speaker finds fulfillment through divine inspiration and the scripture. Augustine the author continues to seek the fulfillment of rest. Admittedly, McMahon does seem to indicate that Augustine the author has not found complete fulfillment, as he is still aspiring. However, given the nature of the text and the similarities between Augustine the author and Augustine the speaker, it is acceptable to assume that McMahon suggests that the actual Augustine of Hippo did find some fulfillment at the completion of the text[12].

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[11]Ibid, 37.

[12]I find McMahon's distinction between Augustine the Speaker and Augustine the Author to be an interesting one. Augustine does make significant strides to create different personas of self (Augustine the Youth, Augustine the philosopher, Augustine the Christian) by separating his old self with his spiritually reborn self. When first entering into this project, I'd not thought about distinguishing Augustine the Speaker

Vaught and McMahon both portray the final two books as a type of telos, a final goal that Augustine uses to complete his opus. The first twelve books build to a staggering climax. For Vaught, the reader is left, as a redeemed part of creation, waiting to be made new at the hands of the Divine. McMahon suggest the presence and fulfillment of God. In both cases, Augustine's discussion of Genesis is the final goal for both reader and speaker.

Before moving to other interpretations of the *Genesis* exegesis, it should be noted that it is possible to understand Books XII and XIII as a part of a larger telos, rather than being a complete telos in itself. The example of this interpretation is found in the writings of Marjorie Suchocki, who believes that the final two books are part of a single process of redemption that began at the point of Augustine's conversion in Book VIII. She states, "The condition of those who through the fall love creature rather than creator is described in the five books following the fall; the condition of those whose wills are healed is described in the five books of redemption."[13] This interpretation seems to imply that the text is best understood as only possessing two major sections, with a section devoted to Augustine's life pre-

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from Augustine the Author. On reflection however, I believe that any discussion of the validity of that distinction is beyond the scope of the discussion of this project. However, McMahon's separation of the two figures is interesting and not a universally held assumption (Vaught and O'Connell, for example, observe no such distinction).

[13]Marjorie Suchocki, "The Symbolic Structure of Augustine's *Confessions*," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 3 (1982): 377.

conversion and post-conversion. While I find such divisions problematic[14], they do lend themselves well to a discussion of the telos of the text. For interpretations such as this, the final two books can still be understood as being part of a telos. In the case of Suchocki's claims, the final two books serve as the final comments on Augustine's post-conversion meditations. The conversion itself is the climax and goal of the text for Suchocki, and the last five books discuss the fallout from that particular event.

The Garden as Refutation Approach to the Exegesis of Genesis:

As suggested above, there are several different approaches that understand the exegesis of Genesis as a type of a natural conclusion and spiritual climax to the text. However, other contemporary unity scholars advocate a second approach to the text, the exegesis of Genesis as an exercise in engaging and refuting heresies. One of the most convincing advocates of this position is Annemaré Kotzé. Kotzé suggests that Augustine's discussion of Genesis is actually a refutation of Manichean philosophy.[15] Kotzé begins her analysis of Books XII and XIII by recognizing a fundamental trait of Augustine the author. He was aware of his audience. In his awareness, Augustine realized that his readers might engage the text for a variety of

[14]I have already presented a critique of Suchocki's approach in Chapter Two of this project. I will examine her work further in Chapter Five.

[15]When beginning her project, Kotzé is quick to point out that she does not believe that Augustine intended the Manichean audience to be the sole audience of the text. She states, "Before I go on to outline some issues relevant to Augustine's relationship with his Manichaean audience, I want to repeat that it is imperative that the reader understands that I do not claim the Manichaeans to be the sole intended audience of the *Confessions*."(87). However, when actually engaging Books XII and XIII, Kotzé provides no significant alternative to her claims about a Manichean audience. Other approaches are, at best, a secondary thought or a recognition of previous scholarship.

reasons, including curiosity. Kotzé describes Augustine's recognition of his reader when she states:

> Augustine remains acutely aware of his other audience, his readers. He often talks to God about people. At times he addresses these people directly. Sometimes he fights philosophical or theological positions and in this manner bestows on their adherents an indirect presence in the dramatic set up in the *Confessions*. He seems to be aware of the fact that human curiosity may be an important ally in enticing readers to take up his text.[16] (197)

To this point, the ideas and efforts described in the second chapter of this project seem to mirror Kotzé's assertions. I agree with Kotzé's claim that Augustine was aware of his diverse audience, and I agree that Augustine engages several popular philosophical, religious, and ethical approaches to reality.

While Kotzé does recognize Augustine's engagement of a variety of perspectives, she narrows her project to examine Augustine's treatment of the Manicheans. Kotzé proceeds to identify and examine each of Augustine's confrontations with the Manichean faith, from his introduction to the Manicheans in Book III to his eventual refutation of the Manichees in Book VII. Kotzé further asserts that this refutation of the Manichean system continues through the conversion, through the discussion of memory, through the discussion of time, and concludes with the exegesis of Genesis. For Kotzé, the exegesis of Genesis is a process of redeeming Genesis from the corruption of the Manichean heresy[17]. As she states,

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[16]Annemaré Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience.* (London: Brill, 2004).

[17]Although I speak generally of 'the Manichean Heresy', I do not assert that such beliefs were held only by the Manicheans. Certainly, Augustine is addressing philosophical and theological beliefs that are held by a variety of perspectives,

"It is clear that book 12 does have a role to play in the effort to redeem the text of Genesis in the eyes of the Manichaeans, an enterprise enhanced by the use in the opening paragraph of the book of a Biblical text that had special meaning for this group. . ."[18] (227). Initially, it seems that Kotzé presents Augustine's discussion of a controversial text as simply another act of diversification. Augustine uses a familiar text to relate to his audience. However, Kotzé soon changes this image. Augustine introduces the first chapter of Genesis, not just as a point of discussion, but rather a foundation for an assault on the Manicheans. Kotzé is careful not to label the change of Augustine's tone as 'Manichean Bashing'[19], however she does state that there is a significant change in the text. She states:

> We find the pastoral tone of the previous paragraphs gradually making place once again for a more polemical approach, though still not what I would call 'Manichee-bashing'. Augustine argues patiently and laboriously, of with great emotion, but the aim clearly remains 'to heal heretics' rather than 'to destroy them.' The fact that the last issue the monumental *Confessions* focuses on is the elimination of the Manichaean error constitutes one of the strongest foundations for my argument that the work may primarily intended as a subtle protreptic aimed at a Manichaean audience.[20] (236)

Kotzé's interpretation of the final two books does not present Augustine as a feared inquisitor seeking to defeat the plague of Manichaeism. However, Kotzé does seem to

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including some Christians of the time. However, for the sake of simplicity, and fairness to Kotzé's approach (as she does not specifically mention other perspectives) I will summarize these beliefs as 'Manichean'.

[18]Ibid, 227.

[19]She does ascribe this term to James O'Donnell's 1992 work, *Augustine's Confessions*. Although Kotzé does not advocate Augustine being abusive toward the Manicheans, there are at least similar positions that do.

[20]Ibid.

suggest that Augustine does return to his rhetoric past, introducing a formal debate to his Manichean reader. The text does support Kotzé's claim. Consider Augustine's thoughts in XIII.30.45, when he states:

> I understood that there are certain men to whom your works are displeasing. They say that you were compelled by necessity to make many of those works, such as the fabric of the heavens and the arrangement of the stars. . .Madmen say these things, for they do not see your works by your Spirit and do not recognize you in them.

It should be quite obvious that Augustine is writing in response to the Manichean heresy. Although it could be debated whether calling the Manichees 'madmen' (insani) is really a patient act of polemics, Kotzé does seem to be correct in her claim about some of the content found in Books XII and XIII.

It should also be noted that Kotzé's assertion above provides a glimpse of her final conclusion. Notice the language of the final sentence. She seems to indicate that the *Confessions* were 'primarily' intended for a Manichean audience. Throughout the text, Augustine does actively engage the Manicheans. From his joining and eventual departure from the sect in the biographical books to his comments on the purpose of creation, he is intentionally seeking engagement with the Manicheans. To this extent, it is clear that Kotzé is correct. However, it is a much bolder statement to assert that the *Manichees* were the intended audience. I will return to this claim in a critique of her approach later in this chapter.

Robert O'Connell similarly asserts that the final Books serve to address the Manichean heresy. He states in *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of the soul* that:

> The Manichee notion made man a fragment of the divine substance; it makes creation in its turn a divine strategy to recapture these sparks of divine Light, imprisoned in matter. In this view, one can scarcely confess what Augustine does in the opening the final book of his *Confessions*: the soul must be known at least partially by its contrast with God. . .Augustine is at pains throughout the early portions of Book XII to lay to rest once and for all the fundamental Manichee contention and its corollaries.[21] (158,159)

When discussing the exegesis of Genesis as a type of refutation, it is important to note and reflect on another Augustinian text. Specifically, I believe that *On Genesis* provides significant support to viewing the texts as a refutation of the Manicheans. Augustine attempted at least five examinations of the Genesis creation. In 389, he completed *De Genesis contra Manichaeos*. Between the Refutation commentary and his efforts in the *Confessions* (397-401) he attempted a literal commentary (*De Genesis ad litteram liber unus imperfectus*). Augustine's efforts in exploring *Genesis* continued in *Ge Genesi ad Litteram* (416) and finally in Book XI of *City of God*. While Augustine's subject matter and focus varies from text to text, a careful observer would note that Augustine's initial endeavor into Genesis was established as a tool of refutation. He introduces the text as such when he states:

> If the Manichees were to choose the sort of people they meant to deceive, I too would also choose the appropriate words with which to answer them. But since they are hunting down both the well-educated with their writings and the uneducated with their erroneous ways, and while promising them the truth are striving to turn them away from the truth, it is not with elegant and well-turned phrases that they are to be convicted of teaching nonsense, but with the evidence of reality.[22] (1.1.1)

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[21]Robert O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of the Soul* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1969).

[22]Augustine. *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees,* ed. John Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (New City: Hyde Park, 2002).

Because of the relatively small amount of time between the completion of De Genesis contra Manichaeos and the *Confessions* (less than 10 years), it could be assumed that some of Augustine's work in Books XII and XIII stem from his previous refutation of the Manichees. At the very least, there seems to be some significant historical and contextual evidence that supports Kotzé's assertions about the intentions behind the final two books of the text.

A Critique of the Previous Two Approaches to Books XII and XIII

As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, it seems clear that both approaches to the *Genesis* discussion of Books XII and XIII are rather convincing. Kotzé's claims about the text as a refutation of the Manichean heresy are significantly supported by key passages in the *Confessions* as well as Augustine's previous works on *Genesis*. McMahon's and Vaught's efforts suggest that Augustine leads the reader to a state of peace and rest. This assertion too seems supported by segments of the text such as XIII.35.50 which states, "O Lord God, give us peace, for you have given all things to us, the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, the peace without an evening."[23] The act of giving is presented in a perfect active tense. God has already given this peace, and now Augustine encourages the reader to revel in it. With all the support the *Confessions* provides these approaches, it may seem difficult to critique them. However, as I hope to show in this second section of this chapter, there are some important weaknesses with each approach that must be brought to light.

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[23]"Domine deus, pacem da nobis -- omnia enim praestitisti nobis -- pacem quietis, pacem sabbati, pacem sine vespera."

I will begin this section with a critique of Kotzé's exegesis as a type of refutation. In her efforts, Kotzé presents the bold claim that the primary purpose of the *Confessions* is to serve as a "subtle protreptic aimed at a Manichaean audience."[24] Kotzé's language in her assertion is of importance. She asserts that the intended audience of the text is the Manicheans. While the Manichean heresy does play a significant role in Augustine's biography as well as his meditations on Genesis, it seems to be a bit of a reach to consider the text to be aimed specifically at the Manicheans. If one can accept the assertions made in the first chapter of this project, it would seem evident that Augustine uses the early books of the text to engage many different types of perspectives. And while many of these perspectivess do not have the prominence that Manichaeism does in the text, there are several, such as Platonism, that are featured frequently in Augustine's efforts.

When examining the *Retractations,* further doubt is cast over Kotzé's claim. When discussing an effort against a specific philosophy/heresy (*Contra Academicos* and *Genesis contra Manichaeosa* among others), Augustine introduces the text as an act of refutation.[25] The *Retractations*' examination of the *Confessions* is, of course, missing any confirmation of a refutation. Augustine states:

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[24]Kotzé, SSA.

[25]For example when introducing his three books against the academics he states, "Before my baptism I wrote, first of all, against the Academics or about the Academics, so that, with the most forceful reasons possible, I might remove from my mind--because they were disturbing me-- their arguments which in many men instill a despair of finding truth." When discussing *Genesis contra Manichaeosa* Augustine states, "I showed that God is the supreme Good and the unchangeable Creator of all changeable natures and that no nature or substance, insofar as it is a nature and substance, is an evil, was intentionally directed against the Manichaeans…"

> The thirteen books of my *Confessions* praise the just and good God for my evil and good acts, and lift up the understanding and affection of men to Him. At least, as far as I am concerned, they had this effect on me while I was writing them and they continue to have it when I am reading them. What others think about them is a matter for them to decide. Yet, I know that they have given and continue to give pleasure to many of my brethren.[26]

Augustine refers to his God, himself, his fellow Christians, but there is no mention of the Manicheans in this introduction. Compounded with Kotzé's own assertions at the beginning of her project[27], it would seem that her hypothesis that the text is solely intended as a Manichean protreptic is flawed.

Besides the final conclusion, there are further issues concerning the exegesis as refutation that must be considered. The more obvious issues are the points established by Vaught and McMahon. Augustine does seem to use the exegesis of *Genesis* as an expression of peace and rest. Books XII and XIII are an upward movement (XIII.9.10), a perceiving of the Trinity (XIII.11.12), an affirmation of God's providence (XIII.25.38), and a reiteration of the eternal rest found in God (XIII.37.52). With so much attention focused on seeing things through the divine spirit (XIII.31.46) it does not seem appropriate to say that the final two books of the text are intended to only be a refutation of the Manichees. Further, I would argue that it is not proper to consider the final two books solely as a refutation of *any*

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[26]Augustine. *The Retractions*, trans. Maryline Bogan. (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1968). http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=98659573 (Accessed July 3, 2007).

[27]She states, "I do not disagree with those scholars who have over the years referred to Augustine's fellow-Christians as those addressed in the *Confessions*. They will, however, have to concede also the potential Manichaean reader constitutes an important segment of Augustine's target audience." (88)

perspective. The rhetorical method of Augustine's efforts is far more capacious and elegant.

While the assertions made by Vaught and McMahon prove problematic for understanding the final two books as an act of refutation, Kotzé's efforts challenge the possibility that the final two books are a climax of rest. McMahon establishes a connection between Augustine's discussion of rest and scripture. McMahon notes the significant increase in references to scripture between Books XI and XIII[28]. This repeating referral intimately connects the *Confessions* to scripture. McMahon describes the woven relationship when he states:

> The whole volume, like every Christian work, aspires to the condition of Scripture, as it were. Its final twenty-seven chapters are "closer to Scripture" than any other part of the *Confessions*, both in their literal texture and Augustine's explicit claim to divine inspiration. Similarly, throughout the volume Augustine aspires to the closest possible awareness of God's presence in his life and in his ongoing prayer.[29] (33)

McMahon interprets Augustine's efforts as a striving for divine closeness, the result of which is eternal rest. He directly asserts his conclusion at the end of his project when he states, "The 'restless heart' of its very first chapter, the heart that searches so insistently throughout the prayer of the *Confessions*, comes to rest. . ."[30] (147). McMahon's interpretation of Book XIII is one of ultimate culmination. Augustine spends the first twelve books of the text seeking and reaching, only to find rest in the

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[28]McMahon states that there are 120 Biblical references in XI, 169 in XII, and 365 in XIII (30, SSA).

[29]McMahon, SSA.

[30]McMahon, SSA.

final parts of the text. In this light, Book XIII is an act of celebration, the speaker rejoicing in the found peace.

However, consider McMahon's previous comments in light of Kotzé's exploration of XII.24.35, a segment of the text well in the final twenty seven chapters of the text. She states:

> It must be clear that this thoughtful analysis offered in an attitude of humility cannot but be designed to argue with the Manichaeans. In this instance we have clear evidence that the issue was a point of discussion between them and Augustine. . .thus, this was certainly another of those aspects of the Genesis narrative that Augustine had to explain in a way acceptable to the Manichaeans if he hoped to succeed in convincing them of the value and validity of this text and the whole of the old testament.[31] (238)

Again, Kotzé provides another powerful contention, advocating a refutation-style interpretation of the text. In a segment of text where McMahon's version of Augustine the speaker is 'seeing the firmament of heaven (XIII.32.47), Kotzé's vision of Augustine's efforts show the Author using an *ex nihilo* reference (XIII.33.48) to touch on the Manichean views of creation. At the very least, one must wonder if Augustine is capable of finding eternal rest while establishing a well-grounded argument against a heresy.

One could argue that it is possible to understand the text as presenting the exegesis of Genesis as both a telos and as a refutation simultaneously, or, at the very least, assume that the approaches are not exclusive. In fact, the approach I propose advocates an incorporation of both approaches. It seems that the fundamental problem for both the efforts of Kotzé and McMahon is each author's claims of exclusivity. Kotzé concludes that the Manicheans are the primary audience of the

[31]Kotzé, SSA.

text, while McMahon provides no real allowance for the passages of text that are clearly directed at refuting the Manicheans. Further, neither author significantly engages the Platonic imagery or even the natural images that appear in the text. I argue that an appropriate approach to the Genesis exegesis should recognize the plethora of ideas woven into the last two books of the text. I believe that understanding the exegesis as a contemplation or meditation does this.

A Third Alternative: the Exegesis as a Synthetic Retrospective

Understanding the discussion of *Genesis* as an act of contemplation begins by drawing key truths from both of the previous approaches. In line with McMahon's description, the final two books should be understood as a type of spiritual climax. As the previous two chapters of this project indicate, Augustine creates a path of ascension. The reader is introduced to a sign and, through a process of elimination, is exposed to that sign's signified object. The reader is provided the opportunity to witness God, and the final two books detail the results of that encounter. The final two books are a type of telos, but they are not only a vision of peaceful rest.

Likewise, understanding the exegesis as an act of retrospection encompasses part of Kotzé's approach to the text. Both approaches hold that Augustine utilizes the final books of the text to return to previously introduced, examined, and possibly refuted perspectives. However, unlike Kotzé's focus, this final position assumes that there are a plethora of perspectives considered in the final two books. This examination provides a unique opportunity for the reader. By returning to a reflection on a series of perspectives, the reader is awarded the opportunity to consider

the value and importance of each. This contemplation is not just an endeavor of refutation, but also one of integration and redemption. By perceiving the exegesis in these terms, the text becomes adamantly affirmative, rather than merely negative.

Throughout the final two books of the text, Augustine provides opportunities to return to previous biographical and philosophical events. Consider Augustine's reference to the consumption of fruit and its lack of spiritual satisfaction found in XIII.26.39. He draws the reader back to a previous biographical event. He states:

> But they who find delight in such fruits are fed by them, but those whose God is in their belly do not find delight in them. For in those who offer such things, the fruit is not what they give but with what sort of mind they give it. Hence I see plainly why that man who served God and not his own belly rejoiced, and I rejoice greatly with him. (XIII.26.39)

Notice the key themes of this passage. Agents attempt to find satisfaction in 'fruit'[32]. The 'fruit' does not satisfy, leaving only the man who has fully integrated God into himself with a full belly. I argue that Augustine uses this imagery of fruit, consumption, and satisfaction to draw the reader back to the pear theft of Book II. Notice that the young Augustine procures the fruit but is not satisfied by its taste. Further, the young Augustine 'gives' the fruit to the swine with improper intentions. The result is a weak and undernourished soul. When Augustine uses familiar signs, he allows the reader of Book XIII to return to return to the events, ideas, and signs of Book II.

By drawing the reader back to the previous segments of the text, Augustine not only reintroduces the various signs again, but also the nexus of possible signified

[32]I fully understand that Augustine is not speaking about physical fruit. However, his discussion of spiritual fruit and connection to the 'belly' do draw the reader back to the sour and bitter fruit (both physical and spiritual) of the pear theft.

objects. By returning to the garden of Book II, Augustine returns the reader to Cicero, Virgil, Plotinus, the Manicheans, and the Academics. Augustine prompts this return after the reader has transcended these signified objects and encountered God. The result, as I suggest above, is that the reader is forced to incorporate, refute, or redeem each of the possible signified objects.

Kotzé's contentions should make the act of refutation clear. Augustine allows the reader to encounter the Manicheans and promptly attempts to disprove the heresy. The reader returns to the Manicheans as a possible signified object, only to immediately reject them. Again, it must be stressed that refutation is not the only process that occurs in this return. It is possible that the true signified object incorporates and redeems lesser signified objects. I will first consider the process of redemption. Consider the writings of Virgil, one of the possible signified objects found near the pear theft of Book II. Virgil brilliantly describes the beauty of nature. At the beginning of the *Georgics* he sings:

> O most radiant lights of the firmament, that guide through heaven the gliding year, O Liber and bounteous Ceres, if by your grace Earth changed Chaonia's acorn for the rich corn ear, and blended draughts of Achelous with new found grapes, and you fauns, the rustics' ever present gods (come trip it, Fauns, Dryad maids withal!) 'tis of your bounties I sing" (Book I 5-14).

Compare the Virgil passage with one of Augustine's own discussions of creation. He states, "All things are beautiful because you made them, but you who made all things are inexpressibly more beautiful" (XIII.20.28). Notice that Augustine, like Virgil, acknowledges the beauty of the physical world. However, Augustine directs the reader toward a different source of the beauty. Virgil frequently points to the Roman pantheon as masters of creation. The passage above

identifies several supernatural creatures. Augustine's examination of creation focuses on a single divine being. Further, Augustine establishes the cause of creation's beauty. Creation is only beautiful because it is created by the ultimate being of beauty. Virgil's assertions about nature revealing a supernatural beauty are correct. However, the supernatural beauty is not a group of sex-starved goat men. Augustine moves the focus away from a number of unknowns to a single 'I am'. I argue that this transformation is an act of redemption. Augustine presents a sign that previously indicated a series of illusions and redirected it toward the true signified object. This is different than his treatment of the Manichean heresy. Where the Manicheans were rejected outright, Augustine's engagement of Virgil is more pastoral. He does not want to deter from the search for the creator, but rather direct the reader toward the true source.

I further argue that Augustine not only uses the return to previous signs as an opportunity to redeem them, but also show how some signified objects can be integrated into Christian thought. O'Connell provides a strong example supporting this position. One of O'Connell's major goals in his examination of the *Confessions* is to reveal Augustine's use of and dependence on Platonic ideals and philosophies. As I have already discussed in Chapter Three of this project, Augustine seems to indicate that the Platonists did have a solid vision of an absolute creator being. However, Augustine critiqued the absence of a Christ figure. The Platonists could glimpse the goal, but had no understanding of how to reach it. When Platonism as signified object, which is encountered because of the return to the signified nexus, is held in relation to the Divine as signified object, a revelation occurs. O'Connell concludes his

examination by stating, "The foregoing examination of his sensitivity to the various strands in Plotinian thinking is intended to show, not that he succumbed to it, but how that evident capitulation can be accounted for. . ."[33] (184). I argue that when Augustine uses descriptions of goodness (XIII.31.46) or the Divine's eternality (XIII.38.53), he utilizes a Platonic concept in Christian context. Augustine redeems the Platonists by bringing their vision of God into a relationship with the figure of Christ.

Up to this point, I have only focused on a single return found in Book XIII. It must be stressed that the final two books of the text is filled with reminders of events found on the reader's journey through the text. When Augustine describes the soul reaching for God (XIII.9.10), he draws the reader back to the momentary vision of Book VII, as well as his experience at Ostia. Consider the similarities between the following three passages, the first found in Book XIII and the latter found in VII and IX, respectively. Augustine states:

> By your gift we are enkindled, and we are borne upwards. We glow with inward fire, and we go on. We ascend steps within the heart and we sing a gradual psalm. By your fire, by your good fire, we glow with inward fire, and we go on, for we go upwards to the peace of Jerusalem, for I am gladdened in those who said to me, we will go into the house of the Lord. There will good will find us a place, so that we may desire nothing further but to abide therein forever. (XIII.9.10)

He describes his experience in Book VII as:

> It was not a common light, plain to all flesh, nor a greater light, as it were, of the same kind, as though that light would shine many, many times more bright, and by its great power fill the whole universe. . . When first I knew you, you took me up, so that I might see that there was something to see, but that I was not yet one able to see it. You beat back my feeble sight, sending

[33]O'Connell, SSA.

> down your beams most powerfully upon me, and I trembled with love and awe. (VII.10.16)

Finally, the vision at Ostia:

> We proceeded step by step through all bodily things up to that heaven whence shine the sun and moves and the stars down upon the earth. We ascended higher, yet by means of inward thought and discourse and admiration of your works, and we came up to our own minds. We transcended them, so that we attained to the region of abundance that never fails. . . (IX 10.24)

Each of these passages describes an ascent toward the divine. By describing his search for God as an ascent in Book XIII, he returns the reader again to the sign of the garden. This again allows the reader to return to the previous uses of the garden sign (in this case the garden as a tool for ascent) and reflect on that old sign through the eyes of an individual who has encountered the true signified object. Further, it allows the reader to reflect on the previous attempts at ascent and compare them to the events in Book XIII. The pre-conversion ascent found in VII is held up to and contrasted with the ascent prior to Monica's death in IX[34], which is held up and contrasted to the description of the ascent that occurs in XIII. Three different ascents, three different results, three different points in Augustine's life are presented before the reader. This allows the reader to reflect on each one individually, as well as their relationships to each other.

Again, it must be stressed that this process of reflection and retrospection occurs throughout the final books. Augustine comments on becoming a 'babe in Christ' (XIII.18.23) which leads the reader back to Augustine's description of his early childhood in Book I. Augustine further states, "You know, O Lord, how you

[34]Both of these ascensions occur prior to the discovery of the true signified object.

clothed men with skins, when by sin they became subject to death. . .” (XIII.15.16). This mention of succumbing to sin brings the reader back to how young Augustine “loved to go down to death” (II.4.9), while the inclusion of clothing directs the reader to the divine instruction to “put you on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh. . .” (VIII.12.29). Images of community, faith, nature, and humanity’s striving for the divine permeate the final Book of the text, and each reference directs the reader back to a previous segment of the text. Carl Vaught provides a gripping discussion of the images of community found in XIII and its relation to previous portions of the text. Vaught suggests that the allegorical community of Man with God (as the pre-fallen Adam and Eve exist in communion with the Divine) returns the reader to Augustine’s relationship with his nursemaids (I.6.7), the group of friends that caused Augustine to steal the pears (II.8.16), the community of the Church after the conversion, and the mystical experience with his mother.[35] Vaught’s final comments about the text suggest further acts of retrospection. He states, “Augustine’s final words in the *Confessions* point to the journey from creation to fulfillment, and they take us back once more to the first page where he frames his introduction to the confessional enterprise. . .” (226).[36]

In terms of the project so far, Augustine uses Book XIII to create a retrospective that puts a set of parts in relation to a whole, signs in relation to signified. By doing so, he simultaneously empowers and limits each of the signs he encounters. This allows the reader to reflect on previous assertions, emotions, and

[35]Vaught, SSA.

[36]Vaught, SSA.

conclusions. He brings the reader back to the intellectual and spiritual nexus of the previous garden events, allowing the reader to reflect on the previous signified objects as an agent who has encountered the Divine. In some cases, as Kotzé seems to suggest, this activity leads the reader to reject some of the old signified objects. However, it also can lead the reader to adapt and integrate some of these old signified objects into his current ideology. The fatal flaw of Platonism is given a correction through an integration of the Christ.

For a project focused on the garden sign, it may appear that this final analysis contains relatively few connections to the garden image. This conclusion is improper for several reasons. First, as suggested above, Augustine regularly returns the reader to the events of the pear theft in the Book II garden, his conversion in the Book VIII garden and the Vision at Ostia in the Book IX garden. However, beyond that I would argue that there is the implication of a fourth garden in Book XIII. Augustine concludes Book XIII with a series of chapters focused on rest. Chapter 35 requests that God grant the peace of the Sabbath (the day of rest). Chapter 37 requests that God rests in 'us'. And the final Chapter of the text proclaims that God's rest is found in himself. All of these references to divine rest point to Genesis 2:1-2. Immediately after this passage is the introduction of Adam, Eve, and the Garden of Eden. God's moment of rest leads to a blessed, innocent community, a community found in a garden. Augustine's exegesis of Genesis takes the reader back to the entrance of the Garden of Eden. By 'putting on the Christ', both Augustine and reader enter into the final garden. This is not a garden of rest, per se, but rather a garden of community in which creation actively reflects, contemplates, and waits on the divine.

Before moving toward an analysis of other unity theories, I find it necessary to reiterate the progress of the project so far. Chapter one of the text introduced the first two garden signs. In this chapter, I suggested that the text introduced a series of possible signified objects that were intimately connected to the garden sign. Chapter Three suggested that after Augustine introduced the garden sign he undertook an analysis of the various possible signified objects. The result was a 'stripping-away' of many of the possible signified objects, with the reader finally being introduced to Augustine's ultimate signified object, God. The third chapter of this project proposed that Augustine leads the reader through a process of reflection and retrospection in which the previous possible signified objects were reevaluated. The result was a transformation of these possible signified objects. Some were rejected completely. Some were adapted to properly relate to the signified object.

In terms of unity theory, the presence of the garden eliminates the presence of textual gaps. The biographical books point to the philosophical books, which point to the exegesis on Genesis. In turn, the exegesis of Genesis points to both the philosophical and the biographical books. The result is a deeply woven text that depends completely on each of its segments.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Garden as Unity in Relation to Contemporary Scholarship

In these four books I have discussed with whatever slight ability I could muster, not the kind of man I am, for I have many defects, but the kind of man he ought to be who seeks to labor in sound doctrine, which is Christian doctrine, not only for himself, but also for others.

—St. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana[1]

The first four chapters of this project propose a unique reading of the *Confessions*. I argue that by examining a specific sign in the text, a reader can observe a robust three stage development. Augustine uses the early books of the text to establish a specific sign, with a variety of possible signified objects. He then begins the delicate task of evaluating the possible signified objects. He concludes this second action by establishing a definitive signified object, God. Augustine then returns the reader's focus to the sign, which can now be held in relation to the signified object. This not only enriches the sign by confirming its relation to the signified object, but also allows the reader to evaluate the previously rejected possible signified object. Assessing these other signified objects allows the reader to reject those objects that irreversibly conflict with the signified object[2] or to refine objects that are missing key elements[3].

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[1] Augustine. *On Christian Doctrine*, trans D.W. Robertson (Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1958).

[2]Such as the Manichean philosophy.

[3]Such as the writings of Cicero and the Platonists.

This approach lends itself well to expressing the overall unity of the text. A proper discussion of the cohesive nature of *Confessions* should accomplish three general goals. As stated in the introduction of this project, the goal of any unity theory of the *Confessions* should be to exhibit the coherence of the work textually, thematically, and hermeneutically. The theory needs to bridge the 'natural gaps' in the text. It should also engage Augustine's utilization of a variety of religious, cultural, and philosophical images and themes. Finally, it should address Augustine's relationship with his reader; the way the reader is led to group the parts of the work in relation to the whole.

I believe that the theory I present engages and satisfies the three issues surrounding the unity of the text. By tracing the introduction and development of the garden sign throughout the text, we are able to unite the *Confessions* and examine Augustine's influences. This fifth chapter focuses on relating this theory to similar contemporary Augustinian scholarship, a significant amount of which addresses the unity of the text. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I have grouped recent efforts into three categories. Each section of this chapter will begin by examining key thinkers from each grouping. Doing this serves several functions. By reflecting on these previous endeavors, I can clearly identify the breadth and nature of current efforts. I will then critique the specific thinkers and provide comments on the whole category. While many unity theory projects successfully contribute to the existing dialogue, there are some efforts that are fundamentally flawed in their approaches to the text. Nonetheless, I find that each of the scholars I examine provide key insights

to the text. Instead, I hope to show how my project can complement the efforts of others or, at the very least, bring to light and correct minor problems.

The first group examines Augustine's introduction and progression of a particular world view, philosophy, and/or theology. In general, this group attempts to confirm the textual unity by examining the development of a specific school of thought or religious/philosophical project in the text. Examples of such scholarly projects include Kotzé's work with Augustine's criticisms of Manichaeism or O'Connell's work on the *Confessions*' Platonic sympathies. The second group focuses on the structure of the text. Scholars using this type of analysis confirm the unity of the text by identifying key literary characteristics such as "typological parallels"[4] or "dimensional frameworks"[5]. The final group details the progression of specific signs and images. In a process very similar to my own project, these endeavors track Augustine's use and reuse of specific images throughout the text.

Before fully undertaking this final stage of the project, it is necessary to provide two minor caveats. First, some of the authors I examine do not explicitly state that their efforts concern the unity of the text. In some cases, such as the work of Carol Ramage, the project predates the formal title of 'unity theory'. In others, such as the work of Carl Vaught, the author is engaged in a larger and more complex project and the affirmation of the cohesive nature of the *Confessions* supports a broader goal. This being said, the set of readings offered bear directly on textual

[4]David Leigh, "Augustine's *Confessions* as a Circular Journey," *Thought* 60, no. 236 (1985):73.

[5]Carl Vaught, *The Journey Toward God in Augustine's Confessions: Books I-VI*. (Albany: State University of New York, 2003).

unity. Second, it could be argued that most of the scholars examined in this chapter belong in multiple categories. James Siebach, for example, describes Augustine's use of "a series of signs which, taken together, constitute an indubitable sign signifying 'Deus Est'"[6] (94).And yet, I will explore Siebach's efforts when I engage the structure group and not the signs group. It is not my intent to create rigid groupings of contemporary scholarship. Instead, I have established these general divisions to streamline thought and to focus my assessment of the Author's main intent[7]. With these disclaimers presented, and the framework of this final chapter articulated, I move my discussion to the first group: unity through Augustine's use of distinct perspectives.

Textual Unity Through Examination of Augustine's Use of Distinct Authors and Texts

As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the three general groupings of contemporary unity scholarship are a loose amalgamation of several different approaches to the text. The first group consists of scholarly efforts that center on making a specific claim about Augustine's ideology or a specific philosophical/social/religious position. These essays typically begin with the author making a claim about Augustine's influences and then tracing evidence of those sources throughout the *Confessions*. Previous chapters of this project have already introduced some scholars, such as Annemaré Kotzé, that adopt this approach to the

[6]James Siebach, "Rhetorical Strategies in Book One of Augustine's *Confessions," Augustinian Studies* 26 no. 93 (1995).

[7]Sienbach, for example, does briefly mention Augustine's use of signs. However, the main argument centers on the use of a proof of God's existence as structural support for the text.

text. In Kotzé's case, she begins her project by assuming that the text is a protreptic directed at the Manicheans[8]. She states

> Even here I narrow the scope of my research down to two distinct but interrelated areas: 1) To what extent does the *Confessions* conform to the standards of a specific genre. . . and 2) to what extent is this protreptic aimed at specific segment of the intended audience of the work, the Manichaens.[9] (2)

Under these assumptions, Kotzé weaves through the text identifying and evaluating passages that support her conclusion. An excellent example of Kotzé's tactics can be seen in her analysis of IX.4.8[10]. She asserts:

> It is the Manichaeans Augustine wishes could be listening and looking on and not any other group or even the whole world as the statement at the beginning of the passage might have seemed to indicate. Moreover, he assumes that if they could in some way hear and see his emotional reaction without him knowing that they were there, they would be convinced of the sincerity of his emotions and not assume that he was staging an act for their benefit. (100)

Engaging Kotzé's comments is a challenge. She makes a very astute connection between Augustine's engagement of the Psalms at Cassiciacum to his lingering sorrow stemming from the Manicheans. At the same time, she identifies the passage as responding *only* to the Manicheans. Notice her language in the first sentence. According to Kotzé, Augustine desires no other group, no other person in the world to observe his encounter. The passage above, as well as Kotzé's comments described in

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[8]It is necessary to assert again that none of the scholars I evaluate assert that their method is the 'only' way to perceive the text. Kotzé immediately directs the reader to the work of O'Connell and others who differ from her position.

[9]Annemaré Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (London: Brill, 2004).

[10]"vellem, tu alicubi iuxta essent tunc, et me nesciente, quod ibi essent, intuerentur faciem meam et audirent voces meas, quando legi quartum psalmum in illo tunc otio, quid de me fecerit ille psalmus."

Chapter Four of this project, describes segments of text that are focused toward the Manicheans. To this extent, I agree with Kotzé's conclusions. Clearly, Augustine intends the Manicheans to be part of his readership. The danger of Kotzé's contentions concerns her general thesis that these passages are 'for Manichean eyes only', or that they can be understood *only* by individuals familiar with the Manicheans. In a way, this approach does provide some unifying structure to the text. One can easily trace the presence and influence of the Manicheans throughout the biographical, philosophical, and theological segments of the *Confessions*. The work is united because it, as a whole, is a protreptic directed at the Manicheans. Yet, it is possible that such a supposition can actually fragment the text. Consider the core of Kotzé's position; there are sections of the text that can only be fully understood by a specific audience. If a reader does not belong to that specific audience, the restricted passage becomes at best a mysterious argument and at worse a literary void. The issue becomes more complicated if one assumes that there are many of these ideological themes running through the text. As stated in the earlier chapters of this project, it is not difficult to identify passages that are influenced by or directed toward Platonists, Christians, Academics, Manicheans, and poets. Following the letter of Kotzé's argument, could a reader not conclude that Augustine intends portions of the text to speak only to a single group, and not anyone else? If so, the *Confessions* would seem to lose its unified nature and become fractions of text. Part of the text would speak to the Christians. Part of the text would speak to the Platonists. Part of the text would speak to the Academics. The only reader that would truly grasp the entirety of the work would be an individual who was intimately

connected to all of the aforementioned groups. But, any person who was intimately aware of all the schools of thought would not be someone who was exclusively committed to and only aware of one school of thought.

Examining a second, similar ideological examination of the text confirms this danger of separation. Carol Ramage details the striking similarities between the *Confessions* and the *Aeneid*. She states:

> We have isolated the following series of elements as being common to the careers of both Aeneas and Augustine: a stormy sea-journey, literal or metaphorical, a period of shipwreck in Carthage and extrication therefrom, the demonstrated capacity to sever oneself from beloved women, the support of a mother who intercedes directly with God in one's behalf, descent into the realms of memory, and finally, a series of oracular revelations of God's will. Each of these elements Augustine reworks in the *Confessions*; he preserves their energy, their effectiveness as rhetorical foils. . . Just as Vergil rewrote the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* for his own ends, Augustine is, in a sense, rewriting the Aeneid. He is the new Vergil. But at the same time, since it is his own story he is telling, he is the new Aeneas.[11] (58)

Like Kotzé, Ramage identifies portions of the text that affirm her conclusion. In this case, the reader is presented with evidence that Augustine was influenced by Virgil. And like Kotzé, Ramage's analysis does seem to lend itself well to confirming the unity of the text. Using Ramage's conclusions, the whole text becomes a reinterpretation or retelling of the *Aeneid*. Ramage is not as restrictive in her claims when compared to Kotzé. Ramage does not say that portions of the text are intended solely for readers that are familiar with the *Aeneid*. However, she does not directly account for or engage segments of the text that do not confirm her position. She does

[11]Carol Ramage, "The Confessions of St. Augustine: The Aeneid Revisited," *Pacific Coast Philology*. 5 (1970): 54-60.

provide leeway for Augustine's 'mysterious' Christian experience[12], but does so only in vague terms such as "Augustine's truth". The other ideological influences become little more than footnotes or variations of the *Aeneid*. Again, the reader encounters a type of fragmentation, albeit different from the type presented when examining Kotzé. Kotzé's project leads to a fragmented *Confessions* in which segments of the work are *only* intended for specific perspectives. Ramage establishes a text that contains elements that have little to no relevance to the overarching theme of the work. Neither scholar successfully describes the continuity of the work, which proves problematic when describing the text's unity.

Further concerns arise when Ramage continues her analysis by stating:

> Acknowledging the deliberate, even calculated aspect of Augustine's use of Vergil, we must not overlook the very personal implications of the technique. I know of no more profoundly 'self-centered' book, after all, than the *Confessions*: none that is more obviously written out of the needs of the writer himself. The act of uniting himself imaginatively with Aeneas, or in another sense, measuring himself against Aeneas, might have its rewards for Augustine in the form of reassurance and energy in a period of severe testing. (58)

Again, it seems that Ramage has described an interesting truth about the nature of the text. The *Confessions* is, in a fashion, very 'self-centered'. Augustine recounts the events of 'his' life, the struggles with 'his' sin, and 'his' revelations about memory and time. However, if the text is a work of self-gratification and self-assurance, then the relationship between Augustine and the reader is diminished. If Augustine's primary

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[12]Besides serving any 'self-centered' needs, Ramage also concludes that the Confessions serve as a bridge between the Roman population and Christianity. This project affirms that assumption, as it shows a movement from the nexus of possible signified objects to a single signified object. However, Ramage describes Christianity as 'remaining mysterious'. This seems to indicate that there is limited development of Christianity found in the text, an assumption with which I disagree.

intent is to establish a connection between himself and Aeneas, the reader of the text becomes a silent observer or even an afterthought.

While I believe that Kotzé and Ramage each correctly identify elements of Augustine's ideological influences in the *Confessions*, I am not convinced by their conclusions. Kotzé's firm claim that portions of the text are directed only at the Manicheans unnecessarily divides the text, while Ramage's conclusion creates passages of irrelevant text and reduces the role of the reader. Further, I think that these types of analysis indicate a deeper concern for any ideological unity theory. When focusing on a specific influence on the text, one must avoid the fragmentation scenario described above. One possible solution is to establish parallels between ideological influences. The work of Robert O'Connell provides a solid example of this type of practice. In his essay, "The Enneads and St. Augustine's Image of Happiness" O'Connell begins his project in a similar fashion to Ramage and Kotzé. He introduces a specific perspective, Platonism, and attempts to connect it to the *Confessions*. He states:

> Examination of certain parallels in Augustine's work on the one hand, and Plotinus' on the other, reveals not only the same language, but, more decisively in our view, the same pattern and cohesion of image and thought-connection at work on both sides: these 'parallel patterns', we have suggested, raise at least a very strong presumption that quite early in his career Augustine manifests the influence not only of the Enneads. . . [but] very probably others as well.[13] (130)

Initially, O'Connell's effort seems similar to the two positions previously observed in this chapter. His preliminary focus seems to only be on Augustine's Platonic

[13]Robert O'Connell, "The Enneads and St. Augustine's Image of Happiness," Vigiliae Christianae 17 no. 3 (1963): 129-164

influences. However, O'Connell soon introduces a second influence, scripture. He continues by exploring the relationship between the Bible and the Platonists in VII, 13-15. He asserts:

> Here he means to show he is clearly aware both of the agreement and disagreement- *ibi legi. . . ibi no legi*- between the *platonici* and the Bible. That fact alone is significant for it illustrates his method of reading Plotinus as well as the Bible. . . what strikes him most is the series of coincidences between the two. Of these coincidences, many are purely verbal to our modern eyes but they meant a great deal more to a *rhetor* educated in a predominately literary culture. (131)

By integrating Scripture and Christianity into his discussion, O'Connell drastically changes the focus of his effort. The project transforms into an evaluation of the relationship between two distinct perspectives[14]. For O'Connell, the *Confessions* serves as a culmination of a long term project in which Augustine attempts to establish a firm connection between Platonism and Christianity. As he states in his later work, *St. Augustine's Confessions*:

> The consonance between Plotinianism and Christianity spiritually understood is the positive burden of Augustine's early work; in *De Vera Religion* he shows pained awareness that the Neo-Platonists themselves do not seem to have appreciated this thesis. The *Confessions* represents, therefore, his heroic attempt to show that consonance again.[15] (18)

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[14]Admittedly, O'Connell does not 'completely' escape from the fragmentation trap. By focusing on two ideological influences he seems to ignore other possible authorities, such as Virgil. . I believe it would be an unfair critique of any project to demand that it address *all* of Augustine's ideological influences. However, a project should be able to partially engage other ideologies, or at the very least acknowledge their existence and relevance to the text. As shown in Chapter Four of this project, O'Connell's efforts do allow him to explore other influences, such as the Manicheans and Cicero.

[15]Robert O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of the Soul.* (Cambridge: Belknap 1969).

The last line of this passage clearly shows the heart of the project's thesis. O'Connell brings together the *Confessions*' Christian and Platonic elements and in doing so, presents a significant thesis on the unity of the text. It does not seem to directly conflict with any of the three criteria I establish at the beginning of this chapter. O'Connell engages several influences. Further, he establishes a firm connection between Augustine and his reader. He also presents a dialogue between the Christian and Platonic elements of the text which bridge the apparent gaps in the text.

However, O'Connell's focus on maintaining the integrated relationship between these two ideological influences leads to some significant problems with his position. O'Connell substitutes a simple unity, or even an identification, for what is best understood as a complex unity. In his discussion of Book VII, 13-27 O'Connell states:

> What features of the soul's situation in reality ground the appropriateness of that [the necessity of baptism] divine decree? The radical spirituality of Augustine's anthropology seems to offer none. Why should a sacramental rite like baptism or a temporal, bodily reality like the Incarnation be the universal and necessary way for the soul's return to its eternal home? Plotinus himself lived after that decree had been issued; his philosophic activity took place at Rome, the very heart of Christianity. What of him? (80)

Although O'Connell attempts to address these questions in his analysis of Book XIII, a significant issue lingers. In attempting to affirm the relationship between two perspectives, how does one address significant differences? How does one account for images and philosophical positions that are grounded in the works of Cicero or Virgil? Further, how does one address these differences in relation to the text? In O'Connell's project, he seems to dodge this difference by referring to Augustine's silence. O'Connell glosses over Augustine's contention that, "All of these writings of the

Platonists do not have. Their pages do not have this face of piety, the tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humbled heart. . ." (VII.21.27).[16][17] O'Connell is so focused on maintaining the connection between the two ideological positions that he fails to fully examine the differences. At its core, O'Connell's examination of the relationship between Platonism and Christianity is too narrowly focused. Augustine is far more inclusive in his efforts, drawing on pagans, poets, and academics.

In Chapter Three of this project I describe the Platonists as correctly perceiving a spiritual destination, a relationship with a divine creator, but lacking the means to arrive at that destination. This position affirms the connection between the two perspectives, but maintains their differences. Admittedly, it could be argued that I too leave my final conclusions about the significance of the differences between Platonism and Christianity vague. However, I contend that I do so to allow the reader of this project to draw his own conclusions. One must decide how relevant and important the omission of the Christ is to Augustine in his examination of Platonism.[18] Chapter Three of this project concludes that the difference is significant

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[16]O'Connell does call the comments in VII.21.27 "severe remarks" but further goes on to state that "never once does he [Augustine] say or imply that it is flatly impossible for such as Plato and Plotinus to 'arrive' at the vision. (80)

[17]hoc illae litterae non habent. non habent illae paginae vultum pietatis illius, lacrimas confessionis, sacrificium tuum, spiritum contribulatum, cor contritum et humiliatum, populi salutem, sponsam civitatem, arram spiritus sancti, poculum pretii nostril"

[18]A similar discussion could be had about Augustine's relationship to Cicero. As described in Chapter Three of this project, Augustine believes that Cicero, like the Platonists, is 'just' missing the figure of the Christ. I leave it to the reader as well to

enough to discount Platonism as the final signified object. While O'Connell does address the three criteria I establish at the beginning of this chapter, his effort eventually encounters problems because he tries too hard to maintain the identity of the relationship between two distinct ideological positions.

John Kenney adopts an approach that explores a set of perspectives. Like O'Connell, Kenney begins his project by acknowledging the similarities between Platonism and Christianity. He states:

> Augustine employs the books of the Platonists to sketch out the alliance of Athens and Jerusalem, of two sorts of monotheism. The enemy is the polytheism of Egypt. The *Confessions* are, in this respect, a record of a momentous confluence in late antique culture between Christian and pagan monotheism. The success of monotheism was the result, therefore, not of the efforts of Christianity and Judaism alone. It was the Athenian element in the Greco-Roman tradition, its pagan monotheism, which bore a share in this transition.[19] (55)

One could argue that Kenney's claims about the influence of pagan monotheism are stronger than any comments made by O'Connell. Yet, soon after establishing this strong relationship between the two ideologies, Kenney makes the following claim:

> The text offers a critical cognitive advance: the soul now grasps fully its own contingency, and this leads to the shocking recognitions that it has an external source. Moreover, that source is known through love and discovered to be the power of love that has drawn the soul to this very moment of discovery. That realization means that the source of the soul has, as it were, a metaphysical location sufficiently distinct from the soul to permit this expression. And it means, moreover that the God who loves the soul can reveal his existence in a mode that the soul can recognize. This aspect of the Augustinian account differs fundamentally from Plotianian contemplation. The Plotianian theism does not permit this sense of distance. . . (58)

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decide the significance of this omission.

[19]John Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Kenney maintains both relationship and difference between Christianity and Platonism. Further, he uses the dialogue between these two ideologies to focus the reader toward his intended examination. Kenney uses the similarities between the mystical practices of both ideologies to direct the reader toward a specific ideology. Kenney moves from engaging both Platonism and Christian mysticism to only engaging the Christian perspective. He continues:

> Contemplation is effective only when it is conjoined to confession. Only then does the soul contact God and grasp the true nature of its present condition. Thus contemplation supports the practice of the Christian religion in the account of the *Confessions*. There its true significance and final purpose emerge. For confession is a distinctively Christian practice- admission of the fallen and culpable state of the soul, recognition of the reality of God's presence, and finally, submission to the saving power of Christ. (108)

Like Ramage and Kotzé, Kenney concludes that a specific ideology serves as a foundation for the *Confessions*. For Kenney, the goals and focus of Christianity provide the framework necessary to engage the entire text. Yet, unlike Ramage and Kotzé, Kenney integrates other perspectives into his analysis. The first passage cited indicates Kenney's confirmation of the value of Platonism and its relation to Christianity. Plotinus provided a significant benefit to Augustine and the early church. Yet, Kenney confirms that focusing exclusively on the similarities creates further problems. As he states at the end of his project, "it [attempting to integrate Platonic and Christian mysticism] neglects the profound differences in their theologies of contemplation, in their conceptions of the soul, and in their representations of the divine" (145). Kenney carefully describes a unique relationship between predominate and subordinate perspectives. Each position is important when attempting to understand the entire text, but only one serves as Augustine's primary focus.

Kenney's project, like O'Connell's, satisfies the three criteria established at the beginning of the chapter. In many ways, this current project is similar to Kenney's effort. Both undertakings begin by exploring Augustine's use of a variety of perspectives and both move toward a specific predominant view. One difference of note is that Kenney does not describe redemption or return to sign that this project discusses in Chapter Three. For Kenney, the dissimilarities between Platonism and Christianity are too significant. Any final union or relation between the two views neglects powerful differences between them. I am not convinced that the positions are irreconcilable, or that Augustine believed them to be. As Chapter Three of this project discusses, the exegesis of Genesis and the reintroduction of the garden sign draw the reader back to the philosophical nexus of Books II and VIII. This return to a recognized sign allows Augustine to reevaluate the previous possible signified object in light of 'the' signified object. While Augustine considers some perspectives definitively retrospectively heretical and simply false in median res, such as Manichaeism; there are other positions, such as those presented by Plotinus and Cicero that he tries to reconcile with Christian faith.

How does my reading stand in relation to the interpretations examined thus far in this chapter? Like Kenney, I too believe that Augustine moves the reader from a plethora of ideologies toward a specific perspective. Augustine is deeply and fundamentally convicted by his Christian beliefs and the *Confessions* serve to express and reflect on that faith. However, to assert that Christianity was the only influence on Augustine seems to be a misinterpretation of the text. As Ramage concludes, Augustine did draw on Virgil. Kotzé brilliantly identifies portions of text as part of a

campaign against the Manicheans. Yet these influences are all shaped by Augustine's encounter with the divine. One of the goals of my project was to examine the relationship between these influences, and I believe this project does so successfully.

Textual Unity through Literary Structure

I have already spent some effort discussing at least one scholar that has focused on the unity of the text through literary structure. In Chapter Three of this project I introduce the chiastic structure David Leigh presents in his essay, "Augustine's *Confessions* as a Circular Journey". When discussing Leigh's effort previously, I objected that Leigh's effort does not adequately describe the entire *Confessions* for two reasons. First, Leigh's effort could create a sort of exclusivity between paired books. Book I's discussion of birth, for example, is concluded by the death of Monica in IX. While Leigh does not explicitly conclude that Book I is only related to Book IX, his project does lend itself to a type of textual segmentation. Book I, for example, introduces a concept, birth, which can only be fully understood when related to IX's discussion on death. Leigh's analysis transforms the text into independent couplets, in which each chapter pair has little connection to the other parts of the whole work. Second, Leigh's chiastic project consists only of an analysis of Books I-IX. While this is not an error, it does present a problem as to how these books are to be related to the remaining books of the *Confessions*.

To examine these issues, I turn to Carl Levenson who, like Leigh, identified a symmetrical pattern in the first nine books of the *Confessions*. Leigh establishes connections between books using very specific incidents in the text. Leigh, for

example, connects Augustine's 'evil' companions described in II,8-13 to the reestablishment of community in 8.12[20] (76). In contrast, Levenson adopts a different connection between texts. Books I and IX are united by Augustine's use of Monica[21] (501). Levenson states that Monica "arranges the world around her infant and fills it will her generosity. . . Her love makes her anxious to give" (501). Monica is physically and emotionally present to her infant, a presence that reemerges for Levenson in Book IX. He states, "There is a final resurgence of presence, since Augustine and Monica enjoy a moment of perfect intimacy" (512).

Levenson does propose an interesting interpretation to the first nine books of the text, and I am sympathetic to the chiastic structure. Certainly, to ignore the obvious introductions, interactions, uses and returns to key concepts such as community, family, and faith that occur between two linked portions of text would be absurd.[22] However, it is necessary to caution those who undertake such an analysis. As stated in Chapter Three of this project, one possible problem in developing a literary framework is the creation of more fragmentation. If books of the *Confessions* are to be understood as part of a symmetrical pattern, as Levenson suggests, it becomes possible to downplay, ignore, or misinterpret portions of the text that do not completely adhere to this symmetry. For example, Levenson's analysis of the text

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[20]Leigh, SSA.

[21]Carl Levenson, "Distance and Presence in Augustine's Confessions," *Journal of Religion* 65 no. 4 (1985).

[22]Not to mention the introduction, use, and reuse of signs and images. Augustine is absolutely intentional with his use of garden imagery with his descent into sin in II and his return to God in IX.

does not discuss Monica's presence in Book II, her dream in III.11, or her part in Augustine's conversion in VIII.12. Any type of chiastic understanding of the text lends itself to this type of 'glossing over'.

The second concern becomes evident when one recognizes that both Leigh and Levenson only establish the chiastic structure for the biographical books of the text. While this is not an issue for their projects, it does complicate a discussion of the unity of the whole text. To expound on this point, I return to Levenon's exclusive focus on only the first nine books of the text. He states, "Augustine's desire is to outrun transience, to cling to the eternal, and in the very same stroke, to arrive at presence through distance. He achieves it here, at the end" (512). For Levenson, Augustine arrives at divine presence at the end of Book IX. If this is the case, one might wonder what the final four books of the text have to do with this arrival. Levenson gives no possible explanation as he does not mention X-XIII throughout his article. The apparent gaps between the biographical, philosophical, and exegetical portions of the text are present; and a unity theory must discuss how the reader is to bridge those gaps. As presented, the efforts of Leigh and Levenson are both too narrow in focus to properly be understood as 'unity theories'.

While Leigh's effort is too narrow to be properly described as a unity theory for the entire work, I do believe that Leigh provides an interesting framework that might be adapted into a full textual unity theory. Leigh too seems to hold that a similar theory can extend to the entirety of the work as he states at the beginning of his article:

> The *Confessions* of Augustine begin with a question from the word of God followed by the book's thematic statement that the human heart is a restlessness in search of God. The text ends- after nine books of autobiography and four of reflection on memory, time and creation- with an answer that God is forever at rest. . .This correspondence of opening with closing paragraphs indicates, as several commentators have suggested, that the overall narrative of Augustine's life is in the form of a circular journey.[23] (75)

I do not believe that it would be that much of a stretch to apply a chiastic approach to the entire text. Such an effort is beyond the scope of this current project, but I do believe that the establishment (I-VIII), transcendence (VIII-XII), and contemplation (XI-XIII) process I discuss in the preceding chapters relates well to the descent (I-V) and return (V-VIII) layout of Leigh's circular journey.

Where Leigh and Levenson use incidents in the text to explore the relationship between different books, Carl Vaught establishes a project with an overarching schematic of the text. He states, "Augustine's *Confessions* develops within a three-dimensional framework: the first is temporal, the second spatial, and the third eternal. . . An adequate attempt to understand the *Confessions* must move within the temporal, spatial, and eternal dimensions simultaneously" (4,5)[24] For Vaught, each of these three axes relate to a specific aspect of Augustine's life. The temporal axis, for example, traces the *Confessions'* progression from Augustine's past (the biographical account of I-IX), to his present (his philosophical inquiry and his act of remembering), to his future (his desire for eternal rest). The spatial axis moves the reader through Augustine's bodily movement as well as his introspection and examination of the soul. The eternal axis guides the reader though Augustine's

[23]Leigh, SSA.

[24]Vaught, SSA.

relationship to the divine. Each of these axes run through the entirety of text, so at any given point the reader could evaluate where Augustine was temporally, spatially, and eternally. It should also be noted that Vaught describes these axes as a three-dimensional grid. So, one could not encounter an event on temporal axis fully without accounting for and engaging the spatial and eternal axes, much like one cannot properly identify a point on a coordinate plane without reference to both the X and Y axes. When all three axes are considered by the reader simultaneously by the reader, a phenomena known as the 'place of places' emerges. Vaught describes this event as where Augustine's "life and thought unfold, both for himself and for his readers" (4). Vaught's three axes framework allows the reader to trace over-arching themes throughout the work. Further, the axes draw Augustine the writer into relation to Augustine the biographical subject and Augustine the confessor.

While I find a great deal of value in Vaught's examination, it is unclear precisely what he means by 'place of places'. I see two possible interpretations of this event. First, the 'place of places' can be understood as an interaction between Augustine and each individual reader. If this is the case, the text becomes an intimate ordeal. Each life event described in terms of the three-dimensional axes is made unique as each Augustine/reader coupling works through the text[25]. If this is the case, then there is a problem that arises with the end orientations of each axis.

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[25]For example, consider two readers of the *Confessions*, one a long time Christian, the other an individual who has just been introduced to the religion. As the first reader engages the text his recognition of and interaction with the three axes is going to be significantly different than the second. If this first interpretation of the 'place of places' is correct, then this difference is totally acceptable, as Augustine the Author will meet the reader on 'his' level.

Consider the eternal axis. Vaught describes this axis as having an extension upward toward God and an extension downward toward attempting to leave God's presence. If a reader does not recognize these extensions, or possesses significantly different 'high' and 'low' markers, the nature of the whole text can change. This can lead to serious misinterpretations of the text. A pagan reader, for example, can have a significantly different understanding of divine closeness or separation, depending on his understanding of what "God" is.

The other possible option is that the 'place of places' requires a set of presuppositions in order to 'enter'. In this light, the extreme ends of the axes are preserved, as both reader and author possess similar knowledge relating to the divine, the soul, and the self. The obvious problem to this solution is that it seems to prohibit access to the text. In other words, a reader can only begin to engage Augustine and the *Confessions* when he arrives at certain philosophical, spiritual, and emotional stage of development. Viewing the text as a process of ascent and return creates opportunities for both a unique reader/author relationship and a preserved notion of the divine. The nexus of sign found in the biographical books allows readers to personalize the text. However, as Chapter Three describes, Augustine is able to maintain the consistency of the true signified object while appealing to a wider variety of readers.

So far, I have examined efforts that have applied a chiastic and axial framework to the *Confessions*. The final type of structural unity I will explore is James Siebach's logical rhetorical framework. Siebach begins his project by noting the different uses of the term '*confessio*'. As he states, "Often overlooked is that

confessio also means 'proof,' 'incontrovertible evidence,' 'indubitable sign,' and 'undeniable testimony'. The thesis of this article is that the rhetorical arguments in Book 1 are constituted as proofs. . ."[26] (93). Siebach argues that by integrating biographical elements and phenomenological arguments Augustine is able to create 'hidden' logical proofs that draw the reader toward confirming the existence of God. By uniting these two distinct elements, Book I becomes a true 'confessio'.[27] As Siebach states, "Book I thus, is a *confessio*, a demonstration of the indubitable signs that God exists, which signs are discovered in Augustine's own life experience. Augustine employs this sort of rhetorical strategy throughout the first nine books." (98). What I find particularly interesting about Sienbach's project is the way in which he describes a literary technique by which Augustine seems to move the reader's focus toward specific logic proofs. While the development of certain proofs can be found throughout the text, their role and purpose often changes depending on the philosophical and biographical material Augustine the author addresses. So, while a proof of God's existence might have a subtle undertone throughout the first books, Augustine brings it to the forefront during portions of his biographical discussion, such as the reading of Platonists in VII (107). While this project has focused on Augustine's use of sign, rather than his use of rhetorical or logical proofs, I believe Augustine undertakes a similar process when he utilizes specific signs. This includes the image of the sign discussed in this project. Although Augustine only

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[26]Siebach, SSA.

[27]Admittedly, Siebach's project is focused exclusively on Book I. However, he does imply that his analysis can be adapted for the other biographical books.

specifically divulges four garden events, the sign of the garden lingers with the reader throughout the text. This lasting presence of a sign is not limited only to the image of a garden. I firmly believe that Augustine undertakes a similar process with signs addressed by other scholars. The final section of this chapter focuses on these efforts. While I believe that this project can engage many of the different type of unity scholarship, it is most applicable to the discussion created by these scholars.

Unity through Sign

This project has been heavily dependent on much of the contemporary scholarship that examines the progression and development of a specific sign or group of signs in the *Confessions*. Already, I have utilized Leo Ferrari's examination of the 'mystical tree', Michael Foley's essay on sacramental imagery, and Robert McMahon's analysis of prayer in my project.

Consider the work of Leo Ferrari. As described in Chapter Two of this project, Ferrari establishes a relationship between the pear theft incident and the conversion of VIII. Ferrari astutely recognizes Augustine's use and reuse of the sign of a tree, an image that holds important significance for Christianity and several other perspectives. He states, "The mystical tree, or tree of religious experience, has from time immemorial been a most important symbolic element in many religions of mankind."[28] (93) Ferrari seems to describe an event very similar to the philosophical nexus found in Books II- VIII. Further, he specifies Christians as being Augustine's

[28]Leo Ferrari, "Symbols of Sinfulness in Book II of Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971).

primary audience. He continues, "More specifically, the mystical tree has played a vital, even if unobtrusive role, in the western Christian tradition down through the centuries." (94). Ferrari believes that a sign, familiar to a variety of perspectives, is used by Augustine to explore his sin and redemption. Ferrari unfortunately limits his discussion to the trees described in II and VIII. Because of this, I do not believe his effort can be considered a work describing the text's unity. I do think that his project can be broadened to include a discussion on the exegesis of Genesis in XII-XIII, and that this project can provide a framework to do so. Recall that I advocate a return to the garden sign in the exegesis of Genesis, and that this return allows the reader to re-evaluate and analyze the possible signified objects. In terms of Ferrari's project, the reader can engage these later books and then return to the image of the cross and image of the tree of knowledge. At the very least, Augustine's examination of Genesis draws the reader, a reader who has ideally recognized the divine as the signified object, back to the tree of knowledge. This transforms Ferrari's two-fold movement[29] into a three-fold movement[30]. It also allows the Ferrari's project to be examined as a full unity theory.

I could not engage in a discussion of sign as unity without addressing the efforts of Robert McMahon. Chapter Four of this project examined McMahon's analysis of the Books XII and XIII of the text. McMahon's efforts point to an

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[29]He moves from the tree of sin (the fall of Adam) in Book II to the tree of salvation (the cross) in VIII.

[30]A movement from the tree of sin to the tree of salvation to a return/reengagement of the tree of life.

Augustine who encounters, or at the very least recognizes, God in the final stages of the text. I have already critiqued this approach to the text. Books XII and XIII can be interpreted as a type of telos; they can also be described as a rediscovery or reiteration of previously encountered ideals. My project provides an alternative to McMahon's position, not a disagreement with his interpretation. That being said, McMahon's analysis of prayer as a unifying literary form serves as a foundation for contemporary unity theory. While I do not agree with his position that the text should be understood entirely by reference to Book XIII, I do appreciate his use of a particular sign to describe the unity of the text. McMahon also establishes an interesting approach to his final project. He states, "I have also refused to contest other solutions to this problem because many different 'right understandings' of formal coherence in the *Confessions* are not only possible but inevitable."[31](xxi). This project was never intended to be the 'absolute' articulation of the text's cohesive structure. Like McMahon, I believe that there are several different probable unity theories. I only intend my project to be considered part of that conversation. By adding my voice to other scholars, I hope to, like McMahon "contribute something to our understanding- and so, to the continuing life- of Augustine's Masterpiece." (xxii).

Finally, this project holds many similarities to Michael Foley's project in his essay "The Sacramental Topography of the *Confessions*". In this project, Foley examines the role of sacramental imagery in the *Confessions*' structural unity. He suggests that Augustine "structured, at least in some measure, all thirteen books of

[31]Robert McMahon, *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

his *Confessions* according to the sacraments that he received during his lifetime."[32](31). While Foley does address Augustine's Platonic influences, his project is structured in such a way so that other pagan authorities are beyond its scope. This limits any discussion on Augustine's use of pagan poetry or philosophy. My project actually compliments and enhances the work of Foley. My project is able explore Augustine's use of Cicero and Virgil, while maintaining that the *Confessions* should be understood primarily as a testimony for Christianity. Examining my project in light of these other sign unity theories provides further richness to each effort and, more importantly, a deeper understanding of the text as a whole. Understanding the *Confessions* as an exploration of the sacraments does not necessarily conflict with the *Confessions* as exploring the image of the garden. Instead, a reader of both projects can observe how Augustine integrates both efforts into the text, creating a rich and detailed masterpiece. A similar statement of appreciation could be given to the work of Kotzé and Ramage. Augustine constructs the *Confessions* in such a way that he is able to weave together several themes. While using the image of a garden in Book II, Augustine can reveal his theology of baptism and connect his ordeal to Aeneas' flight from Troy. By integrating these images and contrasting these signs, Augustine establishes a network of thought that spans a plethora of ideologies. He establishes a text that allows a reader to see himself on every page.

In this final chapter of my project, I have attempted to compare my efforts to previous unity scholarship. While this project is most compatible with other sign-

[32]Michael Foley, "The Sacramental Topography of the Confessions," *Antiphon*. 9 no.1 (2005).

based unity theories, I believe it engages and compliments other approaches as well. While the scholars presented were not an exhaustive list, and the groupings were not rigid, I do believe that I have presented a general scope of the current state of contemporary efforts.

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