

which to flee. *Civitas Dei* is Augustine's Christian epic intended to replace Vergil's *Aeneis*, turning Vergil's Rome into Vergil's Troy, the city destroyed and abandoned and whose only contribution to the new foundation is the genetic stock of some of the settlers. Ferguson, however, goes further than other scholars who have described the reversal that Greco-Roman literature underwent at the hands of the Christians, demonstrating how Augustine's aesthetic, historiographic, and theological conclusions all follow from canonical reflections on the nature of language. By foregrounding the figurative dimensions of speech, Augustine not only reprioritizes literary exegesis as a cultural enterprise, but makes the attempt to circumscribe and thereby police the boundaries of literariness highly problematic.

"Exiles," remarks Aegisthus in the *Agamemnon*, "feed on hope," and thereby makes it clear that the corollary of absence or alienation is desire. With this theme as its focus, David Halperin's essay, "Plato and the Erotics of Narrativity," pursues the same set of issues that Ferguson takes up in regard to reference, but explores them as they are complicated by narration. If pure dialogue or drama is the "proper" or adequate representation of a conversation, corresponding to the literal or proper use of words, narration stands at one remove. As Plato understands it, then, narrative essentially elaborates the basic structure of metaphor by projecting it into a serial or temporal scheme: "the illusion of dramatic immediacy it provides typically serves to collapse the distance between the occurring and the recounting of an event, or between the characters in a tale and its audience, while the very fact of narrative serves to consolidate that distance, to institutionalize and perpetuate it." This is made clear in Theaetetus' claim to have erased all traces of the research and recounting that went into the production of "his" book so that he could present it "as a dialogue between the actual speakers," which only advertises the very lack that his script proposes to make good. In the *Symposium*, by contrast, Plato takes the reciprocal tack, layering and tangling multiple levels of reportage into a "bizarrely complex compositional form." What Halperin is able to show here is that, just as in the case of Augustine, the representational and narrative structure of the *Symposium* "illustrates," even "manifests" its principal theme, the dynamics of desire. *Erôs* itself, according to Diotima (whose opinions emerge as the most deeply nested in the inset narratives and are thereby—only at first paradoxically—the most authoritative by virtue of their being most and most indirectly represented), "oscillates . . . between presence and absence" and thereby realizes or enacts the dialectic of both language and narration. To put it another way, "the rhetoric of *erôs* and the erotics of rhetoric" turn out, in Plato, to be reflexive and, as Halperin stresses, this argues for a fundamental homology between metaphor, narrativity, desire, and interpretation.

3

Saint Augustine's Region of Unlikeness: The Crossing of Exile and Language

Margaret W. Ferguson

I. Exile and Erring

The theme of exile functions in many literary works not only as a reference to historical or biographical events but also as a central figure in the text's meditation on its own linguistic mode. It is not fortuitous that works which are thematically concerned with a loss of a "proper" place—in Augustine's case, the Heavenly City—should also be concerned, implicitly or explicitly, with the problematic distinction between proper and figurative language. Indeed there is a striking parallel between the situation of the exile, the *persona* banished from his proper place to an alien one, and the classical definition of metaphor formulated by Cicero (who follows Aristotle here in identifying metaphor with figurative language in general): metaphorical words, according to the *De Oratore*, are "those which are transferred and placed, as it were, in an alien place" (*eis quae transferuntur et quasi alieno in loco collocantur*).¹ The significance of this parallel between the existential situation of displacement from one's homeland and Cicero's definition of metaphor can be found in certain fundamental metaphysical tenets that inform both the traditional view of spiritual exile and the theory of language from which the classical distinction between proper and figurative derives.

The Platonic and Christian metaphor of earthly life as an exile from an atemporal essence—the Summum Bonum or God—presents exile as the middle term of a dialectic which J. Hillis Miller calls "a basic paradigm of Occidental metaphysics—the picture of an original unity, lost in our present sad dispersal, to be regained at some point in the millennial future."² The frequency with which the notion of a fall from a paradisaical state is evoked even in works that portray exile as the result of specific political or biographical events (for example, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* or Ovid's *Tristia*) testifies to the pervasiveness of the dialectical pattern Miller describes. The ontological ramifications of this dialectic can be simply stated: the metaphysical exile is defined as flawed because he is absent from an original unity of

being. This absence may be conceived either in temporal or spatial terms. The exile is defined negatively with reference to what he is not; his essence is determined by a *difference* portrayed as a lack.

The significant correspondence between the metaphysical conception of exile I have been sketching and classical rhetorical theory can be defined more precisely with reference to the critique of "mimetic" concepts of rhetoric articulated by many poststructuralist theorists and most usefully, for my purposes, in writings by Jacques Derrida from the late 1960s and early 1970s. A metaphysical concept of truth as "presence," according to Derrida, underlies both the Judeo-Christian metaphor of human life as an exile from God and many traditional formulations of the theory that language imitates or represents something essentially *unlike* language, something that is often conceived spatially as behind or beyond the medium that imitates it. In "Edmond Jabès et la question du livre" (in *L'Écriture et la différence*, 1967), Derrida draws an exemplary parallel between the writer who longs to escape the "errance" of language and the Wandering Jew who longs to escape the desert which symbolizes his exile from Eden and the Promised Land. Both writer and Jew, for Derrida, are mystified by the ideal of meaning as Presence: the writer longs for a totality or fullness of meaning as the exiled Jew longs for the epiphanic appearance of God.³

I am schematizing Derrida's argument in order to stress his point, elaborated in *De la grammatologie*, that an "inside/outside" dichotomy governs both the exile and writers who see their words as the imitation of things—in the double sense of the Latin *res*, that is, physical objects and concepts.⁴ When meaning in language is said to depend upon the adequacy with which words imitate things, one posits an extralinguistic standard of correctness for discourse; at the same time, one relegates all language to the status of an outside with regard to an inside of significance. Mimetic theories have traditionally privileged proper over figurative language because the latter is seen as an erring from the norm whereby each word points (univocally) to its referent. The very distinction between proper and figurative language is based on the notion of a source of significance which is fundamentally unaffected by the words which reflect it. Cicero's definition of metaphor as a *transfer* of a name from its proper thing to another which resembles the first presupposes a radical discontinuity between signifier and signified. As Derrida writes in "La Mythologie blanche," the philosophical thesis underlying the very concept of metaphor in classical theory is that "the meaning aimed at through these figures is an essence rigorously independent of that which transports it."⁵ As long as language is regarded as an imitation or transportation (*translatio*) of significance, metaphor may be seen (safely) as a home away from home, a detour in the road whose goal is union—or reunion—with truth.⁶

For Augustine, however, all language is a metaphorical detour in the road

to God because no sequence of words, even "proper" words, can adequately represent an atemporal and holistic significance. What Derrida calls the "faulty essence" of the mimetic theory of language can be most clearly analyzed in an author like Augustine whose theory of imitation subordinates the *res* of natural objects to the *res* of a transcendent reality. As Joseph Mazzeo argues, Augustine's formal distinction between temporal and eternal referents shows his prime concern to be with the adequacy of signs to the ultimate "res," God.⁷ Language as the representation of God is necessarily faulty; it is not only outside its source of significance but it is by nature unable to imitate an "inside" conceived as Divine Presence. Language is essentially inadequate because the concept of presence entails a notion of meaning as the immediate unveiling of a totality. Language is, in Derrida's phrase, a *figuration exilée* because its structural dissimilarity from its eternal referent is manifested by its inability to reveal except by a temporal process, not by an instantaneous unveiling.⁸

Augustine is haunted by the parallel between the nature of language and the nature of man "lost in our present sad dispersal." His analysis of language as a sequence of parts is in many ways a forerunner of Derrida's discussions of language as a "play of differences" that necessarily ruptures any concept of truth as a totality. Unlike many modern theorists, however, when faced with the contradictions between a philosophy of essence and linguistics of difference, Augustine chooses to relinquish language rather than God.

II. The Region of Unlikeness: The Context

In Plato's *Statesman* the Stranger relates to the young Socrates a myth of cosmic history intended to explain why the attempt to reach a definition of the ideal king must take into account the fact that "the present era" is radically different from the Golden Age of the reign of Cronus. Although the universe, like man, possesses a divine soul, it also has a "bodily form"; its corporeal nature prevents it from abiding "forever free from change," for, as the Stranger explains, "Ever to be the same, steadfast and abiding, is the prerogative of the divinest things only." The result of the universe's bodily form is that it must revolve in two contrary cycles, since "to revolve ever in the same sense belongs to none but the Lord and leader of all the things that move." In the universe's primary cycle (the reign of Cronus) it is governed by God himself, by the "divine transcendent cause" serving as "pilot," according to Plato's metaphor of the universe as a ship. In its "rotation in reverse," however, God "releases his control" and the universe must turn by a momentum "stored up" during its first cycle. At first the universe continues in an ordered course by means of its "recollection" of

God's instructions, but as time goes on this memory fades and the tendency toward chaos and evil innate in the universal "matter" increases; a corresponding increase in evil appears in all creatures of the universe. At the point of cosmic crisis when the universe is about to destroy itself in "the ancient condition of chaos," the divine pilot, who has been far off in his tower, intervenes to rescue his creation:

Beholding it in its troubles, and anxious for it lest it sink racked by storms and confusion, and he dissolved again in the bottomless abyss of unlikeness, he takes control of the helm once more. Its former sickness he heals; what was disrupted in its former revolution under its own impulse he brings back into the way of regularity, and, so ordering and correcting it, he achieves for it its agelessness and deathlessness. (273e)

Plato's myth of a cosmic fall into an "abyss of unlikeness"—the phrase is a compromise solution to the critical debate about whether Plato wrote *τόπον* ("region") or *πόντον* ("ocean")—is a touchstone for a rich tradition of exile literature.¹⁰ Writers from Plotinus through Dante to Gide allude to the Platonic "abyss," or, in a more common textual tradition, to his "region" of unlikeness in their delineations of an allegorical landscape of exile, a landscape of the mind in which the generically erring soul, fallen into matter or sin, wanders with such cohorts as Satan, Cain, and the Prodigal Son.¹¹ Augustine uses the Platonic region of unlikeness at a crucial moment in his *Confessions* (Book 7), in the account of the important but ultimately flawed illumination which Platonic philosophy provided the Christian on the eve of his conversion. Dante, as John Freccero has shown, defines the spiritual state of his pilgrim in Canto 1 of the *Inferno* by drawing not only on the Augustinian *regio dissimilitudinis* but also on a later interpretation which assimilated the Platonic region to the Biblical saga of the Exodus.¹² William of St. Thierry had identified the region of unlikeness with Egypt, the land of Israel's captivity, but Dante associates Plato's region with the Exodus journey itself, with that wandering in the desert which links spiritual "unlikeness" to linguistic "errance."¹³

In Augustine's exemplary treatment of the region of unlikeness, the metaphor itself is a nexus for linguistic theory and spiritual exile. The metaphor invokes, negatively, the concept of similitude, and similitude, as Augustine developed the idea from Plato, is at once an ethical imperative, *imitatio Christi*, and the cornerstone of a mimetic theory of language. The metaphor of the region of unlikeness, in which dissimilitude is expressed in spatial terms of distance, allows us to see why Augustine associates the ontological state of exile with an exile into figurative language. If Plato's myth already introduced a metaphorical translation from time to space in its use of the region of unlikeness to describe the temporal difference between

the reign of Cronus and the "present era," Augustine problematizes the very notion of such a *translatio* by analyzing spatial metaphors as the inevitable result of that "spatialization of time" which is syntax, either of spoken or of written language. For Augustine, the very fact that a spiritual difference from God must be explained as a spatial distance from Him is a sign of the inadequacy of all signs to express truth in a literal way.

Augustine follows Plotinus in fashioning Platonic theories into bulwarks for a passionate (if not always completely consistent) rejection of philosophical dualism: as Plotinus had used Plato's idea of the Good to attack Gnosticism (suppressing many dualistic aspects of Plato's corpus in the process), so Augustine uses the "books of the Platonists" to reject Manichaeism.¹⁴ The fundamental tension in any monistic philosophy is that evil can only be defined as a degree of difference from the absolute essence of Sameness; and yet difference, multiplicity in general, must be justified if God's purpose in creating anything other than himself is not to be questioned. This tension, which informs Augustine's ambivalence toward language in significant ways, can be traced, I think, in his use of two recurring spatial metaphors for language, one which compares the realm of human signs to a chaotic "region," the other which likens signs to an ordered "journey." Both metaphors, like Augustine's general conception of verbal *mimesis*, owe a great deal to Plato.¹⁵

Language in its negative aspect is portrayed by Plato precisely as a chaotic region of signs which are unlike truth—because it consists of a multiplicity of potentially ambiguous elements. According to the *Philebus*, language is an "unlimited variety of sound," and this word "unlimited" (*apeiron*), which Plato also employs to characterize the region of unlikeness in the *Statesman*, is charged with negative connotations: lack of order, lack of "boundaries" between similar and different categories—in short, that absence of any fixed relation between word and thing which in the *Cratylus* Socrates associates with the relativistic philosophy of the Sophists and the followers of Heraclitus.¹⁶ It is this problematic relation between verbal signs and their referents which allows language, as rhetoric, to be so dangerous a tool for the Sophists or any user of language who is ignorant of the philosopher's truth. Augustine follows Plato in a deep awareness of the dangers of rhetoric: his condemnations of his own early love for pagan literature and, more subtly, his struggles with the multiple interpretations of Scripture in the last books of the *Confessions* testify to his fear that the soul may be seduced into unlikeness to God through worship of false linguistic idols, signs which hold man in bondage (*sub signo enim servit*) if they do not point to truth.¹⁷

For both Plato and Augustine, however, the dangers of language are balanced by virtues; in its positive aspect, language may serve as a path or journey to the divine truth. If language is governed by the philosopher (who subjects it to his knowledge of extralinguistic ends), if it is ordered by correct

definitions (literally “making finite,” “establishing boundaries,” from *horos*), it becomes no longer a chaotic region of unlikeness but a way of escaping that region. Language must be justified as a power of man’s divinely given reason. Augustine therefore argues that the verbal ambiguities of the Scriptures need not be stumbling blocks but can instead serve as “testings” of the reason which strengthen faith.¹⁸ The signs of the Scriptures, as Augustine’s own conversion-by-reading shows, can provide an “opening” in the path to God.

Yet the paradox which allows language to be seen as both the region of unlikeness and the way of escaping that region points to another problem. The ambivalence which appears in the dichotomy between negative and positive spatial metaphors is ultimately weighted in favor of the negative pole because in both the Platonic and Augustinian systems the notion of a journey through language to divine truth is shown to be metaphysically impossible. A linguistic journey might succeed if the difference between truth and untruth were really quantitative, as the metaphors of a region and a journey imply. For both Plato and Augustine, however, there is finally a qualitative difference between truth and all verbal signs; this qualitative difference prevents the linguistic journey from ever reaching its goal of a total escape from the region of unlikeness. With different conceptual emphases, Plato and Augustine unite in insisting that there is in language something “faulty by essence” (to borrow Derrida’s phrase).¹⁹ Augustine can no more express the nature of the God who tells Moses *Ego sum qui sum* than Socrates in the *Republic* can satisfy Glaucon’s desire to arrive at “an end to our journeying” through an answer to his question about the “nature” of dialectic. Despite his “good will,” Socrates cannot answer Glaucon’s question because to describe the nature of dialectic he would have to state its *telos*, its end; that “end” is beyond language, since all language exists in the mode of an image, an imitation. To state the end of the dialectical journey, Socrates would have to show “no longer an image and symbol of my meaning, but the very truth.” (*Republic* 533a).

Because there is something in the nature of language which is radically *unlike* the truth, both Plato and Augustine manifest at times a profound impatience with their own linguistic enterprises; both long for an “alternate route” to truth, a route which would bypass language and transcend its inherent limitations. In Plato, the desire to escape language emerges as an ironic recognition of the difficulty of distinguishing “good” images, imitations founded on direct knowledge of the Idea, from “bad” images, the “phantasms” of the Sophists which merely *seem* to resemble the Idea. At the end of the *Cratylus*, Socrates shows his dismay at the difficulty of determining “the correctness of names” by a wistful desire for a “nobler and clearer way” to pursue truth—a way which would not involve verbal imitations at all but which would allow an unmediated inquiry into truth: “How real existence

is to be studied or discovered is, I suspect, beyond you and me. But we admit so much, that the knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. No, they must be studied and investigated in themselves” (439b).

Although Socrates knows that this “nobler and clearer way” is an impossible dream, his attitude toward rhetoric is always colored by that dream. Augustine’s conviction that there is a way of knowing God “face to face” gives rise to an even more passionate impatience with language. This impatience often takes the form of a desire to collapse time (the duration of individual life and history itself) because an unmediated approach to God is, for the Christian, guaranteed as a posthistorical moment. The mystery of the Incarnation provides a Mediator—Christ as the central Christian metaphor of the “way”—which is infinitely superior to the mediation of the Scriptures because, in Augustine’s logology,²⁰ the single Word is better than any multiplicity of words: “From that city whence we are exiles, letters came to us; these are the Scriptures, which exhort us to live well. Wherefore do I say letters? The King himself descended” (*Enarration on Psalm 90*).²¹ This “descent of the King” marks, for Augustine, Christianity’s crucial advance over Platonic philosophy; however, even Christ, the supreme “Similitude” to God, is in his form of “word made flesh” bound by the rules of time. So long as his message comes to us “through the lattice of our flesh,” his message is subject to a “fallen epistemology,” the imperfect mode of knowledge Augustine associates with the linearity of language and the “region of unlikeness.”²²

III. The Region of Unlikeness: The Text

In the seventh book of the *Confessions* Augustine praises the wisdom he found in “certain books of the Platonists” for having taught him to search for “incorporeal truth.” The parallels between the Platonists—notably, Plotinus—and the Gospel of John testify to the fact that pagan philosophers have “said things which are indeed true and are well accommodated to our faith,” as Augustine writes in *On Christian Doctrine*; therefore, the pagans’ wisdom “should be taken from them and converted to our use” just as the Israelites fleeing Egypt stole their captors’ gold and jewels “as if to put them to a better use.”²³ From the Platonists Augustine learned to conceive of an absolute, incorporeal God:

... certus esse te et infinitum esse nec tamen per locos finitos infinitosve diffundi et vere te esse, qui semper idem ipse esses, ex nulla parte nulloque motu alter aut aliter, cetera vero ex te esse omnia, hoc solo firmissimo documento, quia sunt. . . . (7:20, 149)

I was certain both that you are and that you are infinite, though without extent in terms of space either limited or unlimited. I was sure that it is you who truly are, since you are always the same, varying in neither part nor motion. I knew too that all other things derive their being from you, and the one indisputable proof of this is the fact that they exist at all. (154)

In the Platonists Augustine also found the answer to the agonizing question “Whence is evil?”—that question which had led him into Manichaean dualism. Now he understands that evil is not a substance, but rather degrees of “dissimilitude” from the one true substance. Yet Augustine’s mode of describing the knowledge of evil which he found in the Platonists points to his view of the philosophers’ fundamental error:

et quaesivi, quid esset iniquitas, et non inveni substantiam, sed a summa substantia, te deo, detortae in infima voluntatis perversitatem proicientis intima sua et tumescentis foras. (7:16, 145)

And when I asked myself what wickedness was, I saw that it was not a substance but perversion of the will when it turns aside from you. O God, who are the supreme substance and veers towards things of the lowest order, being *bowelled alive* [Ecclus. 10:10] and becoming inflated with desire for things outside itself. (150)

For Plato, it is the rational part of the soul which must be “converted”; for Augustine it is the *voluntas*, the faculty wounded by original sin. And it is precisely because the Platonists have no concept of the Grace which must supplement human reason in order to raise man from his fall into error that Augustine condemns the pagan philosophers as those who “saw whither they were to go, but saw not the way.” For Augustine, as we have said, the “way” to the truth is given by the descent of Grace in Christ’s Incarnation; although the philosophers’ books teach the doctrine of the *logos*, “that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, did I not read there.” Only the doctrine of the Incarnation provides a remedy for the wound caused by original sin, the gap between “knowing” and “willing.” Because, according to Augustine, the Platonists did not even perceive that gap, his own conversion can occur only after he has “corrected” his will by a descent in humility, a descent figured by his turning from the Platonists to the “venerable writing” of the Scriptures, and especially of St. Paul. Only in St. Paul can he learn the humility necessary for reconciling the “willing spirit” with the “weak flesh.”

The passage that describes Augustine’s sojourn in the *regio dissimilitudinis* contains in miniature the entire philosophical drama of the seventh book of the *Confessions*, for this passage at once pays tribute to Platonism and reveals its essential inadequacy. Augustine draws on two passages from Plotinus’

First Ennead: a description of the soul’s “interior journey” from the realm of matter to “our dear country” of the Good (chapter 6); and a discussion of the soul’s fall into vice and bestiality which Plotinus characterizes by a direct echo of Plato’s phrase “region of dissimilitude” (chapter 8).²⁴ Augustine “corrects” Plotinus by insisting that the soul’s ascent can be accomplished only by the help of a divine “guide” (the figure of man’s need for Grace); he also strikingly revises the Plotinian original by incorporating the metaphor of the “region of unlikeness” into the very substance of his vision of the truth. Unlike Plotinus, Augustine portrays his ascent not as an escape from the region of unlikeness, but as a progress in self-knowledge which leads not only to a vision of “what there was to see,” but also to the perception that he himself “was not yet such as to see”:

Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intravi in intima mea duce te et potui, quoniam factus es adiutor meus. intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem. . . . et cum te primum cognovi, tu assumisti me, ut viderem esse, quod viderem, et nondum me esse, qui viderem. et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei radians in me vehementer, et contremui amore et horrore: et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis (7:10; 140–41)

These books served to admonish me to return to my own self. Under your guidance I entered into the depths of my soul, and this I was able to do because *your aid befriended me* [Ps. 29:11]. I entered, and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, I saw the Light that never changes casting its rays over the same eye of my soul, over my mind. . . . When first I knew you, you raised me up so that I could see that there was something to be seen, but also that I was not yet able to see it. I gazed on you with eyes too weak to resist the dazzle of your splendour. Your light shone upon me in its brilliance, and I thrilled with love and dread alike. I realized that I was far away from you in the region of unlikeness. . . . (146–47)

The epilogue of this drama of vision is a fall, a “sinking with sorrow” back into “inferior things”; this fall is a testimony in Augustine’s own spiritual history to the Christian imperative that a “descent” in humility which purges the affective soul must precede any lasting ascent to God.²⁵

Augustine’s doctrine of the erring will, sunk by the “weight of carnal custom” into affection for the creature rather than for the Creator, is the key to the theological paradox of the metaphor *regio dissimilitudinis*: an “unlikeness” from God is conceived as a distance which is *not* a spatial distance. Augustine elaborates the notion of a “moral” distance from God in a commentary on the parable of the Prodigal Son in Book 1. Critics have noted that Luke’s depiction of the Prodigal Son in a “far country” (*regionem longinquam*, 15:3) is probably obliquely echoed in Book 7’s phrase, “I found myself

to be far from you in a region of unlikeness" (*et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis*).²⁶ Augustine compares his own distance from God to the exile of the Prodigal Son, an exile constituted not by "farness of place" but by spiritual darkness:

nam longe a vultu tuo in affectu tenebroso. non enim pedibus aut spatiis locorum itur abs te aut reditur ad te, aut vero filius ille tuus minor equos vel currus vel naves quaesivit aut avolavit pinna visibili aut moto poplite iter egit, ut in longinqua regione vivens prodige dissiparet quod dederas proficiscenti . . . in affectu ergo libidinoso, id enim est tenebroso atque id est longe a vultu tuo. (1:18,22)

For the soul that is darkened by wicked passions is far from you and cannot see your face. The path that leads us away from you and brings us back again is not measured by footsteps or milestones. That younger son of the Scriptures went to live in a distant land to waste in dissipation all the wealth which his father had given him when he set out. But, to reach that land, he did not hire horses, carriages, or ships; he did not take to the air on real wings or set one foot before the other . . . for he departed from you by his lustful affection, that is, by his darkened affection; and such darkened affection is what it means to be far from your face. (38)

The paradox of a distance which is a moral, not a spatial, concept is glossed again in Book 12, in Augustine's discussion of the problem of the creation of "unformed matter": matter is "far" from God in that it is "unlike" Him, but "it is not farness of place" (*sed tanto a te longius, quanto dissimilius: neque enim locis*; 12:7, 297).

If "dissimilitude" is a distance from God which is not a distance of space, how are we to understand it? The answer to this question can only be approached through another question: Why does Augustine use a spatial metaphor in the first place when he clearly insists on its inadequacy to express his meaning? One could say of course that Augustine is simply warning against a literal interpretation of distance as a physical rather than a moral phenomenon. I would suggest, however, that Augustine's very use of spatial terms whose literal denotation he would reject is indicative of a theoretical problem which he sets forth in Book 11's discussion of time. The fact that earthly temporality can only be seen as a linear "extension" or "protraction" and the fact that for Augustine human language is the prime model for linear time suggest that the use of the spatial concept of distance is emblematic of a fundamental flaw inherent in all language. The inability to free even an allegorical notion of distance from conceptualization in spatial terms is Augustine's acknowledgment that his own language traps him in the very unlikeness he is trying to define precisely because there is something in the nature of language which necessitates a spatial understanding of a differ-

ence—an unlikeness—that is not spatial (quantitative) at all. Paradoxically, in his very insistence that the "distance" he speaks of is not to be understood literally, Augustine is at the same time defining all language as figurative because it is incapable of grasping the literal truth of God's nature as pure presence.

By its own spatial metaphors Augustine's text defines itself as "exiled" into the dissimilitude of figurative language. In Book 13, chapter 7, Augustine explicitly sees the recourse to spatial metaphors in general as a fault in human expression; describing how the soul is "pressed down" by lustful affections and "raised" by the Spirit of Grace, Augustine interrupts his discourse: how shall I explain this phenomenon, he asks—*quomodo dicam?* "For it is *not* spaces in which this rising and falling occurs" (*neque enim loca sunt, quibus mergimur et emergimus*). The problem is that the spatial metaphor is both "like" and fatally "unlike" that which it tries to signify: *quid similius et quid dissimilius?* (13:7, 333). The "dissimilitude" of the spatial metaphor is a sign of the flaw inherent in the temporal nature of language. A passage in Book 7, chapter 7, further elaborates the link between temporal utterance and the recourse to mystifying spatial metaphors. Augustine writes that the "voiceless" cries of his soul could reach God's ear but not any human ear because no "groans of the heart" can be adequately expressed by the tongue's utterance in time. Immediately following this criticism of the temporality of human utterance is a dramatization of the inadequacy of spatial terms: Augustine says that God's light was "within" him, though he could not see it, since he was looking "outward." But then he rejects this spatial dichotomy: "The light was not in space: but I thought only of things that are contained in space, and in them I found no place to rest" (143). Once again, Augustine no sooner employs a spatial metaphor than he qualifies it: the style itself is emblematic of that "restlessness" which characterizes the heart trapped in "things of this world," things that are "contained in space." Language is one of those things which by nature cannot satisfy the soul, and Augustine's undercutting of his own discourse stresses the "dissimilitude" between his words and their transcendental referent.

Augustine's exposition of his discovery that "the present has no space" allows us to understand the paradoxical relation between time and the ontological inadequacy of things "contained in space." His discussion of time in Book 11 shows why spatial metaphors constitute a sign of an exile into figurative language. Augustine presents his discovery of the "spacelessness" of the present as the result of a logical process of *unmasking* the terms which ordinary discourse employs to designate a certain period as "present." These terms—century, year, month, day, hour, moment—are revealed to be fictional denominations of the "present" because each term names a "period" which can be divided into smaller units.²⁷ Only if an "indivisible" unit could be postulated could we say we have truly "located" the present, for any

period composed of a sequence of parts is never "present as a whole"; rather, it consists of a linear extension of its constituent units, some of which are past, some of which are future, depending on where one situates oneself in the sequence. Augustine concludes:

si quid intellegitur temporis, quod in nullas iam vel minutissimas momentorum partes dividi possit, id solum est, quod praesens dicatur; quod tamen ita raptim a futuro in praeteritum transvolat, ut nulla morula extendatur. nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum: praesens autem nullum habet spatium. (11:15, 277–78)

In fact the only time that can be called present is an instant, if we can conceive of such, that cannot be divided even into the most minute fractions, and a point of time as small as this passes so rapidly from the future to the past that its duration is without length. For if its duration were prolonged, it could be divided into past and future. The present has no space. (266)

Augustine's discussion of the language we use to "signify" time is a dramatization of the problem of all language. He demonstrates that the terms which designate the "present" are necessarily figural because the present is literally absent. And because past and future also "are not," do not literally exist, any linguistic sign which "refers to" time is figural; the "referent" of such signs does not exist. Time is a "movement" from "that which is not yet" (future) through "that which has no space" (present) into "that which now is not" (past). We see, however, that a figural language which is necessitated by the nonexistence of the referent is a peculiar sort of figurality. The figurality engendered by the ontological absence of the referent is precisely the phenomenon which prompts Socrates to attack the followers of Heraclitus in the *Cratylus*. Socrates argues that if words "name" only things which are in constant flux, such words—unlike words which imitate unchanging ideas—cannot give any certain knowledge since their referent is literally nonexistent as an object of epistemology. No verbal imitation of a mutable entity gives certain knowledge, according to Socrates, because if the very essence of knowledge changes, "at the moment of change there would be no knowledge, and if it is always changing, there will always be no knowledge" (*Cratylus* 440b). The Ciceronian definition of figural language cited earlier has, of course, quite different connotations, since it presupposes the existence of stable referents, usually conceived as physical objects. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine does adopt the Aristotelian-Ciceronian definition of metaphors as *signa translata*, signs transferred from one *res* to another.²⁸ I am suggesting, however, that the "exile into figurative language" delineated in the *Confessions* invokes Plato's more radical notion of an epistemological figurality of language.

According to Augustine's radical philosophy of Being, human language

can never be truly "literal" because all referents other than God are constituted by "not-being" and are therefore, like the referent "time," themselves figural with respect to the one absolutely literal truth. Etienne Gilson highlights this problem when he paraphrases Augustine's statement, *non enim est ibi verum esse, ubi est et non esse*: "There is no true being, and hence one cannot know how to speak truly of being, wherever there is also not-being."²⁹ The elaborate alliterative repetitions in Augustine's phrase dramatize the difficulty of conceiving essential being when one is trapped in the not-being of temporal discourse; indeed, the phrase illustrates the epistemological impasse which guarantees the failure to achieve a literal language. We cannot speak truly (literally) about the world of changing phenomena because they are constituted by not-being. And since language itself is constituted by the not-being of time, we cannot speak truly of the one perfect Being.³⁰ This paradoxical dilemma underlies Augustine's sense that language is an obstacle between man and his desired union with God. As Gilson suggests, Augustine ultimately denies "any possibility of natural thought" because the mode of knowing in time is absolutely inadequate for grasping the nature of God's atemporal Being.³¹ "In a philosophy of essence," as Henri Marrou remarks, "time always appears as a bit of a scandal."³²

What precisely is the nature of this figurality of language which bears witness to its failure to express truth literally? That failure stems from the linear temporality which makes any linguistic unit exist in *synecdochic* relation to the truth Augustine conceives as a "whole." Indeed, he uses human discourse as the prime illustration of his belief that the fundamental flaw of earthly epistemology consists in the necessity of synecdoche, of substituting the part for the whole. The mind trapped in earthly time can only "know" according to the model of the person reading a text or hearing a voice. Only after the words subside into silence, or after the eye completes its perusal of a semantic unit, can the "spaces of time" which are constitutive of meaning be "measured," because the thing measured is the "interval between a beginning and an end" (11:27, 288; trans. 275). Augustine enunciates this principle in his description of how we understand a speaking voice, and he recapitulates it in his analysis of the phrase *Deus creator omnium* in order to explain that we can "know" a text even when it is past because the memory retains "traces" of it. The matter at issue here, however, is not Augustine's theory of memory, but rather the problem of knowing that comes only at the "end" of a linear sequence.³³ For the endpoint which allows retrospective understanding is only provisional; each sequence has an end which points only to another sequence. Each semantic unit is, like the "periods" of time we have already discussed, a part of a larger unit as well as a composite of smaller units. Augustine illustrates this notion of an infinite series of "parts" at the conclusion of the well-known description of how future (expectation) passes into past (memory) during the act of reciting a psalm:

et quod in toto cantico, hoc in singulis particulis eius fit atque in singulis syllabis eius, hoc in actione longiore, cuius forte particula est illud canticum, hoc in tota vita hominis, cuius partes sunt omnes actiones hominis, hoc in toto saeculo filiorum hominum, cuius partes sunt omnes vitae hominum. (11:28, 291–92)

What is true of the whole psalm is also true of all its parts and of each syllable. It is true of any longer action in which I may be engaged and of which the recitation of the psalm may only be a small part. It is true of a man's whole life, of which all his actions are parts. It is true of the whole history of mankind, of which each man's life is a part. (278)

The vision of human life and human history as a sequence of texts which point only to other texts is emblematic of Augustine's view of earthly temporality as an endless horizontal sequence which, like Zeno's Achilles, approaches a "whole" only asymptotically. For Augustine, the "sum of the parts" can never equal God's whole because, like Boethius, he postulates an essential distinction between perpetuity (an infinity of sequence) and eternity (an infinity of presence).³⁴ The gap between the provisional whole which constitutes the "end" of a sequence and the divine whole is unbridgeable because the former only comes into being in a mode of negativity, through a "passing away and succeeding of parts" which is the law of mutability decreed for all earthly things: *hinc et huc usque*. Again using the model of language, Augustine explains the difference between God's eternity, where "the whole is at once present" (*totum esse praesens*), and that doomed search for a whole which takes place in time, which is never present (*nullum vero tempus totum esse praesens*): a sentence can never be completed (made whole, *totus*) "unless one word gives way when it has sounded its part, that another may succeed it" (4:10, 65; 11:11, 273). The paradox of our desire for the "whole" which is a temporal "completion" is that we must actually wish for the passing away of parts, whether they are the "beautiful things" of the world or the words of a sentence; the sense of completion which comes from the passing away of parts, however, leaves the heart still restless:

nam et quod loquimur, per eundem sensum carnis audis et non vis utique stare syllabas, sed transvolare, ut aliae veniant et totum audias. ita semper omnia, quibus unum aliquid constat, et non sunt omnia simul ea, quibus constat: plus delectant omnia quam singula, si possint sentiri omnia. (4:11, 66–67)

It is one of these same bodily senses that enables you to hear the words I speak, but you do not want the syllables to sound forever in my mouth: you want them to fly from my tongue and give place to others, so that you may hear the whole of what I have to say. It is always the same with the parts that together make a whole. They are not present at the same time, but if they can all be felt as one, together they give more pleasure than each single part. (81)

Augustine's sense of the hopelessness of trying to grasp the true "whole" by means of an epistemology of "succession of parts" is dramatized by his desire, as it were, to speed up time's sequence, so that "whatever exists in this present should pass away" (*ut transiret quicquid existit in praesentia*; 4:11, 66; trans. 81). The degree to which this desire to consume time betrays a fundamental ambivalence about God's purpose in creating time can be gauged by Augustine's tendency to associate the necessity of a synecdochic mode of knowing with the Fall rather than with Creation, despite the fact that the account of creation in Genesis shows God's word to be the primal origin of difference, of the division of the whole into parts and eternity into temporality. Augustine's attempt to maintain an essential distinction between God's word and human words rests on an imaginative suppression of the fact that God's word is in a crucial sense "like" human words in its creative act of generating differences. Indeed, one might say that Augustine never escapes a tendency toward dualism; his Manichaeism is perhaps merely displaced by his sense that time is so radically "other" than God that he cannot bear fully to accept temporality as a necessary result of the Creator's division of the one into the many. It is clear, at least, that Augustine does associate man's inability to know a whole with the Fall;³⁵ in a striking passage in Book 4, he derives the soul's synecdochic mode of knowing from the "just punishment" which relegated the soul itself to the status of a "part": *sed si ad totum comprehendendum esset idoneus sensus carnis tuae ac non et ipse in parte universi accepisset pro tua poena iustum modum . . .* ("But had your fleshly sense been capable of comprehending the whole, and not for your punishment been justly restricted to a part of the whole . . ."; 4:11, 66; trans. 81).

Because Augustine sees human language as the prime indication of the effects of being imprisoned in a temporal sequence, he links the end of language with the end of all "knowing by parts": "For reading is only necessary, as long as we know in part, and prophesy in part, as the Apostle says; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."³⁶ The necessity of speaking or reading words, which in Book 13 Augustine sees as the result of "the abyss of this present world and the blindness of the flesh," is in fact a sign of man's utter inability to know in a "simultaneous" rather than a partial (sequential) mode. It is language that prevents the "delight" which Augustine associates with knowing all parts "collectively" rather than "severally." Augustine's lengthy meditations on God's statement in Exodus 3:14, *Ego sum qui sum*, emphasize the failure of human language in terms of the radical difference between God's *est* and the verb which, as a "sign" of human time (that which "is not"), can only express meaning by the predication of "attributes."³⁷ As Gilson notes, Augustine highlights language's inability to express an "essence" of perfect sameness, to express a "simultaneous" truth, when he adopts the deliberately tortuous formulation, *ab illo enim est, qui non aliquo modo est, sed est est* ("for

that *is*, which is not in any way, but is is").³⁸ Even *est est* does not succeed in grasping God's nature, for tautology, as logicians point out, fails to "mean" identity because there is always a temporal difference between the first term and the second.³⁹ The gap between an atemporal essence and man's nature would be absolute, according to Augustine, had God not deigned to "descend" to our level. And the descent which foreshadows Christ's Incarnation is portrayed, in Augustine's commentaries on God's words to Moses, as a descent into the human language in which the verb "to be" "means" through predication. For in Exodus, God did not only say *Ego sum qui sum*. He added the sentence *Ego sum Deus Abraham, et Deus Isaac, et Deus Jacob*. By consenting to give himself multiple attributes, by consenting to enter historical time (symbolized by the series of patriarchs), Augustine says, God signified that He is not only that which "is," but also that which "is for us."⁴⁰

We can perhaps understand the way in which the doctrine of the Incarnation constitutes, for Augustine, the only possible escape from the exile into language if we invoke the distinction between "allegory" and "symbol" which Paul de Man discusses in "The Rhetoric of Temporality."⁴¹ The "fault" of language as I have attempted to describe it consists in language's nature as a sequence of parts which, according to Augustine, can never truly "signify" the whole of God's essence. I have also suggested that Augustine's use of spatial metaphors in his own discourse is an emblem of his awareness that the very nature of language, which dictates an epistemology of measuring "spaces of time," is radically "figural" with respect to God's atemporal truth. Now such an awareness that language is absolutely unlike the meaning to which it refers is precisely the phenomenon which de Man defines as allegory, the mode in which language points "to a meaning which it does not itself constitute" (174). De Man contrasts allegory with symbol: the symbol implies a relation between sign and signified which is "organic," which erases the qualitative difference between sign and signified by positing "an intimate relation between the image that rises up before the senses and the supersensory totality that the image suggests" (174). De Man links the symbolic mode of language with the trope synecdoche, and it is here that I must modify his argument: for Augustine, as we have seen, there can be no "organic coherence of synecdoche" (177) in language because he sees the substitution of the part for the whole as an infinite "horizontal" sequence. De Man, interpreting the figure in accordance with Romantic poetics, evokes a "vertical" image of synecdoche, in which the part bears an integral resemblance to the whole.⁴² What I wish to suggest is that for Augustine, there is only one "word" which is symbolical in de Man's sense of the term, and that is Christ. Christ is the only "image" which can bridge the absolute gap between sign and signified by allowing the "image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their

being but only in their extension . . ." (de Man 190). Christ is the only true *similitudo* because His relation to God is one of genuine "simultaneity," a simultaneity which can only exist outside of time.⁴³ Thus it is that Augustine places so much emphasis on the fact that Christ—God in his aspect of the Word—existed "before time": "O Word more ancient than time, by whom times were made. . . ."⁴⁴

It is precisely because Christ is consubstantial with God that His Word provides a redemptive escape from the *regio dissimilitudinis*. It is important to realize, however, that for Augustine, the Incarnation does not redeem language itself; rather, the Incarnation guarantees the *end* of language because it promises the possibility of an ultimate transcendence of time. Augustine's rhetoric is finally a "rhetoric of silence" because he maintains a distinction of *essence* between God's Word and human words.⁴⁵ The Grace which comes to man in time and which promises an end to all time is a Word wholly unlike other words, even the words of Scripture, which translate God's voice into "a creature's movement, a temporal movement."⁴⁶ The soul can in fact know through language only because she has been granted an "intuitive" knowledge of the truth, an intuition which provides a standard by which to judge the inadequacy of all temporal utterance:

et haec ad tempus facta verba tua nuntiavit auris exterior menti prudenti. cuius auris interior posita est ad aeternum verbum tuum. at illa comparavit haec verba temporaliter sonantia cum aeterno in silentio verbo tuo et dixit: "aliud est longe. longe aliud est. haec longe infra me sunt nec sunt, quia fugiunt et praetereunt: verbum autem dei mei supra me manet in aeternum." (11:6, 269)

These words, which you had caused to sound in time, were reported by the bodily ear of the hearer to the mind, which has intelligence and inward hearing responsive to your eternal Word. The mind compared these words, which it heard sounding in time, with your Word, which is silent and eternal, and said, "God's eternal Word is far, far different from these words which sound in time. They are far beneath me; in fact, they are not at all, because they die away and are lost. But the Word of my God is above me and endures for ever." (258)

The image of the "inward ear" is the sign of man's receptivity to Grace, the sign that for the Christian, unlike the Platonist, there is indeed a "way" to God which "bypasses" language. In his inward ear Augustine hears that there is an absolute difference between words which proceed in time and God's Word, which "time does not affect," but which rather "stands forever, equal with me in eternity" (*verbo autem meo tempus non accedit, quia aequali mecum aeternitate consistit*, 13:29, 365; trans. 341). And it is only the inward ear—that conduit of love—which finally serves as a bulwark against the multiplicity of interpretations which Augustine sees arising from the text of

Genesis. There is no way of judging words' "correctness" (since the "intention" of any given author is unknowable) except through the "inward eye" which is "lighted" by God so that it judges all words according to the simple standard of whether or not they promote "charity."⁴⁷

In the last analysis, Augustine regards all language as a region of radical unlikeness. The Scriptures are a partial path toward God, but by their existence as signs in time they remain unlike the truth toward which they point; and their "anagogical" level signifies the coming of a time when even Scriptural signs will be unnecessary. The mode of unlikeness which characterizes the Scriptures is suggested in Augustine's metaphor (from Psalm 103:2) of the Bible as an unfolded scroll, extending across the heavens in a striking allegory of the "spaces of time" which constitute the "linear" nature of earthly temporality. When the scroll is "rolled together," according to the apocalyptic prophecy of Isaiah 34:4, the time of sequence will be replaced by a "present" of eternal simultaneity. Then the "unlikeness" of language, which Augustine compares to the "riddle of the clouds" and the "mirror of the heavens" (*aenigmate nubium . . . speculum caeli*), will disappear.⁴⁸ Language, in the metaphor Augustine adopts from St. Paul, is the "glass" through which we see darkly; it is a flawed mirror, a *speculum* which by its nature cannot reflect the perfect image of God. So Augustine names the "faulty essence" of all mimetic signs, and longs for that place of rest

ubi est intellectus nosse simul, non ex parte, non in aenigmate, non per speculum, sed ex toto, in manifestatione, facie ad faciem; non modo hoc, modo illud, sed, quod dictum est, nosse simul sine ulla vicissitudine temporum. . . . (12:13, 303)

where the intellect is privileged to know all at once, not in part only, not as if it were *looking at a confused reflection in a mirror*, but as a whole, clearly, *face to face* [I Cor. 13:12]; not first one thing and then another but, as I have said, all at once, quite apart from the ebb and flow of time. (289)

The Christian exile awaits the time when he will arrive at his true home in the Heavenly City; at the end of his earthly pilgrimage, according to Augustine's commentary on Psalm 119, he will join the righteous who "enjoy the Word of God without reading, without letters: for what is written to us through pages, they perceive there through the face of God" (*fruntur Verbo Dei sine lectione, sine litteris: quod enim nobis per paginas scriptum est, per faciem Dei illi cernunt*).⁴⁹

IV. The Waters of Confusion

An essay which maps the metaphorical topography of language as the "region of unlikeness" may fittingly conclude by noting a *translatio* which links

exile with the fall into linguistic multiplicity. In a letter to Henry VII, Dante begs the monarch for deliverance from his "unmerited exile." Drawing on a long-standing patristic tradition which conflated Babel with Babylon by translating both words as *confusio*, Dante revises the famous exile lament of Psalm 136 by portraying himself as weeping above the river of confusion, *super flumina confusionis*.⁵⁰ The confusion Dante refers to here is political; the Florentines who are rupturing Dante's ideal of a unified Italy are called *alteri Babylonii*, new builders of the Tower of Babel who must be punished for their pride.⁵¹ In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* Dante underlines the link between Babel and the Fall. The sin of pride which caused human nature to be "banished from the delightful native land" is repeated in the building of the tower punished by a fall from linguistic unity into diversity of tongues.⁵²

Babel and Babylon, linguistic and spiritual exile—both are constituted by a fall into confusion and fragmentation, a fall away from an ideal of truth as an atemporal totality. In the Neo-Platonic and Augustinian interpretations of the "region of unlikeness," the soul's "dissimilitude" is coterminous with the fallen language it must employ in its search for the truth. As St. Bernard writes, the exiled soul wandering in the region of unlikeness finds only "confusion and uncertainty."⁵³ The inability to grasp a "whole" in language is indeed an exile into the "river of confusion"—the hostile element which Plato associates with Heraclitan flux (the "seas of discourse") and which Augustine, meditating on the phrase "rivers of Babylon," identifies with time itself and the hopelessness of all desire fixed on "that which passes."⁵⁴ Unlike Plato, however, Augustine envisions a rescue for those drowning in the water: they may hold onto the wood of the Cross: "Behold them placed between the flood and destruction: scarcely anyone escapes being snatched by the flood, unless he can hold onto the wood."⁵⁵ The cross is the only escape from the waters of confusion, spiritual and linguistic. For Augustine, it is the "way" from Babylon to Jerusalem, from Babel to silence.

Notes

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *The Georgia Review* (Winter 1975) and I gratefully acknowledge the help I initially received from John T. Irwin, past editor of that journal, and also the encouragement given by the current editor, Stanley W. Lindberg, for the project of revision. That project owes its existence to the editors of the present volume, Dan Selden and Ralph Hexter; I thank them for much invaluable advice. For inspiration and constructive criticism during the many years I've been trying to read Augustine with and against the grain, I warmly thank John Freccero and Rachel Jacoff.

This essay bears traces of the time and place of its initial production, the early 1970s at Yale University. Were I writing it today, I would no doubt attempt a more historicizing mode of analysis than did the author of what you are about to read, an author intrigued by what the movement that came to be known as deconstruction offered to the student of classical and

Renaissance literature and literary theory. I would also do more to qualify my argument about Augustine's (Platonic) skepticism toward human language—an argument based chiefly on the *Confessions*—in the light of valuable recent work by scholars such as Marcia Colish and Kathy Eden on Augustine's theories of rhetoric as articulated in texts other than the *Confessions*, among them the *De mendacio*, *Contra mendacium*, and *De doctrina christiana*; such texts show Augustine's substantial debts to rhetorical and legal theories of interpretation derived from Stoic and Aristotelian sources rather than from the Platonic ones I chiefly emphasize (see M. L. Colish, "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence Revisited," *Augustinian Studies* 9 (1978), 15–24 and K. Eden, "The Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics in *De doctrina christiana*," *Rhetorica* 3 1 (Winter 1990), 45–63).

I have chosen to reprint my essay here with only minor revisions of its original argument (although with substantial addition to the notes) because it probes an aspect of Augustine's work that still seems significant to me, and it does so from a theoretical premise still relatively unusual in scholarly studies of Augustine: the premise is that the author's rhetorical practice, in a given text, impinges in crucial ways on (what we construe to be) his theoretical "views" on rhetoric. In its effort to explore some of the knotted links between Augustine's theory and practice of rhetoric, or more broadly, language, in the *Confessions*, my essay arrives at conclusions I would still defend, though without claiming they represent the whole truth and nothing but the truth about the large and by no means uncontradictory set of texts in which Augustine brooded on the ends and means of signification, human and divine.

1. *De oratore* 3, 37; quoted from the Loeb bilingual edition, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), 2:118–19. Cicero's definition of metaphor is clearly indebted to Aristotle's statement, in *Poetics* 20, 1457b, that "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else" (quoted from *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts and I. Bywater, ed. F. Solmsen (New York, 1954), 251); but Cicero's distinction between *verba propria* and *verba translata* arguably oversimplifies Aristotle's notion(s) of "proper," which, as Jacques Derrida observes in "La Mythologie blanche" (1971; rpt. in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris, 1972), 247–324), may be applied, in its sense of "appropriate" (*πρέπειον*), to any language that meets a standard of decorum. Derrida further notes that the Greek *κύριον*, also translated as "proper," refers to the dominant or major sense of a word, a sense that is often, but not always, what might be identified as the "literal" or "common sense" denotation (294).
2. Miller, "Tradition and Difference," *Diacritics* 2.4 (Winter 1972), 12.
3. See *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris, 1967), 101–92, translated as *Writing and Difference* by A. Bass (Chicago, 1978).
4. See *De la grammatologie* (Paris, 1967), 46 ff. for a discussion of the "inside/outside" dichotomy; Derrida is particularly concerned to critique the idea that writing constitutes a "*dehors*" of which "voice" is the "*déjà*" or "presence"; translated as *Of Grammatology* by G. Spivak (Baltimore, 1971).
5. "La Mythologie blanche," *Marges*, 273; my translation.
6. 302. Derrida interrogates the classical notion of metaphor and its corollary notion of a "proper" home in the course of a wide ranging (if often oblique) questioning of a set of concepts pertaining to the "self," "property," and the long-standing opposition between "scientific" and "poetic" language, an opposition Derrida is intent on deconstructing. Traditional views of metaphor as "obscure" (Aristotle) or as an "obstacle" to "scientific knowledge" (Bachelard) rest, Derrida suggests, on a problematic set of assumptions about figuration as an "expropriation" dependent on an idea of "home" as a place where "*on se retrouve, se reconnaît, se rassemble ou se ressemble. . .*" For Derrida, the Aristotelian (and Ciceronian) view of metaphor as a "*substitution de noms propres ayant un sens et un référent fixes*" (290) is a philosophical defense, with important historical and ideological

consequences for Post-Enlightenment science and philosophy, against the possibility that metaphor might not be a temporary "detour" on a road that leads to truth but rather a potentially endless process of substitution.

7. See Mazzeo's "Saint Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence," *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962), 175–96, esp. 176, 187, 193. See also E. Vance, "Augustine's *Confessions* and the Grammar of Selfhood," *Genre* 1 (1973), 1–28, esp. 6–9, 23.
8. See *De la grammatologie*, 51.
9. *The Statesman*, 269d. This and subsequent citations of Plato are from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton, 1961). *The Statesman* in this edition is translated by J. B. Skemp.
10. For a summary of the textual debate on "*τόπον*" and "*πόριον*" see E. Gilson, "Regio Dissimilitudinis de Platon à Saint Bernard de Clairvaux," *Medieval Studies*, 9 (1947), 108–130. The reading "ocean" appears in Proclus, Simplicius, and in numerous Greek commentaries on Plato from the fifth through the twelfth centuries; some modern critics prefer it because it accords better with the general nautical imagery of the passage. Gilson argues that "region"—the reading of all the early Platonic manuscripts and the one given by Plotinus—is correct.
11. See P. Courcelle, "Répertoire des textes relatifs à la 'région de dissemblance' de Platon à Gide," Appendix 5 of his *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: Antécédents et postérité* (Paris, 1963), 623–40. He supplements this study with additional texts, bibliography, and commentary in "La 'Région de dissemblance' dans la tradition Néo-Platonisante," Appendix 7 of *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin*, rev. ed. (Paris, 1968), 405–40. For the transmission of the "regio dissimilitudinis" through, among others, Plotinus and Proclus—who associate this trope with the soul's fall into matter and bestiality—see also the article on "Dissemblance" by G. Dumeige, in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris, 1957) 3:1330–46.
12. See Freccero's "Dante's Prologue Scene," (1966; rpt. in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. R. Jacoff (Cambridge, 1988)), 1–28.
13. William of St. Thierry links the "regio dissimilitudinis" with Egypt in his *Meditative Orations*, 218b; cited in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 1337. For Dante's merging of the Neo-Platonic tradition and Exodus imagery, see Freccero, 14–15; Freccero points to texts by Richard of St. Victor which allegorize the Exodus desert as the "region of unlikeness." The quotation from William of St. Thierry, translated by Freccero, is from the *De natura et dignitate amoris*, 11:34.
14. On Plotinus' development of a "full-fledged theory of the One as the highest principle or cause" from what are "at best hints in Plato" (mainly from the *Parmenides* and *The Republic* Book 6), and on his attacks on Gnosticism and other dualisms (including Aristotle's), see the article "Plotinus" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York, 1967), 6:353–56. For Augustine's account of his reading "some books of the Platonists" to counter Manichaean theories of evil see *The Confessions* Book 7, chapter 9. All references to this text are to the edition of Martin Skutella, corrected by H. Juergens and W. Schaub (Stuttgart, 1969). The quoted phrase is from p. 137. Subsequent references will give book and chapter numbers of *The Confessions* followed by the page number of the Skutella text. English passages are based on the translation by R. S. Pine-Coffin (Baltimore, 1961); I have, however, made some changes in Pine-Coffin's wording.
15. Joseph Mazzeo remarks that for Augustine, "the use of the arts of language is utterly dependent on the structure of reality" and for this reason, Augustine resembles Plato more than any other classical rhetorical theorist (176); see also Mazzeo's discussion of the significant parallels between Augustine's conception of the "mimetic dialectic" and

- Plato's (193). For a counterinterpretation that stresses Augustine's "dependence on rhetorical sources grounded in Stoic or Aristotelian philosophy, rather than in Platonism or in Pauline theology," see M. L. Colish, "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence Revisited" (cited in headnote), 16.
16. Plato's mention of an "unlimited variety of sound" is in *Philebus* 18b. The concept of "unlimited" is discussed at length in this dialogue in connection with the problem of pleasure. For the negative connotations of ἀπειρον, see Gilson, "Regio Dissimilitudinis," 115–16. He remarks that the Greek word means "lack of limits," which has a different connotation than the "excess" implied by some uses of the French (or English) "infinite[ly]." See *Cratylus* 440a–b for Socrates' arguments against those who hold that "all things are in motion and flux."
 17. For Augustine's denunciation of the "idolatry" of adhering to any sign rather than "the thing it was designed to signify"—a theme throughout his work—see especially *De doctrina christiana*, translated by D. W. Robertson, Jr., as *On Christian Doctrine* (New York, 1958), Book 2, chapters 6–9, 84–87. Augustine writes that it is "carnal slavery" to worship any sign, but it is much "worse slavery" to embrace "signs instituted for spiritually useless things"—i.e., the signs of all pagan literature except that which foreshadows Christian themes.
 18. For Augustine's concept of the moral usefulness of scriptural difficulty, see M. Pontet, *L'Exégèse de Saint Augustin prédicateur* (Paris, 1944), chap. 2, "Les Idées de Saint Augustin sur l'Écriture." In Book 13:24 of the *Confessions* Augustine attempts to explain the fact that "one thing [res] may be understood and expressed many ways, and one of those expressions understood several ways too"; he attributes this multiplicity of expression and interpretation to God's command in Genesis that all things should "increase and multiply" (Skutella 359; trans. 335). For an excellent discussion of this passage see G. Harpham, "The Fertile Word: Augustine's Ascetics of Interpretation," *Criticism* 28 (Summer 1986), 249–50.
 19. J. Derrida, "La Pharmacie de Platon," *La Dissémination* (Paris, 1972), 160.
 20. For a discussion of Augustine's "logology," see K. Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961).
 21. This and other citations of Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* are based on the translation by H. M. Wilkins in the Library of the Fathers series (Oxford, 1847–1855), vols. 4 and 5. The original of Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* is best consulted in *Aurelii Augustini Opera*, part 10, ed. D. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont (Turnhout, 1956) = *Corpus Christianorum Scriptorum Latinorum [CCSL]*, vols. 38–40. The original of the quoted passage is: *Et illa civitate unde peregrinamur, litterae nobis venerunt: ipsae sunt scripturae, quae nos hortantur ut bene vivamus. Quid dicam venisse litteras? Ipse rex descendit. . . .* (*Enarr. in Ps. XC, sermo* 2.1, CCSL 39.1266). An earlier edition of the *Enarrationes* is widely available in *PL* vols. 36–37 (Paris, 1841–1845), where the passage quoted above appears at *PL* 37.1159.
 22. In Book 13:15 of the *Confessions* Augustine distinguishes between the Christ we follow *per retia carnis* and the Christ who will appear in his true guise at the Second Coming: *sed cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum, sicuti est: sicuti est, domine, videre nostrum, quod nondum est nobis* (342). He speaks, of course, not of a change in Christ's essence, but in our mode of knowing Him. Cf. Augustine's commentary on Psalm 104:4: 1, where he distinguishes between Christ as the true Word of God and the Christ who "descended to assume the infirmity of our body" by consenting to manifest himself in "the particles of our sounds," although God's Word has no syllables. *Enarrationes*, trans. Wilkins, 5:128.
 23. *De doctrina christiana* 1:150, trans. Robertson, 75.
 24. The passages from the *Enneads* are quoted in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 1332–33. Gilson (117–19) provides a detailed analysis of Plotinus' conception of matter. For discussions of the notion of the "interior journey," see Freccero 4–6; and also Courcelle, *Recherches* 106–17 (on St. Ambrose's paraphrases of Plotinus).
 25. See *Confessions* 7:17, 145–46. The "fall" occurs after an extended relation of the "wisdom" which Augustine learned from the Platonists, so that the discourse is dramatically situated as part of the vision which disappears as Augustine is pulled down by his carnal weight, *ruebam in ista cum genui*.
 26. For a discussion of Augustine's conflation of Luke's *regionem longinquam* with the *regio dissimilitudinis*, see *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 1334–35. See also, for citations of numerous passages in the *Confessions* which develop Augustine's spiritual journey in terms of the Prodigal Son parable, Fr. Chatillon, "Regio Dissimilitudinis," *Mélanges E. Podécharid* (Lyon, 1945), 93, note 2.
 27. *Confessions* 11:15, 276–78. Augustine's discussion here parallels Aristotle's inquiry into the question of the existence of a "present" in the *Physics*, Books 3 and 4. For a modern philosophical analysis of Augustine's "temporal paradox," see J. N. Findlay, "Time: A Treatment of Some Puzzles," in *Problems of Space and Time*, ed. J. J. C. Smart (New York, 1964), 339–55. Findlay's "ordinary language" approach ignores the complexity of Augustine's demonstration that language partly determines our "common sense" perception of the "facts." For Findlay, the facts are simply "there," and the problem is to make our words correspond to the facts we can "see and show" (346).
 28. *De Doctrina* 2:10, trans. Robertson, 43: "Figurative signs occur when that thing which we designate by a literal sign [*signum proprium*] is used to signify something else; thus we say "ox" and understand by that syllable understand the animal which is ordinarily designated by that word, but again by that animal we understand an evangelist. . . ." This formulation depends logically on a complication Augustine has previously introduced into the *res/signa* dyad, namely that the former category includes the latter from the point of view of ontology, but will often be opposed to the latter for the purposes of rhetorical theory and also in Augustine's own rhetorical practice. As he explains in *De doctrina* 1:2: "[E]very sign is also a thing, for that which is not a thing is nothing at all; but not every thing is a sign. And thus in this distinction between things and signs, when we speak of things, we shall so speak that, although some of them may be used to signify something else, this fact shall not disturb the arrangement we have made to speak of things as such first, and of signs [which category includes but isn't limited to words] later" (8–9). For valuable discussions of the complexities of Augustine's theory of signs, see K. Eden, "Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics" (art. cit. in headnote) and B. D. Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 15 (1969), 9–49.
 29. Gilson, *Philosophie et incarnation selon Saint Augustin* (Montreal, 1947), 29; my translation.
 30. Augustine's definition of the "essential non-essence" of time is in 11:14: ". . . we cannot, rightly, say that time is, except by reason of its impending state of not being" (*non vere dicamus tempus esse, nisi quia tendit non esse*) (Pine-Coffin 264; Skutella 275).
 31. Gilson, *Philosophie* 29.
 32. Marrou, *L'Ambivalence du temps de l'histoire chez Saint Augustin* (Montreal, 1950), 43.
 33. The notion of memory as a "present of things past," which Augustine proffers here as a solution to the literal absence of past time, does not by any means imply an escape from the linear "negativity" of time. Augustine indicates that the "present" of the memory is also "figural" by his use of a specifically linguistic terminology in the explanation of how the memory retains the past: the memory is a repository not of the "things themselves which are past [*res ipsae, quae praeterierunt*], but only words based on our

- memory pictures of those things, because when they happened they left an impression on our minds, by means of our sense-perception" (11:18; Skutella 279; Pine-Coffin 267). These traces constitute a "text" in the mind—a text which like a book is "present" in a way that spoken words are not, since the sequences of words can be "read" again and again; nevertheless, they are still *sequences*, and hence are not "present" according to Augustine's own analysis. They require the passage of time to be comprehended. For a useful general discussion of Augustine's trinitarian view of memory (associated with the Father when "intelligence" is associated with the Son and "will" is associated with the Holy Ghost), see O. du Roy, *L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1966), 439, 443 and *passim*. See also the chapter "Le Labyrinthe de la mémoire" in J. Chaix-Ruy, *Saint Augustin: Temps et histoire* (Paris, 1956), 19–34; and also, for a comprehensive survey of the issue, H.-J. Kaiser, *Augustinus: Zeit und "Memoria"* (Bonn, 1969).
34. For Augustine's notion of eternity as an infinity of presence, see *Confessions* 11:11, 273. Cf. Boethius' discussion of the difference between "eternal" and "perpetual" (a distinction he derives from Plato's *Timaeus* 37d ff.); like Augustine Boethius sees the "infinite duration of time" as a flawed imitation of God's eternity: "For the infinite motion of temporal things imitates the immediate present of His changeless life and, since it cannot reproduce or equal life, it sinks from immobility to motion and declines from the simplicity of the present into the infinite duration of future and past. And, since it cannot possess the whole fullness of its life at once, it seems to imitate to some extent that which it cannot completely express. . . ." (*Consolation of Philosophy* 5, Prose 6, trans. R. Green [Indianapolis, 1962], 116).
 35. H. Marrou, *L'Ambivalence du temps*, argues that Augustine's "negative" view of time does not imply any dualistic tendency, but Marrou is a Catholic defender of Augustinian doctrine. A passage he quotes from Augustine's *De peccatorum meritis* 1:16, 21, underlines the link between the Fall and the creation of "mortal" time: at the moment of Adam's sin "une affreuse et soudaine corruption s'abattit comme une maladie sur les hommes: ils perdirent cette stabilité dans la durée avec laquelle ils avaient été créés et s'engagèrent dans les vicissitudes de l'âge en direction de la mort" (68–69). Marrou admits that Augustine has difficulty in regarding "fallen" time, or "natural" time, as anything other than an evil: *dies mali, malignum saeculum* (71). See also G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge, 1982), x (on dualism in Augustine) and 99 (on evil entering the world at the moment of creation).
 36. *Enarr. in Ps.* 94, trans. Wilkins, Library of the Fathers, 4:349. The reference is to 1 Corinthians 13:9–10.
 37. Augustine's commentaries on Exodus 3:13–15 are quoted at length by Gilson, *Philosophie*. Gilson emphasizes in particular *In Joan. Evangelium*, Tract. 38 and 39; *Enarr. in Ps.* 101, 104, and 134; and *Sermones* 6 and 7. See also E. Zum Brunn, "La Sémantique augustinienne de l'esse," in *Le Dilemme de l'être et du néant chez Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1969), 9–16.
 38. Quoted and discussed in Gilson, *Philosophie* 26; cf. Skutella 13.31, 367.
 39. See, for example, R. Greer Cohn's comment on the problem of "identity" in "Nodes," *Diacritics* 4:1 (Spring 1974), 35, note 3: "[I]f we say A = A, by the time we have pronounced the second A, even the first A is no longer the same (it is altered in time), no matter how infinitely small the interval."
 40. Augustine interprets the "addition" of this sentence as a "consolation" in the face of the absolute incomprehensibility of God's "primary" name, his mysterious "est"; it is a consolation because God "enters" history by giving himself predicative "attributes"; see Gilson, *Philosophie* 26 (on "attribution"). The final phrase is from *Enarr. in Ps.* 101, quoted in Gilson, *Philosophie* 40.
 41. De Man's article is in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Charles S. Singleton (Baltimore, 1969), 173–209.
 42. De Man posits an "organic coherence of the synecdoche" in a discussion of Coleridge, for whom the distinction between allegory and symbol is secondary to a conception of all figural language as a "translucent" designation of the "transcendental source"; Augustine will insist rather on the ultimate "opacity" of all language (the image of the flawed mirror discussed below).
 43. See de Man 190: "Their [symbolic] relationship is one of simultaneity, which in truth is spatial in kind, and in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency." For an elaboration of the doctrinal intricacies of Augustine's view of Christ as the only true "similitudo," see Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1931), 269–70. See also O. du Roy's section on "Dissemblance et Ressemblance," in *L'Intelligence de la foi*, 234–43; see esp. 237 on the relation between the Father and the Son as the "supreme model" of perfect "adequation" and "imitation." R. A. Markus provides a useful analysis of the general issue of "likeness" in his "'Imago' and 'Similitudo' in Augustine," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 11 (1964), 125–43.
 44. Quoted in Gilson 41; from *Enarr. in Ps.* 101.
 45. Augustine draws an important related distinction between human thought and human utterance in the course of making what Kathy Eden calls a "striking analogy between verbal communication and the Incarnation" ("Rhetorical Tradition and Augustinian Hermeneutics" 49). His distinction between "the psychological and the properly linguistic aspects of verbal communication" is illustrated through an account of the Incarnation which verges on dualism in its insistence that "the Word of God was made flesh, but most assuredly not changed into flesh. Our word is made utterance, the divine Word flesh, by an assumption of the outward form, and not by a consumption of itself and a passing into the other" (*De trinitate* 15.11.20, quoted in Eden 49, from *Augustine: Later Works*, trans. J. Burnaby [Philadelphia, 1955]). See also Eden's discussion of the similar passage in *De doctrina* 1.13.12 and M. D. Jordan, "Words and Word: Incarnation and Signification in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), 177–96.
 46. I paraphrase here from *Confessions* 11.6; this passage, partially quoted below in my text, stresses a distinction between "eternal" and "temporal" language—here considered as spoken by God himself—through various plays on singular and plural forms of the word *verbum*. This distinction of *number*, which I think is important to Augustine's effort to represent rhetorically a distinction by nature unrepresentable in human language, is overlooked by Mazzeo in his otherwise helpful discussion of the Augustinian distinction between two kinds of *verba*, which corresponds to his (more frequently mentioned) distinction between eternal and temporal kinds of realities (*res*). See Mazzeo, "The Rhetoric of Silence," esp. 187 and note 45, which adduces passages from *De magistro* 3:5–6 and 11.36 to 12:46 for Augustine's distinction between "man-made" or "conventional" words and those that are "internal, silent," and used by the "inner teacher," Christ.
 47. On the opacity of authorial "intention," see *Confessions* 12.24, 317. Augustine distinguishes between the meaning which is "certain" according to God's truth and the meaning intended by the individual author—in this context, none other than God's "inspired" servant Moses: . . . *sicut in tua veritate hoc certum video, ita in eius mente video id eum cogitasse, cum haec scriberet?* The criterion of "caritas"—given not by reason but by Grace—is finally the only way of "reconciling" the "diversity of true opinions" (12:30, 326).
 48. See Augustine's commentary on verse 2 of Psalm 103 (in the Vulgate numbering): *Extendens caelum sicut pellem*, *Enarr. in Ps.* 104, Library of the Fathers 5:73. In *Confessions* 13:15, 342, Augustine conflates the line from Psalm 103 with Isaiah 34.4, *et compluabuntur*

sicut liber caeli. For a general discussion of the image of the heavens as a "scroll," see R. Eisler, "Der Gottheit Lebendiges Kleid," Chapter 2 of *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt* (Munich, 1910), 87 ff.

49. *Enarr. in Ps.* 120, trans. Wilkins, *Library of the Fathers* 5:466–67; the Latin text is cited in Pontet 117, note 30. See also *Confessions* 13:15 where Augustine describes in similar terms the mode in which the angels know God: *vident enim faciem tuam semper, et ibi legunt sine syllabis temporum* . . . (341). For the motif of the "pilgrimage," ubiquitous throughout Augustine's writing, see his commentary on verse 5 of Psalm 119: *Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est!*
50. *The Letters of Dante*, ed. and trans. P. Toynbee (Oxford, 1920), 89. For the etymological link between Babel and Babylon (mentioned in Toynbee's note 2), see the monumental study by A. Kircher, *Turris Babel* (Amsterdam, 1679); see esp. 36, where Kircher quotes Josephus' *De antiquitate Iudaica* on the reason why Babel was built in Babylon.
51. Letter 6 ("To the most iniquitous Florentines"), quoted from Toynbee 68.
52. *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, 1:7; Babel is here presented as the *third* fall (after the sin which God punished in the Flood, the second prideful "fall"): . . . *tertio insurrexit ad verbera per superbiam suam et stultitiam praesumendo*. Quoted from *Tutte le Opere di Dante Alighieri*, ed. E. Moore (Oxford, 1894), 362.
53. *Tractatus de cantu*, 7; quoted in Courcelle, *Les Confessions* 628.
54. Augustine's metaphorical link between time and the flow of a river appears also in his commentary on Psalm 38:7, where he meditates on the "not-being" of historical time: *"tout cela est comme emporté par l'instant qui s'envole, les choses s'écoulent comme le flot d'un torrent, momentis volantibus cuncta rapiuntur, torrens rerum fluit. . . ."* (Quoted and translated by Marrou, *L'Ambivalence* 43–44.)
55. *Enarr. in Ps.* 136 (commentary on line 1: *Super flumina Babylonis illic sedimus et flevimus*); quoted in Pontet, *L'Exégèse* 520–21; my translation.

4

Plato and the Erotics of Narrativity

David M. Halperin

I

One of the most curious and seldom-remarked facts about Plato's Dialogues is that many of them are not, in fact, dialogues. By this I do not mean that Plato's Dialogues are not "real" dialogues or "true" conversations (measured against some normative standard of conversational reciprocity): I am not about to lodge against Plato the routine liberal complaint that he fails to portray genuinely mutual, freewheeling discussions—choosing to represent, instead, a series of highly asymmetrical exchanges between Socrates (or some other Platonic mouthpiece), who does most of the talking, and various other, more or less cooperative, interlocutors, who (with the refreshing exceptions of Calicles in the *Gorgias* and Thrasymachus in the First Book of the *Republic*) are largely "yes-men."¹ What I mean, rather, is that a number of Plato's so-called Dialogues are not dialogues at all in the formal sense: their characteristic mode of representation is not dramatic but narrative.²

The formal, theoretical or conceptual, distinction between dramatic and narrative literature is not one that is likely to have been lost on Plato. For that very distinction originated with Plato himself.³ In the Third Book of the *Republic*, Socrates divides literature into three kinds, according to whether it employs as its representational medium "simple narration" (*haplé diégēsis*),⁴ "imitation" (*mimēsis*), or a combination of the two (392d–394c). "Simple narration" is defined as that mode of representation in which the author does not conceal himself (393c11) but speaks to the audience in his own person (394c2–3) "without imitation" (393d1, 394a7–b1)—that is, without citing the direct speech of his characters and thereby impersonating or "imitating" them. "Simple narration" can be found mostly in dithyrambs, Socrates tells us (394c3); the late antique grammarian Servius added didactic poetry, as exemplified by the first three books of Virgil's *Georgics*, to the same category.⁵ "Imitation" is originally introduced by Socrates in the *Republic* as an alternative to "simple narration": it is defined as narration that is effected