

Gender and the Nature of Extended Prayer: An Analysis of Sappho's *To Aphrodite*, Enheduanna's *Lady of the Largest Heart* and *The Exaltation of Inanna*, and Saint Augustine's *Confessions*

Sarah J. Black

Despite the recent inclusion of women rhetoricians in college communication textbooks, there is still work to be done examining how the works of ancient female writers have influenced discourse. Likewise, almost no attention has been given to gender and the nature of prayer as rhetoric. The present study is a literary analysis of the poetry of Sappho and Enheduanna and the prose of Saint Augustine. It examines the similarities and differences between how these three rhetoricians seek divine intervention and the influence of gender in how each writer approaches the divine. The findings show that the greatest similarities are the need for acknowledgement, reassurance, and a parental relationship. Although Sappho, Enheduanna, and Augustine use prayer as rhetoric differently, this is the result of culture and time period more than gender. While this study brings needed attention to ancient female rhetoricians and the nature of prayer, further examination of ancient female writers is needed to solidify their place in the communication canon.

In this paper, I explore the nature of extended prayer in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Sappho's *To Aphrodite*, and Enheduanna's *Lady of the Largest Heart* and *Exaltation of Inanna*. The purpose of this research is to conduct a literary analysis of primary texts and secondary sources, whereby I examine the similarities and differences in the ways that men and women in distress appeal to divine intervention. This is an important topic to explore for several reasons. First, there is a dearth of scholarly resources in the communication arena giving attention to ancient female voices. Second, because the earliest female rhetoricians were banned from the public arena (i.e., courts, public assemblies),

it is necessary to examine the voices of powerful women through the mediums they *could* use to express themselves. For Enheduanna, the daughter of King Sargon of Akkad, this was through her role as high priestess. For Sappho, a member of the aristocracy, it was through her reputation as a highly regarded lyric poet whose work was “the quintessential model... and was included as standard reading in Greek, Roman, and Byzantine academies” (Williams 45). Third, it is important to explore whether men and women pray differently to understand the similar and different needs and desires of men and women in their relationships with the gods to have a greater comprehension of the social and psychological constructs that prompt each sex to appeal to divine intervention.

The primary texts that I have chosen to analyze are Sappho’s *To Aphrodite*, Enheduanna’s *The Exaltation of Inanna*, and St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. The translations I will use are from John William’s *An Introduction to Classical Rhetoric* and Henry Chadwick’s *Saint Augustine*. I have chosen these specific selections out of the large bodies of work of these three authors because of their inherent similarities. Each work is written in the first person, each is an appeal to a specific god with whom the author appears to have a close personal relationship, and in each poem there is a specific plea for help. This is important because it demonstrates the intent of the authors to make a personal and emotional identification with their readers.

In my research, I have found very few scholarly articles examining these specific works with regards to how men and women perceive prayer and no books or articles that cross-reference any of these works or compare and contrast how these authors converse with and appeal to God. Therefore, in this paper I first conduct a literature review, establishing what previous scholars have written about each of these specific authors and their works in a religious context and next what studies have shown about the differences between how men and women pray. Then, I present a literary analysis of each of the works, interpreting how each of the poems exemplifies an extended prayer. Finally, I evaluate the similarities and differences of these works in terms of speaker, tone, image, language, and rhetorical style to assess how each of these writers appeals for divine intervention in distress, and to discern if there is a notable difference between how each sex appeal for divine intervention.

Literature Review

Unlike Enheduanna, the High Priestess or St. Augustine, a revered master of exegesis, Sappho is not primarily regarded for her role as a religious leader.

Sappho is best known as a poet and a headmistress of a school for girls. However, the notion of Sappho as a headmistress was first mentioned in the Victorian Era when such a position was fashionable for women, and there is no evidence of her ever having served in this role (Burnett 210). She has a reputation for her promiscuous sexuality and both heterosexual and homosexual attractions and the “inspiration, purpose, and expression of that passion” in her poetry (Duban 36). However, Sappho’s role has been likened to that of a “priestess” and as the “chief personality binding her young devotees together with ties of intimacy and dedication” at a quasi-religious college (Duban 37). Sappho’s poetry, though deeply intimate and personal, is also primarily a social act, embodied in language and song in which others can take part (Duban 39). Sappho is more than a female poet who confesses “private feelings to the female objects of her desire.” She is not motivated by idealism or intellectualism but rather a desire to find solace and communion with Aphrodite as her muse and source of comfort (Duban 45).

Previous scholars have debated the seriousness of *To Aphrodite*, and whether or not it should be considered an intimate prayer or just a direct, conventional poem. The poem is conventional in that Sappho evokes the goddess Aphrodite and then appeals to her for help, acknowledging other occasions where Aphrodite has come to her aid. Cameron describes her tone as “friendly impatience” and says her direct speech conveys the impression of intimacy (7). While he argues that Sappho’s language resembles that of a magician summoning a spirit on her behalf, she is clearly appealing to a higher power rather than a superior calling upon a subordinate (10). He declares that the poem is clearly important for the history of Greek religion, but he does not attempt to draw far-reaching conclusions as to Sappho’s religious beliefs.

The first scroll of Sappho’s work contained 1,320 verses, of which only 500 remained, following the ransacking of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusades. While new techniques in papyrology may lead to the recovery of more of Sappho’s works, it is important for scholars to study works like *To Aphrodite*, her only remaining complete poem. It is especially important for contemporary scholars and critics to study her work from different perspectives, including through the lens of rhetoric. This study seeks to address the nature of prayer as rhetoric, and I believe that any serious study of rhetoric must consider early feminine perspectives like that of Sappho since her writing paved the way for future rhetoricians (Williams 39).

Enheduanna was a Sumerian high priestess with a post at Ur, and her role was to lead religious rituals and perform sacred rites. She was chiefly devoted to

the moon goddess Inanna. Her poems are the oldest known works in which the author identifies herself and speaks in the first person (Women's History). *The Exaltation of Inanna* both illustrates her close personal relationship with Inanna, and is written in the form of conversation in which she seeks divine intervention to alleviate her feelings of rage and abandonment (Williams 39). However, while her poems are deeply personal, Hallo and Van Dijk argue that, based on evidence of the manuscript typology, they are hymns that "probably belonged to an advanced stage of the curriculum of tribal schools" and based on internal evidence "probably formed an integral part, and perhaps the concluding part of a cycle of hymns to Inanna" alluding to their public nature and ritual purpose as well (43).

Inanna was already considered an important goddess in Sumerian culture but Enheduanna desired to lift her out of her established place and exalt her over all other deities. In addition to exemplifying spiritual devotion to Inanna, Enheduanna's poems are an "eloquent diary of adulation and prayer unique in its antiquity." They portray what women long for, a "spirituality grounded in the reflection of a divine woman, offering a full sense of foundation and legitimacy as females" (DeShong Meador 9). To Enheduanna, Inanna is not stiff and remote; she truly believes that Inanna can be moved by her pleas and has the power to answer her prayers. While DeShong Meador has written a biopic that includes some brief analysis of Enheduanna's relationship with Inanna and regards her poems as prayers, there is very little scholarly work specifically examining the nature of Enheduanna's prayers, and I have found none comparing and contrasting the works of priestesses like Enheduanna with their male counterparts or works examining ways that the aggrieved specifically appeal to divine intervention. With regard to Enheduanna specifically, this lack of research is because her work was discovered less than one century ago, in the 1920s, during one of Leonard Woolley's excavations of Ur. And, it is only recently that textbooks, such as *An Introduction to Classical Rhetoric* by John Williams, have included her work as important to the discussion of early rhetoric.

Unlike Sappho and Enheduanna, Saint Augustine wrote prose, not poetry. *Confessions* has most often been regarded as an autobiographical work; its focus on internal struggle has led scholars like Pine-Coffin, to describe the work as "a long prayer" and Brown (1967) called it "a prayer to God... common to a long tradition in religious philosophy" (159). Chadwick writes that the autobiographical first nine books of *Confessions* "illustrate a universal truth about human nature" taking the readers on a journey from the "soul's wandering away" to conversion to the exploration of the Platonic method to

“look within the soul and not at external things” (xxiv). Augustine was seeking for “certainty and stability” (xxv). Augustine writes *Confessions* not to answer questions but “to bring peace to his soul” (Darcy 155). His conversion was more than a change in his morals and the belief in faith over reason; it was also a “metamorphosis... of his mind” (Darcy 193).

Augustine places great weight on the concept of Original Sin, which he says condemns all mankind. Through his prayerful confession of his sins and profession of his unworthy nature, he seems desperate for “God to acknowledge him” (Williams 461). His need for acknowledgement is so urgent because he believes that for his soul to continue existing after death it must exist in God’s memory (Williams 462). One way that Augustine can ensure that God will remember him is by revering and remembering God. Tell writes that Augustine remembers God “through the rhetorical practice of confession... a way of remembering that which cannot be placed in memory” (3). And, this search for God could not be successfully accomplished without speech. The search for God in memory “depends on the spokenness of the confessions” (Tell 16).

Augustine deflected credit for *Confessions*, claiming that if we love anything in this work, that the credit must go to God, who created him. He says that his primary purpose for writing this work is “to demonstrate belief in the efficacy of divine grace” (Bourke 147). Augustine’s conversion is a conversion of both intelligence and will. He now approaches intellect through reading and studying Scripture and through Platonist learning. He relinquishes his will by adopting Christian submission (O’Meara 11). However, while Bourke argues that *Confessions* is the “one story which burns within him until it is told,” Augustine acknowledges that he wrote it for more than personal peace and satisfaction and that it “has pleased and still pleases many of my brethren” (Bourke 148). This suggests that *Confessions* is more than a private prayer. Rather, it is both a carefully planned literary work and a rhetorical discourse written for a particular occasion intended to persuade a larger audience to join him in choosing faith over reason. He admits that the stories are “moralizations on the facts of his life and not the facts themselves” (O’Meara 3) and he writes it both for God and to his friends (O’Meara 11). “If you cannot understand, believe that you may understand” is the philosophy that Augustine adopts and wishes his audience to adopt after reading this work (Darcy et al 159). He is largely successful in this goal, because through his works, he gives birth to “the Christian Middle Ages when all intellectual matters were placed in dependence on faith” (Chabannes 166).

Literary Analysis

Now that we have looked at some of the historical background of these three rhetoricians and their works, let us turn our attention to the texts to analyze how these artists express themselves through prayer. First, I find it necessary to define prayer for the discussion to follow. 1 John 5:14-15 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of Him." While John's definition is a Christian one, it is broad enough in scope (approaching God and God listening) that we can apply it to all of these works.

First, let's look at Sappho, who is best known for her passionate love poems. *To Aphrodite* is similar in that she is appealing to the goddess to regain the love of someone who has pained her. However, it is also a very different work because the tone of the poem is despair. She is a woman anguished and anxious, appealing to Aphrodite to release her from her agony. The first stanza begins in typical fashion for ancient writers, with a completely submissive invocation to the goddess to both acknowledge her but also not to punish her "with reproaches and harms" for daring to speak her name (Sappho 49). The second stanza implies that Aphrodite has heard her pleas in the past and that this legitimizes her claim to invoke her now. The third stanza illustrates Aphrodite's power by using active descriptions of the goddess like "yoking the chariot" and "dense wings whirring." This stanza is Sappho's fantasy of Aphrodite heeding her call. In the fourth stanza, Sappho wins the attention and ear of Aphrodite, who has heard her prayer and responds to her by acknowledging her emotional pain, "your immortal countenance / Asked what hurt me, and for what / Now I cried out" (13-14). Sappho's greatest desire is for an end to her suffering. It becomes evident in the fifth stanza that she envisions Aphrodite as a source of comfort and passion, as a protector and mother figure. "Whom then Persuasion... to bring to you, dearest? Who, Sappho, hurts you?" (18-19) This sentence reads much like the question a mother would ask to placate a crying child, indicating the intimacy in the relationship between Sappho and Aphrodite. Aphrodite is not cold, distant, or superior. She is a living god who loves and cares for Sappho. It is finally in the sixth stanza where the reader is let on to the source of Sappho's pain. "And if she flees, soon she will follow" and "If she does not love, she will love / Despite herself" (21-22). Sappho's pain is the pain of lost love, not necessarily a romantic love, although that is one possibility. But, all that can be clearly ascertained by the text of the poem is that Sappho has loved and lost. The object of her affection does not love her. Sappho's pain is the pain

of loneliness and the pain of not being acknowledged. She has offered gifts and her love to her beloved and has suffered the injustice of enduring rejection. However, in her time of despair, with human love eluding her, the love of her goddess is real, has been attained, and has helped her “harsh worry, let loose.” Although Sappho does not have the power to change her situation, Aphrodite has the power to be her “battle ally” and end the pain of unrequited love. Sappho does not pray that Aphrodite’s will be done or that Aphrodite assist her in relinquishing her pain by helping her work through her pain or cope with the loss of her love. She specifically asks Aphrodite to interfere with earthly affairs and to change the heart and mind of the love that she lost, and grant her the object of her desire. Yet, while the text suggests that Aphrodite will return her love to her, it does not explicitly say so. What she promises Sappho is that “if she does not take gifts, she will give” and “If she does not love, she will love / Despite herself” (22-23). She does not promise Sappho that she will love her but merely that her lover will be forced to endure the painful feelings that Sappho is currently experiencing. Either way, regardless of whether Aphrodite answers Sappho’s prayers by granting her revenge or by granting her lost love, she responds by interfering with the life of another mortal to ease Sappho’s mind and release her from despair.

Unlike Sappho, whose occupation as a headmistress hasn’t been proven, there is much historical evidence to confirm that Enheduanna was a high priestess in approximately 2300 BCE. As such, her chief role was to perform sacred rites, lead public ceremonies, and offer sacrifices and sing hymns of praise to the gods. Enheduanna’s personal goddess was Inanna, known in mythology as a goddess of love, war, and fertility. Notably, Enheduanna shared many traits with Inanna. For example, Inanna was known as a composer of songs and Enheduanna’s poetry is structured like hymns. Inanna was regarded as a keeper of emotions and as high priestess Enheduanna was likely trusted and regarded with the confidences of women, and possibly men, in her congregation. Most importantly, both women suffered a loss of status. Inanna was reportedly demoted as a goddess and Enheduanna was removed by warring factions from her position as high priestess. The intimate connection that Enheduanna must have felt with Inanna made her the perfect goddess to appeal to in her time of crisis, because who better could understand her devastation? It is also interesting that Enheduanna is the oldest known writer in the world to write in the first person because it marks that along with the transition to patriarchy and a more highly developed agricultural system there was also a shift toward individualism. In *Lady of the Largest Heart* and *The Exaltation of*

Inanna, these first person accounts are personal writings written from the specific point of view and are the thoughts and observations of Enheduanna, as opposed to the third person shared narrative stories of ancient myths.

In *The Exaltation of Inanna*, Enheduanna breaches the emotion spectrum, expounding on the reasons for her pain and frustration. Enheduanna's devastation is because she has been removed from her position of high priestess, and along with it, her power and identity. She conveys confusion about her removal, telling Inanna that "truly for your gain / your drew me toward / my holy quarters" (15-17). Enheduanna intimates here that she has lost much more than her occupation. She has lost her sense of certainty in the world and her faith in her purpose in life. Enheduanna finds value in her mission, her "ritual" causes her to "shout of joy." She is shattered "*that man* cast me among the dead / I am not allowed in my rooms" (24-25). Enheduanna has been not only stripped of all of her power, but of her reason for existing. Worse, this has happened not because of fate but because of *that man* demonstrating her subjugation as a woman. Yet, she clings to her last vestiges of faith, that even if she, a woman, cannot overcome male power, the goddess Inanna is more powerful than any human and Inanna still loves and values her and can restore her to her rightful place. "The Woman is as great as he" / she will break the city from him" (45-46). Note that "Woman" is capitalized and "he" is not because goddess trumps man. Although Enheduanna has lost her city and has been ousted from her temple, Inanna is subordinate to nobody and does not live by the rules that subject Enheduanna.

Enheduanna also likens herself to a child and regards Inanna as a mother figure as she prays for Inanna to comfort her: "may the mother not comfort / her crying child" (73-74). However, Enheduanna is not the only crying child. This can be extended to a metaphor for the city of Uruk that has been ransacked, and her great temple Eana that has been desecrated by Lugalanne.

This poem is an intensely personal account of the pain of losing everything. She can "no longer lift my hands / from the pure sacred bed" or "unravel / Ningal's gifts of dreams / to anyone" (114-118). She is no longer a leader. Once full of life, of feminine power, dutiful to her vocation, and full of love and dedication to her people, now she is driven into the wilderness, treated worse than a common animal. "He made me fly / like swallows swept / from their holes in the wall / he eats away at my life / I wander through thorny brush in the mountains / he robbed me / of the true crown / of High Priestess" (97-104). Enheduanna views her vocation as a right and her rightful place was stolen by a man. Although she is devastated, she refuses to wallow in defeat and accept her

fate. It is not the male god An or the moon-god Ashimbabbar who will heed her cries and help her, but Inanna, the divine dynamic feminine power. It is evident that Enheduanna's relationship with Inanna is more than deeply personal. Inanna is her confidante, and the dominant presence in her life. Only through Inanna could Enheduanna ascend to power and only through her divine intervention lies her hope in being restored to her rightful place. The rhetorical message in this poem lies in the belief that when all hope is lost there is a loving, mothering, comforting god(dess) who has the power to effect change and restore order.

Confessions is different from the works of Enheduanna and Sappho in a few obvious ways. First, it is a partly autobiographical and partly philosophical work of prose, not poetry. Second, it is the product of a male author writing to and about a paternal god. Third, unlike in the previous works the narrator of *Confessions* does not have a close personal relationship with God throughout the work but instead in the work shows the development of the relationship. *Confessions* is a work of rhetorical discourse written with a clear purpose and vision to convert others to Catholicism as Augustine was converted.

There are several recurring themes in *Confessions* which warrant discussion. First, Augustine's relationship with God is different because while it is highly personal, Augustine does not view God as a person in human form, except in his son Jesus, but as a mysterious, formless, eternal being. He begins his prayer in customary form, just like Sappho and Enheduanna and all of the writers of epic poetry and prose, with an invocation, calling the Lord more wise and powerful than he is capable of imagining and Augustine humbles himself to God, doubting his own worthiness to praise him. However, he also frames his work as research, asking whether he needs to know God in order to pray to him or whether praying to him will lead him to know God. His answer to this question sets up the central thesis that permeates his work, that of faith over reason, when he claims that his faith calls him to "look for the Lord" and strengthen his faith by praying to God (Augustine 463).

In Book II, Augustine writes that he wants God to enter him (Augustine 463). This is a very Catholic view (the purpose of the Eucharist is to receive Jesus) and a very different way to look at God from the views of polytheists like Sappho and Enheduanna who spoke to their gods in human form. Augustine longs for God to enter him spiritually as a means to better understand Him. He ponders whether God is too great to be contained in him, or whether God already exists in him because he created him and God is everything. God is a paradox. He is hidden to Augustine yet is he ever present and enduring. However, Augustine

cannot reach God through intellect; rather his intellect has distanced him from God. The way to God is through faith and trust.

The middle books of *Confessions* are written in a conversational tone and have elements of the novel, although this work predates the genre. The reader is made to identify with the young boy, Augustine, who is on a journey of self-discovery. Augustine uses pathos as a storytelling device to create a bond between himself and the reader and to invest the reader in caring whether Augustine will find what he is searching. In this story, the first premise is that man is flawed from birth. Augustine states that “I was a great sinner for so small a boy” (467). School was an unhappy time for Augustine because while he found reading and writing a practical tool that could lead him to God, the rest of his school, especially Greek studies, took him toward sin and away from God. Augustine casts aspersions on Greek gods, whom he claims committed great sins, like adultery, while at the same time casting punishment on mortals who committed the same acts, and were thus hypocrites. “I was dying, separated from you, my God and my life, and I shed no tears for my own plight” (467). School taught men “the art of rhetoric” so that they could succeed in business and politics, but it was all “smoke without fire” because his intellect and speech should have been directed to learn the Scriptures and to praise God. While he impressed his teachers and his friends, he also lied to them and deceived them to get what he wanted. Augustine is very self-critical and unforgiving of his own lack of maturity, placing a great responsibility on himself at a young age to understand purpose. At the same time, he blames peer pressure and his friends for leading him down the path of thievery. However, Augustine is clearly using rhetoric to appeal to his audience because he acknowledges that he does not need to recount the actions of his life to God because God already knows everything that he has done and everything that he will do. His purpose in writing *Confessions* is to help “the few other men who might find comfort in this book” (471). *Confessions* is more than a prayer; it is a prayer directed to an audience. Augustine admits that when he started reading Scripture to try to find God that he found the writing not as interesting or valuable as Cicero because he “had too much conceit to accept their simplicity and not enough insight to penetrate their depths. It is true that as the child grows these books grow with him” (476). While Augustine appears to be chastising himself for his lack of understanding, he is actually claiming superiority of faith over reason, which he argues requires a greater depth of understanding. Ironically, it is precisely because Augustine was trained in rhetoric and taught rhetoric for a living before his conversion that he is clever enough to use his training to turn his audience

away from rhetoric and toward exegesis as the best means of academic discourse. Augustine believes that the intellect is overvalued when it is trust that is of the high importance. He extols the virtues of the faithful, for “these men have not had our schooling, yet they stand up and storm the gates of heaven, while we, for all our learning, lie here groveling in this world of flesh and blood!” (491).

There are two main events in Augustine’s life that cause the major shift in his worldview from man of reason to man of faith, the death of his beloved friend, his “other half” Adeodatus, and the death of his mother, Monica. The death of Adeodatus is the first time that Augustine experiences the pain of grief. Although Augustine has achieved academic success, has many friends, and earns a modest living, the death of Adeodatus forces him to confront his feelings of emptiness and loneliness. He begins to understand that the life of man is transient and that he needs to look outward to something greater than himself, to God, in search of answers and truth. Desperate to reach out for something real following the death of his friend, he no longer finds his “superstitious” Manichean beliefs enough to sustain him. While he had never thought of God as “anything real or substantial” and “worshipped... his own delusion,” he realizes that his friends are no comfort to him in his time of grief. God is better than any friend because he “will never forsake you” (Augustine 482). While Augustine admits some conceit in saying that his intellect is further developed than that of his friends, he acknowledges that his academic achievements pale in comparison to loving God. Why should he care about understanding Aristotle if he couldn’t understand the Scriptures? It was not a reasoned intellect but “the food of the faith” that would rescue him from the depths of his grief and return to him his life (Augustine 482).

Thus, while Augustine continues his journey toward baptism and becoming a full-fledged member of the church he states that “my inner self was a house divided against itself” (491). Augustine is pleased with the Church’s modesty in admitting that not every question has an answer and that faith is shrouded in mystery. Augustine is willing to shed his identity as an academician. He is willing to make a serious attempt to know God through scripture and enter into a relationship with him. The only thing now standing in the way between Augustine completing his conversion is his fear in relinquishing his earthly pleasures. Throughout *Confessions*, lust is the vice that Augustine grapples with most. Augustine places faith over reason but faith still needs to prevail over flesh and instinct. “I was frantic, overcome by violence for not accepting your will and entering into your covenant. Yet in my bones I knew this was what I

ought to do" (492). His conversion finally comes, when out in the garden, in the depths of despair, wanting to convert but lacking the strength, he hears the voice of a young child saying repeatedly, "Take it and read. Take it and read." (492). Augustine picks up the Scriptures and opens to the passage that reads, "Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord, Jesus Christ; spend no more time on nature and nature's appetites" (493). Not coincidentally, Augustine uses this verse to mark the transition from Book VIII to Book IX. This ends the autobiographical portion of *Confessions* and segues into the final three books, in which Augustine professes the truth that he has discovered the Lord. Augustine is baptized and he leaves the teaching profession for good to fully pursue studying the Scriptures and writing to praise God, spending the rest of his life producing works such as *Retraction*, *Letters*, and *Confessions*.

It is not a coincidence that Augustine finding his purpose in life and fully transitioning from child to adult, finding independence in spirit by relinquishing complete dependence on God, accompanies his mother's death. While Augustine barely mentions his father's death in passing, it is clear that the death of his mother has a profound influence on him. The most interesting human interpersonal relationship discussed in *Confessions* is the relationship between Augustine and his mother, Monica. Augustine's prayer is as much about his connection with his mother as it is God and in many ways the book is a dedication to her. After all, it is Monica who prayed for Augustine's conversion and to whom it was an immense gift and tremendous relief and unleashing of a burden when his conversion was complete. Augustine expresses remorse for not listening to his mother, who tried to instill in him morals and faith. Augustine likewise recounts little of his relationship with his father except to say that while his father did provide him an academic education he was not a religious man and that he cared nothing for his moral upbringing, and that it was only the strength and faith of Augustine's mother that convinced his father to be baptized shortly before his death, saving him from eternal damnation. The death of Augustine's mother marks the transition between his search inward to find himself to his reaching outward as a preacher to persuade others.

Now that Augustine has found God, is convinced of his awesomeness, and has made a place for him in his life, he writes his last three books of *Confessions* to help his audience come to know God also. Augustine has written nine books of autobiography to establish credibility with his audience so that he can make believers out of them in the last three. He commiserates with his audience that it takes strength to follow God, it is not an easy path, and "many have tried to return to you and have not had the strength in themselves to achieve it"

(Chadwick 219). However, Augustine implies that if he is able to overcome his earthly passions, so is his reader. In Book X, Augustine expounds upon the nature of memory and in Book XI, the mystery of time, but Book XIII is the most prayerful book, the book that ties all of *Confessions* together into one complete rhetorical work. Augustine succeeds in identifying with the audience in his autobiography so that, when he delivers his persuasive prayer to God, it isn't simply meant as a prayer to God. Much like a hymn of praise, Augustine fully intends for all of his readers to join in the prayer, for his work to be a universal prayer to God. His conversion should be everyone's conversion. And because he has learned the great Aristotelian elements of public speaking, connecting himself to his work and connecting his audience to him, he succeeds in persuading his audience. Augustine's prayer is a discourse, a conversation not just with his God, but with his readers. He writes, "I have not known, Lord, I have not met with other utterances so pure, which so persuasively move me to confession, make my neck bow to your yoke, and bring me to offer a free worship" (Chadwick 283). Augustine's prayer follows that of the hero's journey in literature. As a child, he lacks understanding, as an adolescent and young man he suffers a time of confusion and searching, is forced to descend into the underworld, by confronting the death of his best friend and his mother, and makes it through to the other side when he accepts God into his life. His *Confessions* is not just a confession of his sins, but a confession of his faith and his penance, his responsibility, is to win as many minds and hearts as possible to join him in his mission to serve God. Augustine's prayer is that others will view him as a leader and will follow his example. By dramatizing his adolescent sins of greed and lust to connect with his readers, his message is that if he, a great intellectual but a lost and lowly sinner, can overcome so much to come to know and love God, everyone can.

Conclusions

So, what can be extrapolated from these works? Are there any commonalities and differences to be found in how these three rhetoricians seek divine intervention? The major differences I found between these prayers are the ways that each writer approaches the divine, how they view their separate gods, and what it is that they each seek. While they each begin with the customary invocation of praise, they each interact with their gods in a unique manner. Sappho's interaction with Aphrodite is the most direct of the three. Not only does she remind Aphrodite that at "another time... you came," thus proving that Aphrodite should know who she is; she also either imagines the words that

Aphrodite speaks to her or hears Aphrodite directly depending on interpretation. While Enheduanna does imagine her goddess Inanna in human form, she does not imagine direct conversation with her. Enheduanna's approach to her goddess is very repetitious and hymn-like. One could imagine her leading her congregation in common prayer to Inanna. Enheduanna would lead the call-response with lines like "That you are exalted as An" and "that you are as wide as earth" to which her congregation would respond "PROCLAIM!" (44). Augustine's approach to God is more subdued. He does not imagine direct conversation with God nor does he, at least in *Confessions*, lead chants to him. For Augustine, God is a mystery. "Lord, my God, how deep is your profound mystery, and how far away from it have I been thrust by the consequences of my sins" (Chadwick 242). Sappho and Enheduanna relate to their gods as human beings, whereas Augustine spends the last three chapters of *Confessions* contemplating God's form, and how he exists both inside and outside of memory and time. While Enheduanna similarly writes about Inanna as a set of opposite ideas like "to gather the scattered" and "setting free" and says that she has the power to turn "man into woman and woman into man" (Enheduanna 40-41), and proves that in these contradictions she is the ruler of everything, for Augustine, God is everything. He is formless yet present in all forms. Mystery is a key tenet of the Catholic faith and at Mass the priest holds up the Eucharist and sings: "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith!"

It is clear that all three writers are having a crisis of self. Sappho is hurt by a lover and suffers from a "crazy heart" (49). Enheduanna's crisis is arguably more severe because she has become homeless, having lost her identity as a religious leader and her physical home in her temple. Augustine, on the other hand, reflects on his past in order to form his identity. One key difference is that Sappho and Enheduanna are reaching out while Augustine, for the most part, looks inward. Sappho calls on Aphrodite to relieve her heartbreak. Enheduanna calls on Inanna to restore her to her rightful place as high priestess. Both of these women are looking to personal goddesses to help them solve earthly problems. To them, these goddesses are also people and have the power and the inclination to solve real world problems. These goddesses will come when called upon and will meddle in the affairs of humans. Augustine, on the other hand, is less focused on how he can get God to come to him and more focused on how he can come to God. His crisis is not earthly but spiritual. He is not looking for God to physically change anything on earth. He is not asking God to intercede on his behalf to physically change things, but to give him the strength to choose faith over reason and to choose God over lust. Sappho and

Enheduanna do not mention an afterlife in their prayers although their beliefs included an otherworld where souls would go after death. However, Augustine's primary concern was not his life on earth, which he believed to be fleeting; his praise to God was meant as a way to attain to eternal reward and to reconnect with God. "By avoiding this world, the soul lives; by seeking it the soul dies" (Chadwick 291). However, the greatest similarity is that in the end, Enheduanna, Sappho, and Augustine all pray because what they want transcends both gender and time. They need to be acknowledged but it is not just acknowledgement that they crave, but reassurance. Sappho needs to be reassured that her heartbreak will end, and that even if she cannot be reunited with her lover, her lover will understand and experience her pain. Enheduanna needs the reassurance that even without her identity as high priestess she is still loved and valued by something bigger than herself. And Augustine needs reassurance, that even though he is a sinner he is still God's child, that he is worthy for God to enter him, and that he will be reunited in heavenly peace with his Father upon his death.

I was most surprised to learn through my research that I found only a few obvious differences in how each gender appeals to the divine for intervention. For example, Sappho and Enheduanna identify with and pray to female goddesses, while Augustine prays to a male god. Each of their relationships with the divine has aspects of a parent/child relationship. Sappho and Enheduanna are both children calling out to a mother. Sappho wants Aphrodite to ask "what hurt me, and for what / Now I cried out" (18-19). Enheduanna says that she is a "child of yours I am a captive" (163). Augustine, on the other hand, mentions several times in *Confessions* that he does not know his earthly father well and does not have a close personal relationship with him. Augustine is clearly in search of the unconditional love of a parent when he discerns that "You made me and, when I forgot you, you did not forget me" (Chadwick 273). And, as previously mentioned, for the most part Sappho and Enheduanna express their struggles externally and Augustine expresses his internally. However, the biggest differences between these three rhetoricians are the result far more likely of the cultures and time periods in which they lived than gender. It was normal for pre-Christian people to call upon different personal gods according to situation and circumstance whereas the Christian paternalistic worldview, which became entrenched in concert with an agricultural economy, led to a greater definition and separation of prescribed roles according to gender. For example, Enheduanna could not have been a high priestess in Augustine's day.

This is just a cursory look into the nature of prayer and there is plenty of room for researchers to study the rhetorical nature of prayer through many different lenses. For example, it would be interesting to do a more in-depth psychological analysis of prayer, perhaps by looking at Freudian theories, such as the relationship between humans craving a connection with God and the desire for all humans to return to the womb, as Freud describes in his essay, *The Uncanny*. It is also worth noting that Sappho, Enheduanna, and Augustine are all members of the privileged upper-class. Thus, it might be worth exploring whether there is a connection between social class and the way people pray. Another interesting comparison might be to examine whether modern day prayers, for example gospel hymns, share similarities with early-Christian prayers like that of Augustine. According to Mary Zeiss Stange in the article "Do Women Have a Prayer?" published in the March, 2009 issue of *USA Today*, more American women than men pray daily, attend weekly church services, and say that religion is an important part of their lives. Therefore, it might also be interesting to study whether the post-modern age has changed the way that people pray and if there are differences in the ways that prayer is used as rhetoric.

In this essay, I have examined the nature of extended prayer in poetry and prose as well as examined the approach to prayer by gender. I have demonstrated how prayer can be used as rhetoric and contributed to an area with a dearth of scholarly research. John Williams takes a step in the right direction by including a chapter on women rhetoricians in his textbook, *Classical Rhetoric*. However, more attention needs to be given to the *foremothers* of rhetoric, Sappho and Enheduanna, so that these women and other women who have been silenced in western discourse over the past two thousand years will be included in the rhetorical canon, and not just under the heading of women's voices, but simply as rhetoricians.

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