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From Cassiciacum to *Confessions*

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7

The Grammarian's Spoils:
De Doctrina Christiana and the
Contexts of Literary Education

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Knowledge of the circumstances of Augustine's education in Roman North Africa is, of course, indispensable to the writing of Augustine's history, knowledge of the circumstances of Augustine's own writing of *De Doctrina Christiana* no less important for an understanding of that work's place in Augustine's thought. In this essay, however, I would like to contextualize Augustine slightly differently: rather than focusing on Augustine's specific setting in the intellectual history of the later Roman Empire, I would like to explore the ways in which the seminal *De Doctrina Christiana* is productive of two larger ideological contexts, into which Augustine places the task of reading: namely, the contexts of 'paganism' and 'Christianity'. Analysis of Augustine's attitudes toward pre-Christian Roman literature has often been formulated in terms of either the 'conflict' between Augustine's Christianity and such literature, or the 'accommodation' of pagan thought in his overall Christian scheme.[1] Both approaches presuppose that the opposition of two already existing categories, 'Christianity' and 'pagan-

[1] e.g., H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1938; 2nd edn. with 'Retractatio', 1949); H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics* (Göteborg, 1967); P. Courcelle, *Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité* (Paris, 1963), pt. i; S. MacCormack, *Shadows of Poetry: Virgil in the Mind of Augustine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998).

ism', forms the background to Augustine's thought. Much scholarship in late ancient studies, however, has shown that, in Robert Markus's felicitous phrase, late Roman paganism, at least, 'existed only in the minds, and, increasingly, the speech habits, of Christians'.[2] The production of paganism in late ancient speech habits is, I think, central to understanding Augustine's own formulation of paganism and, by extension, to understanding how Christianity emerges as paganism's polar opposite in Augustine's writing. *De Doctrina Christiana* is, I would like to argue, one of the textual moments in which speech habits produced both paganism and Christianity. Specifically, I shall argue that Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana* uses the decontextualizing and dislocating techniques of ancient grammatical writing to produce the opposing concepts of Christianity and paganism, and to locate the educated Christian subject in relation to them.

I. AUGUSTINE ON SIGNS AND THINGS: DISLOCATION AND TRIANGULATION

Although the 'tractatio scripturarum' that forms the subject of *De Doctrina Christiana* is often studied in relation to classical rhetorical 'tractatio',[3] the 'treatment' of Scripture in

[2] R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), 28. Earlier works include A. Cameron, 'Paganism and Literature in Late Fourth Century Rome', in M. Fuhrmann (ed.), *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'Antiquité tardive en Occident* (Geneva, 1977), 1–30; J. J. O'Donnell, 'Paganus', *Classical Folia* 31 (1977), 163–9; and *idem*, 'The Demise of Paganism', *Traditio* 35 (1979), 45–88. Much of the relevant literature concentrates on the question of a 'pagan revival' in the fourth century; for a recent consideration of the issue, see C. W. Hedrick, Jr., *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin, Tex., 2000), esp. ch. 3, 'Unspeakable Paganism'.

[3] G. A. Press, 'The Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*', *AugSt* 11 (1980), 99–124; K. Eden, 'The Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics in *De Doctrina Christiana*', *Rhetorica* 8 (1990), 45–63; M. Scanlon, 'Augustine and Theology as Rhetoric', *AugSt* 25 (1994), 37–50; C. Harrison, 'The Rhetoric of Scripture and Preaching', in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (eds.), *Augustine and his Critics* (London, 2000), 214–30.

Books 1–3 has much in common with late ancient grammatical textual analysis, also known as 'tractatio'.[4] The reading practices which Augustine advocates for the resolution of verbal ambiguity, for example (language study, appropriate word division, and familiarity with a wide variety of word usages[5]), are those developed in the schools of the 'grammatici' for the interpretation of ancient texts.[6] Augustine himself explicitly compares his task in *De Doctrina Christiana* to the work of the late Roman 'litterator' or 'grammaticus'.[7] 'Whoever teaches how [the Scriptures] should be understood is like the expositor of letters, who teaches how they ought to be read'.[8] The grammarian Diomedes, Augustine's contemporary,[9] defines the task of grammar simply as 'the understanding of the poets and the ready elucidation of writers and historians, and the logic

[4] Priscian, for example, analysing the *Aeneid*, begins his detailed grammatical discussions of each line with the imperative 'Tracta singulas partes'; ed. H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini* (hereafter *GL*) iii (Leipzig, 1860) at i. 9, 2. 44, 3. 67, 4. 84, 5. 93, 6. 109, 7. 135, 8. 157, 9. 169, 10. 185, 11. 198, 12. 210. Cf. M. Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge, 1994), 178–89.

[5] *Doct. Chr.* 3. 1. 1.

[6] Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 179–83; for other examples of early Christian use of grammatical techniques, see, e.g., B. Neuschäfer, *Origenes als Philologe* (Basel, 1987); F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge, 1997); and C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese* (Cologne, 1974).

[7] In ancient usage the Roman 'litterator' is sometimes distinguished as the teacher of elementary literacy, the more advanced linguistic and literary instruction being reserved for the 'grammaticus' proper. However, as Robert Kaster has noted, there was in practice considerable overlap between these two teaching professions in Late Antiquity: 'Notes on "Primary" and "Secondary" Schools in Late Antiquity', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113 (1983), 323–46. For further discussion of this passage of the prologue, see Pollmann below, 210–11.

[8] *Praef.* 9. All translations from *Doct. Chr.* are my own; references to the Latin text are to the edition of R. P. H. Green (ed.), *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford, 1995), though I have retained only the traditional numbering.

[9] On the dating of Diomedes, see R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), 271.

of speaking and writing correctly'.[10] Augustine similarly describes the programme of *De Doctrina Christiana* as covering first the correct method of understanding Scripture, and then the correct method of presenting it (1.1.1). That *De Doctrina Christiana* shares its basic approach with the late ancient 'ars grammatica' should not, of course, come as a surprise: Augustine's discussions of language in other works also strongly recall the work of fourth- and fifth-century Latin grammarians, and Augustine's own early *De Grammatica* was, arguably, a work in the same grammatical tradition as Servius or Donatus.[11]

The particular placement of grammar in *De Doctrina Christiana*, however, is significant. The 'ars grammatica' proper, the discussion of verbal signs, does not begin until Book 2. The discussion of signs in Book 1 seems cursory: after noting the difference between 'things' ('res') and 'signs' ('signa') (1.2.2), Augustine spends the bulk of Book 1 on 'things' and the kinds of love the reader ought to bear them. The relationship between the reader and 'things' is, famously, construed as a relationship based on love ('amor') (1.4.4), ultimately on the love of God, who is, for Augustine, the highest 'thing': 'una quaedam summa res' (1.5.5). Augustine thus posits the dislocation of humanity from God (e.g., 1.10.10) as paradigmatic for the relationship between readers and 'things' more generally. This dislocation, in turn, underlies the 'amor' that draws humanity to 'things' and to God. In other words, in Book 1 of *De*

[10] *GL* i.426. This is, clearly, a broad definition of grammar: Servius, in his commentary on Donatus, argues that grammar proper is concerned especially with the eight parts of speech (*GL* iv.405), but 'Sergius' (on whom see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 429–30), also commenting on Donatus, repeats Diomedes' assertion that the 'ars grammatica consists principally in the understanding of the poets and in the logic of speaking or writing correctly' (*GL* iv.486).

[11] Cf. G. Bellissima, 'Sant' Agostino grammatico', in *Augustinus Magister* (Paris, 1955), i. 35–42; J. Collart, 'Saint Augustin grammairien dans le *De magistro*', *REAug* 17 (1971), 279–92; V. Law, 'St. Augustine's "De grammatica": Lost or Found?', *RechAug* 19 (1984), 155–83; Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 169–78; at p. 178 Irvine calls *Doct. Chr.* 'a Christian ars grammatica'.

Doctrina Christiana, the reader is construed as a subject fundamentally desiring the enjoyment of God, since Augustine defines the relationship between humanity and 'things', with God as the paradigmatic 'thing', as a separation that engenders 'amor' between the two.[12]

This amorous—indeed, in the Platonic sense, erotic—relationship forms the background into which grammar is to be set. Anne Carson, in her discussion of *eros* in Greek literature, remarks, with regard to Sappho's fragment 31: 'Where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components: lover, beloved, and that which comes between them.'[13] That Augustine conceives of the relationship between humanity and 'things', particularly divine things, as based on lack and resulting in 'amor', is clear, both in *De Doctrina Christiana* and in other works.[14] In *De Doctrina Christiana*, 'that which comes between' readers and 'things' is the sign: 'All teaching is either of things or of signs, but

[12] H.-J. Sieben has argued that 'caritas' in *Doct. Chr.* is among the 'things' at which Scripture aims: 'Die "Res" der Bibel: Eine Analyse von Augustinus, *De Doctrina Christiana* I–III', *REAug* 21 (1975), 72–90, at 78–9. Although Augustine uses 'caritas' more frequently than 'amor' in Book 1, it is, I think, significant that 'amor' provides Augustine with his definition of 'enjoyment' at 1.4.4, and that this 'amor' is directed toward the Trinity at 1.5.5. The conflation of 'amor', 'caritas', and other such terms (e.g., 'dilectio' at 1.35.39) under the heading of 'love' may not be entirely out of order, as Augustine does not always use them as distinct technical terms: cf. K. Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der Christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus, De doctrina christiana* (Fribourg, 1996), 126–7. It is important here to note, however, that 'caritas' and 'amor' may not be completely synonymous for Augustine, since at *Doct. Chr.* 3.10.16, he describes 'caritas' as movement towards 'enjoyment', earlier defined as an instance of 'amor'. In short, even if 'caritas' is an Augustinian 'res', the relation between 'things' and readers will still be based on 'amor'. On the interpretive function of 'caritas' in *Doct. Chr.*, see esp. Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana*, 121–47, and W. S. Babcock, 'Caritas and Signification in *De Doctrina Christiana* 1–3', in D. W. H. Arnold and P. Bright (eds.), *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1995), 145–63, at 154–7.

[13] A. Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Princeton, 1986), 16.

[14] Most famously, perhaps, at *Conf.* 10.27.38.

things are learned through signs' (1. 2. 2).[15] Moreover, the pre-eminent form that the sign takes, for Augustine, is the word, since words are signs 'whose whole use is to signify. No one uses words except to signify' (1. 2. 2). Nouns, verbs, conjunctions, and the other parts of speech are the things that, as words, 'have gained supremacy in signifying'; 'all other signs are scant in comparison to words' (2. 3. 4.) To the extent that it was the discipline of grammar, in antiquity, that concerned itself with the functioning of individual words,[16] the third part of Augustine's erotic triangle is grammar, the science of signs. Signs 'come between' human-ity and 'things', both in the sense of mediating between them (since things are learned through signs) and in the sense of perpetuating their disjunction: not only does misunder-standing the signs of Scripture lead the reader astray (1. 36. 40–1), but the mere existence of scriptural signs under-scores the separation of the reader from the divine, 'res' (1. 37. 41–38. 42). In the first book of *De Doctrina Christiana*, then, Augustine triangulates:[17] having construed the rela-tionship between humanity and God as essentially dis-junctive, he supplies the necessary third point of the lover's triangle, 'that which comes between them', under the guise of grammar. Grammar occupies the space of dislocation.[18]

[15] On the significance of Augustine's 'per' in 'res per signa', see C. P. Mayer, 'Res per signa: Der Grundgedanke des Prologs in Augustins Schrift *De doctrina christiana* und das Problem seiner Datierung', *REAug* 20 (1974), 100–12, at 104.

[16] Grammatical 'tractatio', as illustrated most prominently in Priscian's *Partitiones*, tended to be either word-by-word analysis of written works or discussion of individual words in phrase-by-phrase reading; for dis-cussion of one such analysis, see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, ch. 5, on Servius' Virgil commentary. On earlier uses of etymology in grammatical analysis, see M. Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Amsterdam, 1989), esp. 15–31.

[17] Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 17.

[18] For 'triangulation' as used here, see ibid. 17. Carson (p. 11) indicates her debt to Lacan for the description of erotic lack; Lacan's interest in structuralist approaches to desire is articulated esp. in 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', in J. Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York, 1977), 30–113; Lacan locates language, as the symbolic, in the displacement of 'the thing', and suggests (p. 104) that this displacement is instrumental in producing desire.

2. AUGUSTINE ON SPOILS AND SCRIPTURE: RECONTEXTUALIZATION AND GRAMMAR

There is a further sense, however, in which grammatical writing in Late Antiquity served as a forum of dislocation and of decontextualization. One of the tasks of the ars grammatica was to remove verbal signs from their original signifying contexts in both written texts and spoken language, and to reconfigure them as signs of linguistic regularity.[19] This shift from what Roland Barthes calls the 'symbolic' function of the sign to the 'paradigmatic' func-tion is a fundamentally dislocating and relocating gesture.[20] It entails the conceptual dismantling, as it were, of prior contexts, and the imagination of new contexts into which the same signs will fit. The process is most visible in the use of Latin quotations in handbooks of 'ars grammatica'. For example, to illustrate alliteration, the grammarians Donatus, Charisius, and Priscian quote the following line from Ennius: 'o Tite tute Tati tante tyranne tulisti'.[21] In its new context in the grammars, the line refers not primarily to any Titus but to the principle of alliteration itself. The repetition of the single, now mobile, line in several handbooks sug-gests, indeed, the persistence of the paradigmatic associ-ations of the line, superseding its symbolic associations.

Individual words are also used in the handbooks to signify grammatical points quite different from their everyday meanings. Donatus, for example, uses the verbs 'sto' ('I stand') and 'curro' ('I run')—on one level antonyms—to illustrate precisely the same thing: namely, what an active verb is.[22] Notably, it is not the 'meaning' of these verbs to which Donatus appeals, but their morphology, as he defines

[19] The appeal to written texts and to common usage generated much debate in antiquity over the relative authority of 'auctoritas' over and against 'usus'. On Augustine's concept of 'authority', see K.-H. Lütcke, *Auctoritas bei Augustin* (Stuttgart, 1968); and Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse*, 100–8.

[20] R. Barthes, 'The Imagination of the Sign', in *idem*, *Critical Essays*, trans. R. Howard (Evanston, Ill. 1972), 205.

[21] Ennius, *Annales* 1. 113; Donatus, *Ars Grammatica* 3. 4. 5 (*GL* iv. 398); Charisius, *Ars Grammatica* 4. 4 (*GL* i. 282); Priscian, *Partitiones* 7. 141 (*GL* iii. 492).

[22] *GL* iv. 360.

an active verb as one ending in '-o', to which 'r' may not be added: we do not say 'stor' or 'curror'.[23] The same approach is found in grammatical work more broadly: e.g., in Priscian's *Partitiones*, in which the answer to 'Why [is *arma*] neuter?' is 'Because all nouns ending in "-a" in the plural are without question neuter'.[24] Words are here entered into a signifying system quite different from the obvious (semantic) one. To the extent that the purpose of the handbooks is to create a grammatical metalanguage out of the language already in use, decontextualization and recontextualization of signs are practices fundamental to them. Without the possibility of transferring words from a symbolic signifying context to a paradigmatic context, grammar as a discipline would be impossible.

Not only semantic units, but entire units of knowledge, were the objects of the grammarian's transferral; in textual analysis the grammarian was to redistribute, piecemeal, the knowledge produced in other disciplines. Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, which in grammatical fashion represents the bulk of ancient learning as an extended gloss on the writings of Virgil,[25] advocates this attitude toward knowledge in its preface: 'Let us gather then from all sources and from them form one whole, as single numbers combine to form one number.'[26] The same sentiment is expressed in Martianus Capella's *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, in which the personified Grammar is held to have authority in poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, history, mathematics, and music, all of which contribute to the explication of texts.[27] Not only is the grammarian configured, ideally, as a polymath,[28] but

23 *GL* iv. 360.
24 *GL* iii. 461.
25 *Saturnalia* 1. 24. 9–25; but note the difference between Macrobius' portrayal of grammatical practice as performed by the fictional figure of Servius and that performed by the historical figure of Servius: Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, ch. 5.
26 *Saturnalia* 1, praef. 8, trans. Percival Vaughan Davies, in *Macrobius: The Saturnalia* (New York, 1969).
27 *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* 3. 225–7, 230, 263, 326 (ed. Kopp).
28 For discussion of this trope in earlier texts, see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 59–64; Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 45, 51.

grammar itself is understood to be the practice of breaking down larger fields of knowledge into 'mobile' decontextualized units.

It is, of course, this conception of knowledge, as something that can be transferred in discrete fragments from one context to another, that Augustine invokes in Book 2 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, on the spoiling of the Egyptians:

[T]he Egyptians had not only idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel hated and fled, but also vessels, gold and silver ornaments, and clothes, which that people secretly claimed for a better use when they left Egypt. (2. 40. 60)

The fourth-century equivalents of these spoils, according to Augustine, are the 'liberal disciplines more fitting to be used for truth' (ibid.).[29] The transference of knowledge from one arena to another is not merely a matter of sharing methodology or philosophical assumptions; Augustine has in mind something rather more 'literal', as his remarks immediately before the Exodus metaphor show:

I think it would be possible for someone who could, and who wanted to perform some great and beneficial task for the use of the brothers, to commit to writing the geography, animals, plants and trees, stones and metals and whatever sorts of unknown things Scripture mentions, discussing and explaining them. (2. 39. 59)[30]

29 The trope of 'spoiling the Egyptians' as a metaphor for Christian 'use' of the liberal arts is not unique to Augustine; for discussion of the use of the Exodus metaphor from Marcion on, see C. Gnilka, *Chrēsis: die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der Antiken Kultur*, i: *Der Begriff des 'rechten Gebrauchs'* (Basel, 1984), 57 n. 120. At pp. 102–33 Gnilka surveys the use by early Christian and other ancient writers of the parallel trope of the student as bee—the student, bee-like, is to take the 'nectar' of literature and put it to proper, usually philosophical, use—but without connecting it with the work of ancient grammarians.

30 Augustine may here have in mind the sort of project more commonly associated with Roman antiquarianism: e.g., the second-century dictionary of Festus, *De Verborum Significatu*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Leipzig, 1913), which lists meanings particularly of earlier Latin religious terms, arranged roughly alphabetically. In 419, Augustine himself compiled a list, the *Locutiones in Heptateuchum*, not of geographical or botanical terms from the Bible, but of unidiomatic Latin phrases in the Heptateuch, as a similar kind of reading aid.

The idea of compiling 'source-books' of knowledge that can be applied to the explication of Scripture suggests a thoroughgoing dislocation and recontextualization of knowledge: Augustine, like his grammarian contemporaries, is interested in changing the signification of previously existing signs by 'literally' removing them from their symbolic signifying contexts.[31] The 'tractatio scripturarum', following this method of reading, is simply another kind of spoliation; and Augustine's spoliating style is that of the late ancient grammarian.

3. PRESENCE, ABSENCE, AND GRAMMAR

The configuration of scriptural 'tractatio' as spoliation, another level of dislocation within the already disjunctive erotic triangle, suggests the ways in which De Doctrina Christiana addresses larger issues of cultural and religious identity. As spoliation, grammatical practice not only rejects 'original' contexts, it simultaneously evokes them.[32] Servius' and Priscian's commentaries are not, after all, meant to occlude Virgil, but to illustrate, and perpetuate, his importance in later Roman literary education. Analysis of particular words in grammatical texts provokes repeated reference to 'antiqui' and to usages common 'apud maiores'.[33] Here the grammarians imagine a historical context into which the text, removed from its literary context, can be placed. It is, however, a past that has been homogenized to a great extent: little distinction is made in the handbooks between exempla from very different periods in Latin literary history, from Plautus to Horace. Donatus can introduce nearly any quotation with the homogenizing 'ut';[34] Pompeius, more precise with names, none the less at one point runs through

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31 This disjunctive procedure is applied even to the signs of Scripture, which must be brought into the context of the 'rule of faith' in order to be understood properly: Doct. Chr. 3. 2. 2.

32 Cf. Lacan, 'Function and Field', 86: 'For the function of language is not to inform but to evoke.'

33 For discussion of the negotiation necessary between the authority of 'the ancients' and the grammarian's authority, see Kaster, Guardians of Language, 171–93.

34 e.g., Plautus at GL iv. 393 and Horace at iv.395.

quotations from Virgil, Persius, Terence, and Plautus in the space of about twenty lines,[35] without distinguishing the authors by anything other than name. The historical context created in grammatical work is, then, a particularly broad one, a past that is notable mostly for being different from the present.[36] The decontextualizing practices of grammar thus entail the reimagining of a broad 'originary' context, an 'antiquity', that marks the difference between the 'auctor' and the later reader.

Similarly, in Augustine's metaphor of spoliation, the gold and silver of the Egyptians may be used by the Israelites in Egypt, but they are first explicitly marked as Egyptian. Hence Augustine's query: 'Do we not see with how much gold and silver and clothing Cyprian, that sweetest teacher and blessed martyr, was laden when he left Egypt?' (2. 40. 61). The very visibility of Cyprian's 'Egyptian' goods argues for the continuing 'Egyptianness' of the liberal arts in Augustine's scheme. Here an originary context is invoked again to mark difference, now the difference between 'Egypt'/'paganism' and 'Israel'/'Christianity'. Moreover, by the proposed confinement of the liberal arts to the kinds of 'source-books' that Augustine imagines, their marking as 'pagan'—that is, not Christian—is, at least in theory, perpetuated. This simultaneous recontextualization and decontextualization of knowledge is the grammatical matrix within which 'paganism' is produced in De Doctrina Christiana. Augustine's excursus in Book 2, the list of the branches of knowledge, and of what from them is to be either retained or rejected (2. 19–42),[37] is as much a programme of

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35 He is illustrating the uses of the noun: GL v. 136.3–25.

36 The division of time into 'then' and 'now' as a hermeneutical technique in Late Antiquity: E. A. Clark, Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity (Princeton, 1999), 145–52; also Kaster, Guardians of Language, esp 183.

37 The role of this list in Doct. Chr. has long been debated; Pollmann, Doctrina Christiana, 89–108 (as in her essay in the present volume), places it within the overall structure of the work by reading Doct. Chr. as fundamentally dihairetic in structure; see esp. 149–55 on Book 2. L. M. J. Verheijen, however, has argued that the list of pagan studies is a 'digression' from the primary argument of Book 2: 'Le De Doctrina Christiana de Saint Augustin: Un manuel d'herméneutique et d'expression chrétienne

'pagan' education as it may be of Christian.[38] Or, to posit another Augustinian triangulation: between the Christian reader and the 'tractatio scripturarum' must come a third term, paganism, the 'doctrina apud gentes' (2. 39. 58), which both mediates and perpetuates the disjunctive relationship between reader and text.

At the same time, however, Augustine uses the desiring relationship between Christian reader and sacred text to reject the 'original', 'pagan' contexts of his spoils. Augustine refers to past authorities in the same homogenizing terms as the grammarians, but does so in order to highlight the need to assign them to a different place in the Christian scheme.[39] As spoils, the liberal arts are there precisely to be recontextualized, moved from a hypothetical 'Egypt' to a hypothetical 'Israel'. Here again is a matrix within which Christianity, as the opposite of paganism, can be imagined and invoked. If 'pagans' are the monolithic 'gentes' from whom 'doctrinae' are taken, 'Christians' are the equally monolithic 'fratres' on whose behalf the 'gentes' are despoiled (2. 39. 59). Augustine's

avec, en II.19.29–42.63, une charte fondamentale pour une culture chrétienne', *Augustiniana* 24 (1974), 10–20. While I would not argue that the discussion at 2. 19–42 is merely tangential to the rest of Book 2, I agree with C. Schäublin that Augustine here 'abruptly shifts his viewpoint': 'De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture?', in Arnold and Bright (eds.), *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, 47–67, at 50. The thoroughness of the 'review' of learning in the passage allows Augustine to conjure up 'paganism' precisely by means of the mass of detail not directly pertinent to his argument (e.g. the list of different kinds of superstition at 2. 20. 31); cf. Lacan, 'Function and Field', 86: 'what is redundant as far as information is concerned is precisely that which does duty as resonance in speech.' [For a contrasting view of the relevance of Augustine's treatment of superstitious practices in Book 2, see Klingshirn's essay above—Eds.]

38 For the controversy over whether or not *Doct. Chr* is a programmatic guide to Christian 'education' or 'culture', see E. Kevane, 'Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*: A Treatise on Christian Education', *RechAug* 4 (1966), 97–133; Verheijen, 'Le De Doctrina Christiana de Saint Augustin'; G. A. Press, 'Doctrina in Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana', *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 17 (1984), 98–120, and Schäublin, 'De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture?', 47–52.

39 Cf. Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse*, 102–3.

rhetorical flourishing of famous Christian names—Cyprian, Lactantius, Victorinus, Optatus, and Hilary, passing over in silence those who are still alive, and innumerable Greeks' (2. 40. 61)—serves less to illustrate appropriate use of the liberal arts than to present the reader with an imagined crowd of 'Israelites' who have left 'Egypt'. Augustine presents Cyprian and Lactantius as standing in for a large, undifferentiated, and anonymous body of 'our many good faithful men' (ibid.). In the same way that the grammarians' 'antiqui' conjure a vague 'classical world', Augustine's language here conjures an equally vague Christian one.[40] The category 'the people of God' stands as a structural parallel to 'Egyptians', and, importantly, is presented as obviously separate: 'spoils', as such, must be transferred from one owner to another. The idea of 'spoils' here invokes the two possible owners of the liberal arts in Augustine's scheme: Christianity and paganism.

The production of 'Christianitas' as an abstraction is intimately related to the grammatical tasks of decontextualizing and recontextualizing knowledge for the explication of texts. The metaphor of spoiling the Egyptians implies not only an 'Egypt' and 'Israel', but also a more general 'Israel'. Augustine ends his use of the metaphor in Book 2 by claiming that 'the wealth of gold, silver, and clothing that that people took with them out of Egypt' was small compared to 'that of the riches which it had afterwards in Jerusalem, as was evident especially during the reign of Solomon' (2. 42. 63). Christianity is finally posited as a location and a separate political entity, parallel to the 'Egypt' of 'paganism'. The idea of spoliation allows Augustine to project an independent existence for Christianity, in a way that a more literal description of late ancient Christians as inhabitants, and products, of the Roman Empire might

40 'Lists' of important figures deployed to evoke 'a certain abstract commonality': P. Cox Miller, '"Differential Networks": Relics and Other Fragments in Late Antiquity', *JECS* 6 (1998), 113–38, at 134; and eadem, 'Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography: Constructing the Subject as Holy', in T. Hägg and P. Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), 209–54.

not.[41] While on one level Augustine's use of the story of Israel leaving Egypt is clearly secondary to the advent of Christianity, on another, the story becomes a device for producing Christianity as a free-standing conceptual entity. It is the ultimate goal of the Israelites' departure, and thus the place, of greatest 'usefulness' in the larger goal of progress toward the divine (2.42.63). The production of Christianity as such in Augustine's speech habits thus occurs through the metaphor of spoliation, inseparable from the simultaneous imagination, and appropriation, of 'doctrinae apud gentes'.[42]

By creating these parallel locations, the dislocation of knowledge—the idea of spoliation—invokes the opposed categories of Christianity and paganism as the two cultural contexts for late Roman education. Moreover, the two competing ideas are placed within the amorous disjunction between reader and 'res', the disjunction with which Augustine opens *De Doctrina Christiana*. At 3.1.1, Augustine maintains that the decontextualized 'doctrinae apud gentes' are simply to be counted among the 'necessary things' for the reader of Scripture.[43] Similarly, Christianity is a parallel region of utility in providing the necessary (and markedly singular) 'doctrina' for the Christian reader, though it is a region, 'Israel', whose origins are persistently marked as 'Egyptian'. This placement suggests, in turn, that

[41] Geographical metaphors used to create religious identity, in a related context: B. Leyerle, 'Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996), 119–43; J. Elsner, 'The *Itinerarium Burdigalense*: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire', *JRS* 90 (2000), 181–95; G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000), considers the ways in which geographical narrative is linked with the ideological productiveness of group biography

[42] Of twenty-four instances of the word 'christianus' in *Doct. Chr.*, fourteen occur in Book 2, in the course of Augustine's description of the branches of learning and how they are to be despoiled for the 'tractatio scripturarum': 2.12.17; 2.16.24; 2.18.28; 2.23.36; 2.25.38; 2.25.40; 2.29.45; 2.35.53; 2.39.59 (twice); 2.40.60 (twice); 2.40.61; 2.41.62. The other occurrences are at praef.4 and 5 (twice); 1.14.13; 1.30.32; 3.8. 12; 4.1.1; 4.7.11; 4.14.31; 4.31.64.

[43] In this passage, the phrases 'scientia linguarum' and 'cognitio quarundam rerum necessarium' denote what Augustine has covered in Book 2.

the imaginative constructs of Christianity and paganism both mediate and perpetuate the separation that is the basis of the work as a whole.[44] In Augustine's approach to the 'tractatio scripturarum', the presence of Christianity is constantly invoked, addressed, and desired; yet Christianity's absence, paganism, 'Egypt', must continually be called upon in order for Scripture to be treated at all.

4. CONCLUSION

In *De Doctrina Christiana*, the two possible contexts in which reading can be undertaken are Egypt and Israel, paganism and Christianity, and reading necessitates movement from one to the other. To the extent that the later history of Latin reading, and of Latin Christianity, could continue the rhetorical use of this division,[45] the project visible in *De Doctrina Christiana*, as in other works of the same period, may be seen to have done its ideological work.[46] At the same time, however, the ambiguity and tension involved in the series of triangulations that Augustine proposes also involve a perpetuation of the paradoxical conditions of the division: the later transmission of classical literature might then be seen, not simply as following an

[44] Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 117, refers to R. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, trans. R. Howard (New York, 1978), 15, to describe the evocative yet paradoxical aspect of such amorous writing: 'Endlessly I sustain the discourse of the beloved's absence; actually a preposterous situation; the other is absent as a referent, present as allocutory. This singular distortion generates a kind of insupportable present; I am wedged between two tenses, that of the reference and that of the allocution: you have gone (which I lament), you are here (since I am addressing you). Whereupon I know what the present, that difficult tense, is: a pure portion of anxiety.' Cf. Lacan, 'Function and Field', 65.

[45] As in, e.g., Cassiodorus' separation of 'divine' and 'human' in the *Institutiones*; or, more negatively, the use of 'Egypt' in Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 99 (ed. G. Morin), which compares traditional learning with the biblical ten plagues. On grammar in Cassiodorus, see Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 195–209.

[46] For fuller discussion of the trope of 'separation' in patristic literature, and of similar approaches to the question of reading by Christian writers, see Gnilka, *Chrêsis*.

independent trajectory of 'classical scholarship',[47] but as the ongoing product of the idea of division, necessary for the equally ongoing articulation of a separate, biblically based 'Christianity'.[48] On such a reading, the dislocating and recontextualizing practices of grammar materially create the contexts of literary education, by motivating the scribal production of bodies of texts that can represent what Augustine calls 'Israel' and 'Egypt'.

I would like to return, finally, to Anne Carson's reading of Sappho's fragment 31. In the poem, the man who sits between the speaker of the poem and the object of her desire seems 'equal to the gods'. In contrast, the speaker's altogether human body is both quickened and, as she says, 'almost killed' by desire.[49] Augustine's amorous triangle in *De Doctrina Christiana* places grammar, and its simultaneous evocations of paganism and Christianity, where they, in turn, seem 'equal to the gods': reified, that is, and authoritative. The desiring Christian reader, on the other hand, is both quickened and immobilized by the simultaneous presence and absence of the object of desire, God, Augustine's 'summa res', whose presence and absence is mediated by grammar and instantiated through Augustinian grammar's productions of Christianity and paganism. The words of *De Doctrina Christiana* both suggest the 'highest thing' to the reader and generate, through grammatical spoliation, the 'godlike' parallel and interdependent structures of Christianity and paganism. 'The divine 'res' is, as Augustine says, only available 'per signa'. I suggest, then, that Augustine's famous vacillations between 'Christianity' and 'paganism' in literary work, at least as such vacillations can be found in *De Doctrina Christiana*, are less a reaction to some ontologically

[47] As plotted, notably, by L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford, 1968, and later editions). On medieval uses of classical texts, primarily for elementary education, see S. Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge, 1996).

[48] Reynolds, *Medieval Reading*, 7–17, discusses the use of the 'auctores' as preparation for the reading of Scripture; on the parallel positions of Virgil and Christian biblical epic in medieval grammars, see Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 364–71.

[49] Quoted in Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 12.

prior categories of 'Christian' and 'pagan' than they are the effect of Augustine's triangulating manoeuvre in the text itself. The Egypt from which the Christian grammarian removes intellectual spoils, and the Israel to which the spoils are removed, are equally conceptual products of the act of spoliation, a late ancient speech habit in which *De Doctrina Christiana* participates.