HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

GRECO-ROMAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiography in Classical Literature

Course Description

A variety of genres will be dealt with in this course, each raising a distinctive mode of self-presentation: epic poetry, represented by the 7th century Greek farmer-poet, Hesiod; lyric (and other) poetry, represented both by three 6th century Greek individual voices (Sappho, Archilochos, Solon) and by four 1st century B.C./A.D. Latin poets (Catullus, Horace, Statius, Ovid); history, represented by the 5th/4th century B. C. Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon; epistolary art represented by Cicero, 1st century A.D. and Pliny, 1st/2d centuries A.D.; meditation and confession, represented by the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (2d century A.D.), and the Christian Saint Augustine (4th/ 5th centuries A.D.). The syllabus will be arranged chronologically, but attention will be paid, throughout, both to autobiography as expression in language and feeling, and to autobiography as literary work taking place inside the conventions of literary tradition. This last kind of consideration will underlie our occasional attention to the importance of genre as a way of thinking about the work of classical autobiography.

About the Professor

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Week 1 Overview of Autobiography in Classical Literature

Classical culture in the West is divided into two separate but jaggedly continuous parts: Greek culture and Roman culture. The origins of Greek culture take us back to the Mycenaeans, the Phoenicians, and Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian culture; culture worlds of which we know more all the time—from archeology and epigraphy-- but which still remain outside the founding presence of our own culture. That Western founding level continues to be the Greco-Roman, which pervades our references and institutions.

What we find, when we enter Greek culture at the historical level of Homer (9th/8th cent. B.C.)—or of the contemporary Greek sculptures of the Cycladic period, or of the architecture of Crete or Mycenae—is imaginative creation we can relate to from where we are today, in our contemporary world swirling with the new but with a capacity for hearing its own past inside it. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, therefore, remain the great autobiography of the Greek people. But that is autobiography in the widest possible sense, and not in the narrower sense relevant for the present syllabus. In the widest sense all great literature is someone's autobiography.

Ancient Greek culture presents no easily identifiable set of self-awareness skills, and hardly produces a text we would today call autobiography in the commonest sense of the word. (However many Greek writers hold the mirror to their faces and in those glimpses, sometimes prolonged, we can discern the profiles of our forefathers' bony images.) As we will see, in the following samples, life-writing might often be a more comfortable description than autobiography for what the Greeks give us as self-image; indeed the Romans too, who divide our syllabus with the Greeks, will rarely give us full face-portraitures, but rather, as in the case of the lyric poets of both Greece and Rome, intense cameos of feelings in action. (It will not be until the Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.) and the Confessions of Saint Augustine (354-430 A.D.) that we begin to see full length self-portraits which are deeply intelligible to us.) Greek culture, in particular, needs careful scrutiny to bring out its self-refllective, or self-revealing traits, and, because that culture was 'plastic,' as deeply as it was verbal, we should ideally employ our perceptiveness for portrait sculpture as richly as our inner literary ears, when we go out to recapture the Greek experience of self.

Roman culture follows its mothering Greek culture, from which the Romans drew their artistic themes, their derivative mythography, their sense for the fine detail of literary craftsmanship and statecraft. As it happens, there is a breakthrough of individual literary self-awareness, in Roman culture, at the same cultural point—at a major historical transition—at which it occurred centuries before in Greek culture. I refer to the historical intervention of the Roman personal lyric, and other poetic styles, with their (albeit highly stylized) revelations of the self inside, a kind of intervention we found earlier in Greece, as that culture segued, in the sixth century B.C., from epic mode (a 'shame culture') to democratic mode (a 'guilt culture'), from epic to lyric poetry. Roman culture's transition from the late Republic into the early Empire ushers in a period rich in salient artistic personalities ready (in their ways) to 'write about themselves.' The synecdoche of these two periods--6th century B.C. Greece; 1st century B.C./A.D. Rome-- puts such lyricists as Archilochos, Sappho, Catullus, Horace, at the center of our analysis. The lyric moment becomes the most expressive outpouring of both Greek and Roman culture, and we need to reflect on the political/economic similarities between the lyric age in Greece (6th century B.C.) and the lyric outpouring of Rome in the the first centuries before and after Christ.

Another challenge to thought—as we construct this syllabus-- is that which leads us out of the classical age altogether into the heady air of a new cultural expression. The transition from the 'old' classical world (both Greek and Roman) into the more familiarly subjective world we know today, is heralded by the writing and thinking of Marcus Aurelius, whose Meditations open up the page to a mature human, at the crosshairs of world history, subtly portraying himself as a texture of concerns, anxieties, and moral convictions. (We will have to feel, already here, an intimacy to us which is new among the texts we will have so far read in this course.) With Marcus Aurelius we encounter a spiritual guide no less modern, and far more subtle, than the latest self-help book in Barnes and Noble. That text opens the first dawn of modernity. That is a beginning. But only a beginning. Saint Augustine, two centuries later, is the first Christian in our study, and a founder, in the tradition of Platonic and neo-Platonic thinking, of the deepest themes of a new religion. His small book, The Confessions (397 A.D.), distills the intensity of a new life perspective, opens a vibrant and penitent person to us, and gives us the sense, for the first time, that the ancient classical world is the other. With Augustine we open onto the kind of autobiography to which the western traditiion is now accustomed—the opening of the heart, the disclosure of personal details, the personal response to the impersonal world.

Readings: Mary Beard and John Henderson, Classics: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford, 2000)

Week 2 Hesiod Works and Days; Theogony (7th century B.C.)

While the shadow of Homer lies over all subsequent Greek culture, and indeed over the entire Western tradition, we can hardly begin with him in a history of Ancient Classical Autobiography. Were we to do so we would need to approach with great subtlety, watching how Homer the blind bard characterizes blind bards, in his poetry, or how Homer nods his head to the reader with a wise aside like 'men always love to hear about the newest and freshest events to come to their ears.' Or we could go to the opposite extreme, and see in Homer's whole epic achievement, which embraces the canvas of human experience, a kind of autobiography, a 'writing of himself by Homer.' With such a broad perspective as that, of course, we would lose any definitional crispness for the term autobiography. We would be no better off than if we were gathering disparate fragments of hints, from an author, about the nature of himself. Both of these interpretive extremes, the macroscopic and the indirective, come into play in our syllabus discussions, but we will try directing our attention to firm and substantive expressions of self. We will, so far as possible, be looking for autobiography in the sense the West has preferred to give it, a 'disclosure or presentation of self, embedded in a life world.'

So what will Hesiod offer us, that we could not have extrapolated from Homer? We will have to read both short epics—The Works and Days, an old farmer's Almanac, instructive for the Boeotian peasant life; The Theogony, a narrative account of the generations of the Gods of 'Greek myth'-- to get a sense of Hesiod's self- presentation. (We will need to consider that Hesiod, like all the Greek and Latin poets considered here, creates in what seems to us a formal stylized prosody—it is called dactylic hexameter, in the case of epic poetry—and that he, thus, thinks, feels, and sings in conventions in which his creative language is embedded. You will note, in the bibliography, reference to Halporn, et. al., The Meters of Greek and Roman Poetry. It is highly recommended, here at the start of this class, that you at least introduce yourself to this important issue, of the kind of language in which classical poetry was created.) In order to analyze autobiographical material up close,

in these epics, you will want to look at the few and cursory 'concrete events' that Hesiod offers us in commenting on the quarrel between his brother and himself, in The Works and Days ll. 27-41, and in recounting his 'encounter with the Muses', ll. 22-35 in The Theogony. We will have recourse to finicky detective work, in uncovering the autos, the self, in these autobiographies. In one of our readings—the historian Herodotus, Week 4--close attention to language issues will be our only key to the autobiographical theme. There will be little concrete self-presentation, but much of that self-positioning in language by which we present ourselves as identities. That is, we will in a few cases, throughout this syllabus, not be dealing with full face autobiography, or even with life-writing, but with the intricacies of the language by which we establish ourselves as persons in a literary text. It will be one of your challenges to determine whether this kind of analysis is an encounter with autobiography.

Reading: Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days

Suggested Translation: Richmond Lattimore, Hesiod Works and Days; Theogony, The Shield of Herakles (Ann Arbor, 1991).

Questions:
1 Hesiod, like all the Greek epic poets, composes in a highly stylized meter, the dactylic hexameter. Of what relevance is that fact to the kind of autobiography Hesiod constructs for himself? Are we accustomed to verse autobiographies today? Can you name one?
2 Hesiod believes that man's condition is getting worse all
the time; his own Age, the Age of Iron, is a dark one.
How does Hesiod's view of the human condition as a whole impact Hesiod's view of himself as a person? Do we know him as one who considers himself part of the Age of Iron?
3 Autobiography is a portrayal of oneself in language. When you consider how you speak and how you present yourself verbally to others, do you feel that those zones of your behavior are where an interested person should go to find your autobiography? Is autobiography that tightly linked to the language act?

Week 3 Sappho, Archilochos, Solon Lyrics (6th century B.C.)

With the emergence of these three characterful individuals (and a number of others), speaking in their own voices about their hopes, responsibilities, and loves, we are snatched away from the relative facelessness of the narrator of epic (Homer, Hesiod), and immersed in the human voice, shaped in melodic and intricate poetic structures—now we are in 'lyric,' now 'epic' metrics-- telling of the person behind them. (Each of these poets has his/her own thematic: Sappho reports passionate longing for her female lover, and at the same time portrays what seems to be a coterie of sophisticated ladies in whose company she lives on the island of Lesbos; Archilochos, by career a mercenary soldier, reports a world full of masculine pleasures and daring, yet threads his disciplined lyrics with his own passages of hot anxiety; Solon, the first law giver for Athens and its greatest early statesman, writes about the legal protections and governing attention he provided for the Athenian people in this formative period of the city-state, while at the same time he is reflecting on himself, and introducing a new level of conscious self-awareness into the early Greek lyric. (This kind of self-awareness from within the lyric, as we see it in Solon, is different from the self-dramatization peculiar to the writing of Sappho and Archilochos.) Rich and self-expressive lyricists like these three speak of a world transition from the epic into the beginnings of a new social and cultural world: the world of the polis, with its democratic values, its stress on the individual, and its new 'freer-market' economic traits.

Reading: Lyrics of Sappho, Archilochos, and Solon

Suggested Translations:
Diane Rayor, Sappho's Lyre: Archaic Lyric and Women Poets of Ancient Greece (Berkeley, 1991). Contains translations of Sappho, and at the time of newly discovered texts of Archilochos and Sappho.
Guy Davenport, 7 Greeks (New York, 1995). Contains translations of Archilochos and Sappho, among others.
John Lewis, The Poems of Solon of Athens, 2006: online.

Questions:
1 Do you think it likely that the development of lyric poetry is related to the conditions of the society in which it takes place? What exactly changed, in sixth century B.C. Greece, that enabled a new genre, lyric poetry, to come to the fore of the culture?
2 We in the West, especially since the Romantic Movement, are used to lyric poetry as an expression of emotions. Do you see that trait of lyric poetry in the poems we have read this week? What emotions are expressed by the three poets we are reading? How are these emotions expressed?
3 Were the lyric poets of Ancient Greece performers of their work, and if so in what settings? (You might want to do some research on this question.) What role do you think musical accompaniment played in their work? Dance? What is the significance, to the autobiographical dimension of these poets' work, of the multiplicity of art-skills incorporated into their work?

Week 4 Herodotus (484-425 B.C.) The History (5th century B.C.)

The first historian/anthropologist to have come down to us from Greek literature, Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus, on the coast of Turkey—and was thus, at that time, a citizen of the Persian Empire. Though we know little about the details of his life we can deduce, and back up, facts about his travels in Egypt and Babylon, and about his unsuccessful efforts later in life to become an Athenian citizen.

The work he creates from his life is what in Greek means 'an inquiry'—historeuo is the Greek verb for 'to inquire' and 'historia' is a broad inquiry—thus a work less fact-fettered than what we would mean by a 'research study,' and open to the discovery of philosophical implications in the world it reveals. That kind of wide ranging work is just what we find in this only writing left to us from Herodotus. As an 'inquirer' he ranges widely through the world of his time, with particular attention both to the events of the Persian Wars (499-449 B.C.) , in which the Greeks first defined themselves as a vigorous and unified culture, and to the character of the cultures in which the Greeks and Persians, and other residents of the Eastern Mediterranean, found themselves at Herodotus' time. Herodotus at once regales and instructs us with stories of Kings and concubines, seers and fakirs, bizarre and fascinating cultural insights from throughout the Eastern Mediterranean; while at the same time he develops a philosophy of history, primarily based on the notion of cyclical repetitions, as cultures come into conflict and replace one another through the processes of revenge and retaliation.

In the course of this large text Herodotus is not voluble about himself, but in the verbal maneuvers by which he narrates his history he turns himself into a distinctive individual talking about himself; by such minimal strategies as we tracked in Hesiod, a self-directed remark here, another there, Herodotus is building toward the full fledged notion of autobiography.

Readings: Herodotus, The History.

Suggested Translation: David Grene, The History of Herodotus (Chicago, l987).

Questions:
1 Herodotus, as we said above, writes into his history many bizarre and fascinating Eastern Mediterranean episodes, which establish him as a kind of anthropologist/historian. Does his use of narrative tales, which entertain and also support his account, mean that he is still, basically, working in the tradition of epic poetry? Or has he broken through the 'epic veil' to address us as 'fellow persons'?
2 Herodotus describes his work as an inquiry, a historia. Does this description, as we use the term 'inquiry' today, seem to fit what Herodotus created? Or do you view his history as a work of art? Does his history resemble what we customarily view as history today?
3 Herodotus narrates his entire history as a friend to Athens and a critic of Persian culture. How does this intrinsic bias pervade the self-image Herodotus is constructing through this inquiry/autobiography? Does his 'bias' play a role in the construction of an autobiographical personality?

Week 5 First 1000 word paper

Please choose one of the following three questions for your first paper.
1 Ancient Greek culture is considered a major foundation of later Western culture—in literature, philosophy, social organization, plastic arts and architecture—and yet, as Misch observes (in his History of Autobiography in Antiquity), the Greek tradition in autobiography is weak. The Greeks—and Misch puts it this way—have great sense for the general, the universal, but a deficient sense for the individual, which results in a weakness in the self-expressive mode that generates literary autobiography. What do you think of Misch's view?
2 In the introduction we alluded to the questions of genres, as formative factors in literary creation. We have, to this point in our quest for autobiography, been confronted with two epic texts, extensive pieces of lyric poetry, and a vast history of the known world. Has the autobiographical element in each of those texts been determined or shaped by the genre of the text? Is there a profound link between one's preferred genre and one's self-image?
3 What do you think of the flexible use we are giving to the term autobiography? (We are taking the term in both the broadest sense, to cover any expression of the self in language, and in the most detailed sense, to cover the fine points of linguistic expression by which we represent our distinctive personalities, by which we mark off whatever is ineffably us.) Do you think this 'flexible approach' enables the term autobiography to retain its usefulness?

Week 6 Xenophon (430-354 B.C.) Anabasis (399-375 B.C)

Xenophon was born near Athens, into an aristocratic family. This was at a moment of anxious peace in the polis, after the Athenians' brilliant victory in the Persian Wars—recounted by Herodotus—and near the start of the Peloponnesian Wars (431-404), which will be the theme of the history of Thucydides. Unlike these two other historians, however, Xenophon was essentially a soldier and writer of diverse texts—on topics as widespread as hunting, royal pedagogy, political philosophy, romance fiction, and military strategy. Of his many works the most widely read is the Anabasis. Schoolboys, then as now, got their first taste of literate Greek prose from this text; only scholars range far out from this text, into the wide and fascinating range of Xenophon's whole oeuvre.

In Xenophon's Anabasis, written in the first quarter of the 4th century B.C., and concerning events from 400 B.C., we hear a field general and adventurer reporting at length on a mercenary expedition to help Cyrus, claimant to the throne of Persia, to recover his royal power. This report reads like lengthy but dramatic exhortations to the Greek troops,

as Xenophon prepares to lead them first to Persia and then from Persia back to Greece through the mountains of Armenia to the Black Sea and finally to the Mediterranean. Not only do we tap into an epic adventure tale, a 1500 mile march over rough terrain--but every step of the way involves the narrator's presentation of himself as narrator. This of course is where the autobiographical element of the text enters. In the course of many reported conversations—reported by himself—Xenophon skillfully comments on himself, establishing a zone of self-consciousness which draws us into him. You will want to analyze that zone of self-consciousness, for it is where we as readers feel in the presence of a narrator. (We have already discussed, in connection with Herodotus and especially Hesiod, the way in which an aspect of autobiography is created by the way the narrator manipulates language about himself.) You will want to look closely at some of the many passages in which Xenophon's manner of speaking about himself reveals him as a person. A kind of example could be Anabasis III, 1, 1-19, in which Xenophon presents to us the despondent mercenary army on the brink of defeat by the Persian monarch, wondering desperately where to turn and how to get home. In Section 4 Xenophon writes that 'there was a man in the army named Xenophon,' a stiff and mechanical approach to bringing forth his own identity. (I think of the kind of defamiliarization of self we sense when a painter like Breughel includes himself as a tiny figure in the lower corner of one of his canvases.) Then Xenophon recounts his discussion with Socrates about the kinds of sacrifice to the gods Xenophon should now arrange, in order to further a propitious return of the army to Greece. Xenophon the narrator is talking about himself in an important negotiation, as though he was both a teller and the one told about at the same time. (Georg Misch, as we noted in the previous week, says that the Greeks, unlike the Romans, had no sense of the concrete individual, but directed their thought and feeling toward the general, the 'abstract.' Do you see any grounds for that view, as you look into a Greek autobiography like Xenophon's?) It is particularly interesting to note Xenophon's account, in sections 11-12, of the dream in which he became convinced that he and his men need to move fast in order to avoid annihilation. 'It seemed to him that there was a clap of thunder and a bolt fell on his father's house, setting the whole house ablaze.' How disturbing the dream's disclosure, yet how dispassionate the narrator's account of the disturbing dream.

Readings: Xenophon, Anabasis
Suggested Translation: H.G. Dakyns, Xenophon, The March up Country (available on line or in many commercial editions).

Questions:
1 Herodotus and Xenophon both write extensively about human affairs—political-social-military affairs—and in doing so each writer infuses his own 'personality' in his text; though neither of them enters into anything like a discussion or display of personality. Which author do you come to know best, as a shaping force in his text?
2 Does Xenophon have a sense of the concreteness of the individual—the unique traits that make a person what he/she is, and that make fictional characters like those of Charles Dickens burst into life from their first appearance on the page? What kind of fullness of personality does Xenophon himself acquire in his own self-portraiture?
3 The notion of 'autobiographical space' derives from the notion that in literary self-expression the narrator establishes some 'distance' between his narrating act and the self whose presence he conjures into his text. That distance, it might be held, could be viewed as the space of consciousness, in which we are invited to touch the self-generative level of the autobiographer. Do you see some validity in this set of thoughts? Do they seem to apply to the operation by which Xenophon is creating an autobiography?

Week 7 Cicero (106-43 B.C.) Letters

Historical context determining many traits of human self-awareness, we will agree in advance that the three centuries separating Xenophon from Cicero saw changes in culture which would sharply inflect writers' autobiographical self-images. Such, of course, is true of the cultural space separating Cicero from Xenophon, a space in which the formative dominance of Greek culture, in the Eastern Mediterranean, was replaced by that of Rome, the new power center. The Eternal City replaced the increasingly fractious city states of Hellas, and the Empire of Alexander (356-323). So portentous was this cultural change, for the issues foremost in this course, that a culture in which the abstract and general was prioritized was being replaced by one in which the individual was being given that priority; in short, a cultural change was brewing which, though hardly to be fleshed out in a brief syllabus like this, was to undergird a change in the mode of the writing self as it moves into self-accounts, autobiography. We will have occasion to remark on this large scale change, as we consider the Roman literary persona in the first years of the Empire—and of course as we move, in our final section on Saint Augustine, into Christian registers of self-expression.

Viewed in political terms, Cicero was living through a chaotic historical period—1st century B.C., 300 years after Xenophon---in which the already hoary Roman Republic, with its traditional Latin virtues and severities, was falling prey to power forces—Caesar, Mark Antony, Brutus were the major players—and Julius Caesar was fatefully to promote himself to dictator status. Cicero, who was of aristocratic family and publically involved—equally brilliant as politician, lawyer, orator, and writer –found himself immersed in the struggles of his time, which ultimately led to his murder, but on the way elicited from him so prominent a public presence that many think him to have been the most formative Roman personage of his time; acquainted with all the power players, a trial lawyer handling cases central to the strategies of government and its foes, a man serving, both as quaestor and then as consul, at the highest administrative level of the Republic.

Cicero's Letters, which he did not write for publication, concern us this week, and will provide a window into a whole personality--politician, lawyer, father, orator, philosopher all in one--with a bewildering life fullness which makes us feel, coming from the Greek autobiography we have been reading, as if we are coming into a new universe. (Have we, among the personally rather reticent Greeks we read, encountered anything like the personal revelations Cicero offers us?) What are the topics of these letters? Political issues, such burning topics as the rise of Caesar as dictator, and the shaping of an opposition to him; the issues raised by the import of Greek philosophy and education into the training of the Roman gentleman; the wonders of filial love, as Cicero feels it toward his beloved daughter Tullia, whose death in 45 B.C. broke his spirit; Cicero's growing conflict with his wife, Terentia, with whom he seems never to have been in love, and whom he divorced, after thirty years of marriage, when he was sixty three—to marry a young girl for her money. What Greek of the ancient past do we know under these different phases? No need to enlarge usage, in order to view this material as autobiographical.

Readings: Cicero's Letters
Suggested Translation: Evelyn Shuckburgh, The Letters of Cicero (London, 1908-09)

Questions:
1 We referred earlier to the question of genres, and now with renewed force the generic question arises: is it relevant, and if so how, that an autobiography is being generated in letters—as distinct from being generated in lyric poetry, say, or in the writing of history? What kind of autobiography gets created through letters? Do you know autobiographies in letters, in our time? How do they compare with Cicero's work in letters?
2 How do you explain the difference in self-presentation which announces itself so dramatically in the historical space dividing Cicero from Xenophon? Is self-expression in

autobiography so tightly linked to the environing political-economic milieu, that a period of three centuries, even in a single broad geographical area, could undergird such change?
3 What kind of autobiographical construction of the self is letter-writing? Are letters—I mean old fashioned pen and ink or stylus-and-wax- tablet letters—creative imaginative documents? Can they be a genuine literary form? Or is the pressure of the audience, the intended receiver, too intense in letters to allow for the movements of higher imagination? Have you favorite letter writers, from closer to our own time, who have on you the effect of literary art?

Week 8 Catullus (84-54 B.C.) Lyrics

Catullus was born in Verona of a prosperous family, and, like Cicero and most of the accomplished Romans we are considering here, spent his life interacting with and moulding his equally aristocratic age mates. (Like Cicero, and the entire elite clique we refer to here--Tibullus, Propertius, Juvenal--Catullus was educated on and in Greek literature, and drew many of his values, including his aesthetic, from these Greek forebears.) The entry of Catullus, onto the scene of highly sophisticated poetry, was natural, given his genius and the support of a clique of neoteri, bright young fellow poets from the north of Italy. From within this setting Catullus rapidly distinguished himself, and managed within a short life—thirty or so years seems to suffice for prodigies like John Keats, Leopardi, or Shelley –to set fire to the possibilities inherent in his language.

The lyric work, onto which Catullus poured his skill, passion, and vitriol, is quick to establish him as autobiography in language, free and direct in his sentiments, and with little desire to conceal.

The body of Catullus' work falls into a number of thematic categories—invectives, Alexandrian epyllia (so called), poems to dear friends, passionate love poems, and poems of condolence, of which the one addressed to his brother (#101), is especially touching. Within these themes, and in a dressy variety of meters which conform to various lyric 'moods,' Catullus establishes a poetic personality of extraordinary openness, complexity, and fire. What kind of autobiography is established by the lyric has already been discussed in connection with the Greek lyric—'three characterful individuals speaking in their own voices'—and no precise answer. It is apparent that the classical lyric expresses an individual self—through the optic of a transformative metric and a rich inheritance of techniques—and is not to be confused, for instance, with the freer lyrics of Western European Romanticism—Hugo, Vigny, Wordsworth—where the free (but careful) flow of feelings is given its head. It is significant, in that regard, that one of Catullus' masterpieces (#51) is a translation of Sappho's passionate lyric addressing the lucky person who is seated beside her lover, a proximity she (the poet) would treasure but would find intolerably intense. 'That fellow seems the same as a god, /seems, if I may, to excel the gods,/ as he sits beside you and at one time/watches and hears you…' The powerful positioning device, by which the narrator accumulates a rare intensity around the beauty of the beloved, is a brilliantly literal squeeze of Sappho. You will want, again here, to sift through the meanings of 'autobiography,' for clearly Catullus is 'telling us about himself' but he is doing so in a subtly performative way, not in any kind of life-detail narration. The same positioning in artifice shines through such different virtuosities of self as poems # 64, the Marriage of Peleus and Thetis, and #97, a powerful example of 'invective.' In the Marriage epyllion, Catullus observes an intricate box within box structure, with plentiful mythological scope and an ultimate conclusion, that our age is fallen and is abandoned by the gods—a conclusion often echoed in ancient texts, and already familiar to us here from our reading of Hesiod. (How elliptically Catullus brings us around, here, to himself as viewpoint!) In #97 we find the same charged skill brought to bear on an unfortunate victim of Catullus' contempt. How could Catullus have more

powerfully expressed what he himself felt and was? How could he have done it with more adroitness of scorn, than by describing a foe whose mouth 'has half a yard of gums that grate like wagon crates;/ it widens as, in summer, split in two, the cunt of a pissing mule will do.'
Reading: Catullus, Lyrics
Suggested Translation: A.S. Kline, Catullus, The Poems,
http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Catullus.htm
Classics in Translation, (Vol. II), edited by MacKendrick and Howe (Madison, l959) , is an excellent recourse for orienting yourself in Latin poetry.

Questions:
1 We marked a wide cultural gap between Xenophon's self-presentation and that of Cicero, two and a half centuries later. Do you have that 'gap' sense at all when you step from the world of Sappho, Archilochos, and Solon into that of Catullus? Does Catullus deal with a wider range of themes, and in a broader palette of moods, than his Greek predecessors? Or would you attribute whatever differences there are in this case to the relatively more fragmentary state of the Greek lyric poets' texts?
2 Catullus' passionate love poems are addressed to 'Lesbia,' about whose identity there is some doubt—though she was clearly a high flying society woman, and the spouse of a powerful political figure. Many of Catullus' poems refer to this woman, for whom he felt great passion. What kind of passion did he feel? Is it 'romantic passion'? Is it purely physical? Does Catullus seem to you similar to Archilochos, in the physical passion he expresses?
3 You have read several registers of Catullus' poetry: regret poetry, elaborate mythographic poems, long and super subtle, and invective. Do you have a sense of Catullus, in his poetry, as a whole individual sensibility? Do you see some similarities between Catullus and Cicero, as analysts of human passions? What kind of autobiography is Catullus creating, as he builds his poetic testimony? Have you acquired a sense of what kind of person he is?

Week 9 Horace (65-8 B.C.) Poems

By two of his earliest translators into English, Lonsdale and Lee (1874), Horace has been called the first autobiographer, and while we clearly dispute that view, in this course, our quarrel with the view may be partly semantic, and in any case does not prevent our seeing some truth in the point. Horace is the first Western writer to sit back, albeit in highly curried verse forms, borrowed from Greek masters, and to tell us about his life (a little), his viewpoints (a lot), the world in which he is living (a good deal), and his views on art, his aesthetic (a lot.) The sum of these disclosures is a fairly rounded personality impression—known in more aspects than Catullus, though subtler to characterize than Catullus—and as engagingly human as Cicero, with whom he competes in drawing our attention to a new sensibility, the Roman, in which the 'modern individual' we Westerners know and are is visible.
The poems left to us by Horace—odes, epodes, iambs—range from startlingly dirty invectives or erotic poems to reflections on art, beauty, and the good life, and carry out their single mission in meters transported from Greek—Archilochos and Sappho are major sources—which Horace had learned to master during his study years in Athens. What kind of man does Horace think he is, in these poems of many sorts? He 'thinks he is' a simple man, son of a freedman who selflessly pursued his son's education, ultimately shaping his ear and sensibility; he thinks of himself, as he ages, as a man enjoying his privacy and the peace of the countryside—Epodes # 2, Odes #3. 1 in which he opens with the famous odi profanum vulgus et arceo, I hate the vulgar crowd, and avoid it; Odes 2.18 on the vanity of

riches, 2.14 on the shortness of life, I. 11 on the unpredictability of life and the case for a joyful/Stoic carpe diem philosophy—

Even now, whilst we are talking,
Grudging time pursues his flight:
Use today, and trust as little
As thou mayst tomorrow's light…;

he is a man whose sexual passions are much tamer than those of Catullus, and who considers himself, at forty, past the 'age of interest' IV,1; who creates an Ars Poetica, an account of what makes for value in art, which is of pertinence to our day—and was his last published work, in 13 B.C., as well as a splendid poem, III.30, in which he declares that he will not wholly die, because his art, the fruit of his leisure and care, will survive.

What we have, by and large, is the testimony of a life-loving but careful—no Catullus he—gentleman, at home on the major power levels of society (his patron, Maecenas, was Rome's wealthiest supporter of the arts), happy in his country home and the surrounding scenes of nature which he loves, devoted to his art, exquisitely sensitive to language, and on the whole at peace with the human condition. There is no contesting that we have here, in sharply turned and learned verse forms, the unsystematic account of a whole life.
And all this living was gone through over a period of 57 years of civil strife and soon Civil War, strongman turf battles on the governing level—Caesar, Pompey, Crassus; Brutus, Antony—world shaping events like Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 B.C. or the battle of Philippi, in 42 B.C., which set the stage for the Imperium of Augustus, the institution of a new form of government and eventually of society, a heralding of unparalleled consequence for modern western humanity. It was Horace's genius, and indeed a byproduct of his personality and values, that he was enabled to escape fairly tranquil and unscathed, though far from uninstructed, by these world formative events.

Suggested Translations: A.S.Kline,
http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horacehome.htm
Kraemer, Casper, Jr., The Complete Works of Horace (New York, l936)

Questions:
1 Horace lives and writes during the very heart of Rome's political/military/social revolution, and yet in many places he writes of the beauties of art, the wonders of the integral life—the poem integer vitae exemplifies this theme--and of the removed pleasures of the countryside, praising his own suburban mansion, in Rome, for being rus in urbe, the countryside in the city. Do you read Horace as attempting to counterbalance, in his poetry, the unsettled world he is living in? Does he form his poetic autobiography as a defense against the world?

2 Does Horace's Ars Poetica seem to you an aesthetic theory drawn from his own work? Does his Ars Poetica exemplify his aesthetic, written as it is in poetry? These two questions may seem to stray from the autobiographical issue, but they do not. Does Horace write with self-consciousness, does he seem to know himself, perhaps to a degree not found in Catullus or the Greek lyric poets?

3. It was often claimed, in classical antiquity, that although local wars eventually sapped Greek power, and made the Greek city state a natural victim for the ascendant power of Rome, in the end the Romans were conquered by those whom they defeated. The reference here is to the overwhelming power of Greek culture, as it passes over into the Roman Republic and Empire. We have seen that Horace writes with virtuosity in a variety of Greek

meters. Does it seem to you that the persona Horace is creating, as he builds his autobiography in language, is heavily indebted to Greek culture? Does your reading in Greek autobiography suggest any parallel to the work and life of Horace?

Week 10 Second 1000 word paper

Please choose one of the following three questions for your second paper.

1 What are you learning, from this course, about orality/writing/printing issues in the formation of ancient Classical Literature? How did the Greeks and Romans create canons of their literary values? Who controlled the means of production when it came to the written word? Who, and when, determined the texts to be canonized as of defining value for the two civilizations? Will we understand classical autobiography more fully, as we understand the answer to questions like these?

2 Horace, Catullus, and Cicero all write from a tumultuous social-political period. (In the ancient classical world there is one other example of such a potent transition, from older to newer values, and that is the transition from the epic to the 'lyric' age of Greece, in the seventh and sixth centuries.) Does that period reflect similarly in the works of the three men? Which man is the most deeply imprinted by his age?

3 Both Horace and Catullus indulge in 'invective poems.' These are not Romantic or erotic poems, but 'scurrilous physical attacks,' in which, in language, the other person is delivered over to scorn. (References to body odors and sexual proclivities abound.) Do these language efforts raise a red flag, alerting you to the strong presence of ANOTHER CULTURE? Or does the poetry of our time include the scurrilous?

Week 11 Ovid (43 B.C.-17 A.D.) Poems : Tristia; Letters from Pontus

The figure of Augustus Caesar, who became Emperor of Rome in 27 B.C., and ruled until his death in l4 A.D., was a powerful tone setter for the cultural milieu in which Ovid grew up. Ovid was born in Sulmo, ninety miles from Rome, and with the support of his father, who, like Horace's dad, pushed himself to provide a fine education for his son, he became deeply immersed in the study of poetry and Greek. (Ovid was said, anecdotally, to have spoken in dactyls, the classic meter of Latin and Greek poetry, from infancy on.) Though Ovid's father pushed for his son's political career, Ovid himself was born for poetry, and though he undertook minor administrative jobs, and underwent legal training, his chief interest was in the language of the legal profession, not in the procedures. His decision for poetry was made the easier by his early popular success—the Amores were published when he was twenty, and were the talk of the town—and by his acquaintance with significant literary figures like Virgil, Propertius, and Tibullus. Rooted in Roman life, married—he was married three times, the last one the true mainstay of his life—he went on to major literary successes—especially The Metamorphoses, a catalogue of mythical figures who had passed into natural forms, and the Ars Amatoria—and to a position, along with Virgil and Propertius, as Rome's leading literary figure. (A position of eminence which was to play out through subsequent literary history, in which Ovid became formative for poetry in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.) In the midst of this 'successful life' a blow descended on Ovid; in 8 A.D. he fell victim to the wrath of the dictator—and sometimes dictatorial—Emperor Augustus, who sentenced Ovid to 'relegation,' who 'relegated' Ovid to exile in the (to the Roman) fairly barbarous outpost of Tomis on the Black Sea. (It is the present day resort town of Constanza, on the Black Sea.) There Ovid was to pass his remaining years, far from the culture he depended on, and surrounded by a people so foreign to Ovid that they dressed in skins, lived by bow hunting, and barely spoke Latin. And all that for an offense to the Emperor which we cannot fully understand, though Ovid attributes it to an 'error' and

to a ‘song,’ a carmen. The explanatory theories around this ‘relegation’ cannot delay us here, for our point has to be this: during the twenty five years of Ovid’s exile he created two long verse essays, the Tristia and The Letters from Pontus, into which he pours his genius and disappointment, and in one of which, Tristia IV. x, he includes a 132 line autobiography. That autobiography incorporates, in classical hexameters, virtually all the limited information we have about Ovid’s life. This is the first text in classical literature that packages concisely, into a single area, what we might almost call a poetic resume. You will, therefore, want to give special attention to the way Ovid presents himself, though you may conclude, ultimately, that he is hardly revealing more from the inside than do Catullus and Horace, in more diffuse mode.

Reading: Ovid, Tristia and Letters from Pontus
Suggested Translation: A.S. Kline, cited above for his translations of Catullus and Horace, has translated (online) all the major works of Ovid.

Questions:
1 What is the dominant tone of Ovid’s autobiography? Is he humiliated or unbowed? Does his pride in his achievements, as a writer, console him for the punishment he is suffering? Does he divulge his personality as fully, in this explicit ‘autobiography,’ as he does in his poetry, say The Ars Amatoria, where his unbridled wit and fascination with the eros game give glimpses of a full self?
2 Many of our inquiries into classical autobiography have been into verse texts—Hesiod, the Greek lyricists, Catullus, Horace, and now Ovid, a poet’s poet, a supreme master of the dactylic meter. While it is a limitation of our course, that we must read all texts in translation, we can through translation think out an important issue: in what way is the autobiographical project inflected by being created in poetry? Does poetry, in itself, shape and define the kind of autobiography created?
3 In Ovid’s poetry the split between the cultured life of the Big City and the ‘barbaric’ life of the out back is vividly lived. Ovid is truly an exile, and, unlike Horace, Catullus, or Cicero spends many years exposed to a deeply foreign culture. (He is the first autobiographer in our class to live in such foreignness; though Herodotus visits the deeply foreign he does not live in it, only passes through and observes.) How does Ovid deal with this aspect of exile? Does he discover anything new? Or does he remain the Roman City poet? Does Ovid’s exiled condition contribute significantly to his autobiographical image?

Week 12 Statius (40-94 A.D.) Silvae

Statius was born into modest circumstances in Naples. His father was a grammaticus, a teacher of poetry and augury, and himself an active poet. (Statius’ father, like those of Horace and Ovid, was a devoted supporter of his son’s education, and did all he could to assure the boy a firm foundation in Greek and poetry.) Both father and son were to be regular participants in the poetry festivals—like today’s poetry ms. competitions—which were regular and popular events in Rome during the period of the Flavian Emperors (69-96A.D.), and which pitted leading poetic voices in both full scale and impromptu combat, again as in a poetry slam today. Statius became by this route a hanger-on with people of wealth, who admired and valued his verse. A natural genius with the hexameter, like Ovid, Statius was renowned for virtuoso impromptu poems, which he could pull up on the spot for a potentially interested patron; and not surprisingly he was an excellent eulogizer of Emperors, and particularly of the mediocre Emperor Domitian (86-96 A.D.), whose military and poetic exploits vied with one another—Statius’ formula—for divine approval.

In his lifetime Statius was widely known both for his Silvae (89-96 A.D.), a collection of diverse hexameter poems on scenes of nature, events in Rome, and on the consolations available for those who lose their loved ones—and for The Thebaid (80-92 A.D.), a major

epic derivative from Greek myths, and concerning the theme of the Seven against Thebes, around which Aeschylus had created a great drama. Much of Statius' work is highly polished and displays what to us seems purely formal feeling, but at certain points, as in his love poem to his wife, in his long eulogy for his late father V.3., or for his favorite slave V.5., he touches us deeply, and shows us his true face with as much ingenuousness as the intricately orchestrated hexameter lines permit. We are in these places as affected by the power of autobiography, as we are in the presence of Sappho's declarations of passion, or of Archilochos' erotic poetic electricity, at the very thought of Neoboule.

Readings: Statius, Silvae
Suggested Translation: Betty Rose Nagle, The Silvae of Statius (Bloomington, 2004).

Questions:
1 Autobiography in intricate, metrically deft and allusive poetry, chuck full of mythological references and exquisitely deft turns of phrase! Is it possible to put forth your life in such a way, in such a medium? How would you answer this question for the case of Statius' work in the Silvae?
2 We have not paid much attention to the economics of literary support, in the ancient texts for this course? How does Statius put bread on the table, so that he can express his feelings intricately onto the tablet? How does he address the Emperor of the day, especially Domitian? Did Horace, Catullus, and Ovid have patrons? Did working for a patron strongly influence a poet's creations?
3 From Cicero to Statius—by way of Horace, Catullus and Ovid—we have seen that Rome is the dominant center for writing and cultural activity. We have referred to the collegiality between our selected poets and coteries of writers with whom they exchange ideas and inspiration. Are such creative communities points at which the self grows conscious, and in which the conditions for autobiography are created?

Week 13 Pliny, (61-114 A.D.) Letters

Not to be confused with an uncle, author of a renowned Natural History, Pliny the Younger enters history's pages as a prolific letter writer, an epistolary autobiographer who lays himself on the table, who has left hundreds of letters recording his own extensive public experience, both as a distinguished barrister and as a Senator appointed by the Emperor Trajan to supervise the Province of Bithynia. Less human in his letters than Cicero (Week 7), Pliny writes formally and seasons his messages with news of the day, remarks on his responsibilities, his affections, his life among important ruling figures, his work in the supremely distinguished post of augur, State Diviner, and his three marriages. All these events provide rich texts, and offer a prolonged look at the Roman man of state in this period when the Empire is still shaky from now century old problems of transition from the Republic. Among the letters of both lasting and local interest are Pliny's domestic vignettes—the combined pleasures of hunting and writing (I,vi), the joys of country peace away from the city (I, ix), his praise of the ideal gentleman, in the person of the philosopher Euphrates (I, x), his discussion of suicide (I, xii), his pleasure in hosting a guest to a fine tuned dinner (I, xv), his ample and fascinating description of his villa seventeen miles outside Rome (II, xvii)—and his major descriptions of two widely different historical events, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (VI, xvi; VI, xx) and his encounters with Christians, in his role as Governor of Bithynia (X, 96). Some of these letters deal with events of world moment, others with 'daily life,' but in either case the author is audible, almost visible sometimes, behind his text, and no more eager than Cicero to cloak himself in the fine robes of disguising art.
Having said this, we have of course not sketched the outer profile of the person behind this language. With Pliny, as with Cicero, life in the public sphere is the oxygen of thought and

action. Pliny, like Horace, Catullus, and Ovid, was privileged to receive a distinguished Roman education, indeed to study rhetoric under Quintilian. By the age of eighteen Pliny made his first appearance at the bar—he too was a brilliant orator and trial lawyer, like Cicero. In 100 A.D., after surviving the reign of terror under the Emperor Domitian, and after having occupied an important administrative position in Rome, as supervisor of River Banks and Sewers, Pliny was made consul by the Emperor Trajan. He died in 115 A.D, a full life behind him, and one which he had assiduously translated into an immortal design, a soul in language.

Readings: The Letters of the Younger Pliny
Suggested Translation: Betty Radice, The Letters of the Younger Pliny (London, l963)

Questions:
1 What is the special character of letters as vehicle of autobiography? Is it not significant that the letter is a transaction between writer and intended receiver—a transaction involving a situational background--in which a distinctive kind of intimacy is evoked? How does Pliny use this vehicle, to bring out his own personal traits in the course of writing? Is he conscious of 'talking about himself,' or does he simply 'reveal' himself by what he 'says' in letters?
2 How does Pliny's autobiographical presentation compare to that of Cicero? Cicero, it seems, did not write his letters for publication, while Pliny did; how does this difference in motive play out on the page? More than a century separates the letter writings of the two men. Do you see the marks of their different historical moments in the autobiographies they make of themselves?
3 Does autobiography, as we see it in Pliny the Younger, serve as an effective historical record, as well as a personal record? When Pliny describes the eruption of Vesuvius is he writing both about himself and about the eruption? Where, in Pliny's account of the eruption, does his account of himself enter?

Week 14 Marcus Aurelius, (121-180 A.D.) Meditations (170-180 A.D)

Marcus Aurelius was born during the reign of Hadrian, and grew up on the highest echelons of imperial society. (It is worth considering that all of the Roman writers considered here were born into comfort, and most into wealth and privilege. Among the Greeks we read, Hesiod was a modest farmer, Archilochos a merchant soldier, Herodotus son of a prosperous but upper middle businessman.) At the age of seventeen Marcus was adopted by the newly enthroned Emperor Antoninus Pius--whose daughter became Marcus' first wife- and in l61 Marcus himself was crowned Emperor, a role he worked with until his death in 181. (From the ages of seventeen to forty, when he became Emperor, Marcus Aurelius was learning the ropes of administration and governance in the rapidly growing empire, which by this time included what to the Romans seemed 'all the known world.') While the Emperor was immensely busy with his new post, fighting against various unfriendly barbarians, in the East of the Empire, he was, as he aged, increasingly scribbling (marvelous prose) into his day book.

The Meditations, the name we give to this scribbled text, are antiquity's richest revelation of personal philosophy—think Sir Thomas More or Henry David Thoreau—as distinct from the other genres of self-revelation visited in this course—the letters, poems, histories, poetic accounts. The frame of the Emperor's self-presentation is Stoic reflections on life; the unique profile of a gentleman philosopher, experienced in a fallen world, radiates from these pages. What comes from these ruminations is what the Romans viewed as the ultimate in philosophy, the central function of which was to substantiate moral ideas. You will want to think, as you read these 'meditations' in light of our course, about what kind of autobiography is created by this kind of thinking. Does it matter what the idea-

content of the meditations is, or is that content what Marcus Aurelius himself is, and is showing us?

The discussion in Marcus Aurelius' text is carried out informally, leaves and returns to ideas, then undercuts its 'ideas' sufficiently to preclude any strain of didacticism. Yet the self-portrait of Marcus turns around compelling self-images as a Stoic, that is as an inheritor of a post- classical Greek school of thought founded by Zeno of Elea at the beginning of the third century B.C. The central themes of this school will leave no doubt of themselves—follow reason, which will be a key to following nature; suffer all events as they come, confident they are guided by a meaning; discipline your emotions; cross check all the petty claims of your ego (jealousy, greed, above all anger); treat all humans as equal, bringing no judgment except the presenting of the best behavior you yourself are; enjoy fellowship; rest confident in the awareness that all things pass away, and are left to the disposition of the order of the universe. What renders this compilation of thoughts live, and leads many to consider this the finest ancient autobiographical text, is that Aurelius allows enriching tones, into his perspective, which allow him to self-portray as a person both noble and complex. Maxwell Staniforth, in the introduction suggested below, remarks that 'the varying moods of hope and depression, the sensitive shrinking from disagreeable associates and sights of blood, the repressed but evident longing for sympathy and affection—these are not the signs of a temper cast in the antique Stoic mould.' (p. 21). It is as though the precepts Aurelius makes of himself are playing out against the very sub-thematic moods the precepts are meant to combat. The person surging at that point of conflict is the noblest of the Roman Emperors.

Readings: Marcus Aurelius, Meditations
Suggested Translation: Maxwell Staniforth, Marcus Aurelius Meditations (New York, l964).

Questions:
1 We have discussed whether, and in what sense, lyric poetry is the establishment of an autobiography, and we can pose the same question about the kind of informal moral philosophic writing we find in Marcus Aurelius. Is this kind of philosophizing writing your autobiography or showing yourself as the figure that can be taken as your autobiography in motion?
2 Does Marcus Aurelius portray himself as a humble figure, and if so does he thus mark a departure from the ancient themes prominent earlier in this course? (Is any of the earlier Greco-Roman autobiographers humble: Solon has his gravitas, Cicero has his dignitas, Pliny and Horace have their 'rustic modesties,' but is any of the Roman poets 'humble,' or interested in 'humility'?) Does not Marcus revel in the awareness of his own fragility and temporary hold on life, and does that reveling not constitute a pleasure in humility?
3 Does Marcus Aurelius' self-account include a view of himself as a lover of the beautiful, as well as of the good? Consider Book IV, section 20, of the Meditations. Is the beautiful just what things are by their nature? Is Marcus Aurelius presenting himself as a lover of beauty, as he respects each thing's realization of its own nature?

Week 15 Saint Augustine, (354-430 A.D.) Confessions (397-398)

Saint Augustine was born in present day Thagaste, forty five miles south of the Mediterranean coast in present day Tunisia. He was, thus, an African, but from a North Africa which was a province and dependency of the Roman Empire; no longer the confident Empire of the time, say, of Marcus Aurelius, but an Empire already under threat from non-Roman 'hordes' on the Eastern border.

In his youth Augustine enjoyed a thorough classical education but was drawn to the pleasures of the flesh—a woman he loved, who bore him a child, and to whom he remained

sexually faithful—and to the thought of a sect prominent and influential in North Africa, the Manicheans. Embedded in the world of those involvements, he started a school of Rhetoric in Carthage—the kind of study drawing all the Roman writers we have introduced earlier—but he found himself appalled by the hooligan behavior of his pupils, and thereupon decided to undertake a teaching career in the mother country, Italy, a career which soon (384 A.D.)—because his brilliance early on attracted the intellectuals of Rome—won him a Professorship in Milan, and with it the opportunity to meet the first religious sensibility that made sense to him and inspired him, the equally brilliant Saint Ambrose. Under the influence of this new Italian milieu he was won over to Catholicism in 386, and baptized in 387. (In 313 the Emperor Constantine had issued the Edict of Milan, which conferred legal and privileged status on Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire.) In 388 Augustine returned from Italy to Africa, and in 395 he was appointed Bishop of Hippo, where he remained for the rest of his life, writing and preaching voluminously, and proving himself a master of both prose and theological genius in works like The Confessions (397-398) and The City of God (early fifth century) . Augustine is the first Christian to appear on our syllabus, and we will pay attention to this spiritual change and the new conception of autobiography. Many new regions of self-investigation are opened up by the Christian perspective.

What are The Confessions? They are the text in which Augustine recounts his youth, his gradual breaking from sensuality—marriage, the dualism of the Manichaeans—his Italian peregrinations leading to a Professorhip in Milan, the encounter with Ambrose, conversion, and, at the very end of the text (397 A.D. in real time) his baptism and the death of his beloved mother, Monica. Is this recounting an autobiography in any of the multiple senses we have been giving the term earlier in the course?

Maria Boulding, the recommended translator of The Confessions, writes that we are not 'reading autobiography in the modern sense. Few modern writers of autobiography…would relentlessly take us through page after exhausting page about the nature of memory, the mystery of time…He referred to his work as "the thirteen books of my confessions."' The two operative senses of confession here—as the translator continues—are a retailing of sins, and a prasing of God. From the start of the text, these two senses are fused. The sins offered to the reader are made namable, by Augustine, through the grace of God, whom he praises for having made those sins visible to this sinner—thus of course saving Augustine from unresolved Hell.

Readings: Saint Augustine, Confessions
Suggested Translation: Maria Boulding, The Confessions of Saint Augustine (New York, l998)

Questions:
1 Does Augustine belong in the lineage of autobiographies that we have been tracing in earlier classical literature, or does his confessional presentation move into new territory, which reflects his Christian faith? Do we feel he is establishing, toward us as reader, a self-presentational style which differs from that of the Greco Roman tradition?
2 In such poets as Archilochus or Catullus or Horace we see a readiness to lay personal cards on the table, in the form of lyrical discourse. Is that kind of laying out of cards at all what Augustine decides to do, in The Confessions? Is Augustine talking to you and me, the readers, or to the inner voice he names God?
3 Marcus Aurelius is concerned, in the Meditations, with 'making his behavior better,' with growing closer to perfection is his personal life. That preoccupation hardly seems present in any of the earlier classical autobiographical writing we have read, but it is clearly present, in

fact dominant, in the work of The Confessions. How does Augustine's autobiographical quest for perfection differ from that of Marcus Aurelius?

Week 16 Final 3000 word paper

Please choose your final paper topic from among the following suggested topics:

1 We suggested earlier that literary genre plays a role in shaping autobiographical texts. How many literary genres have we worked with—epic, lyric, history, epistle, prose meditation, confession—and which seemed (seem) to you especially propitious for the construction of autobiography?

2 Do the autobiographers we have read often take us inside their erotic or romantic lives? Which ones do? What is the effect, on an autobiography, of the incorporation of the beloved or significant other? Does that incorporation enrich the autobiographical text?

3 Viewed as a whole, are the autobiographies reviewed in this course profoundly distant from what we would read, today, from someone of our own moment? Which of the ancient biographies seem to you most distant from us, from another age? Which closest? Is temporal proximity to us the key to intelligibility to us?

4 Apart from Augustine—for the instance is too evident—do the autobiographers we have reviewed feel easy with showing us their inmost feelings? Do we hear much of sadness, loss, anxiety? Please cite examples of such 'inmost feelings' in our texts.

5 Each of our autobiographers is embedded in history—we all are. Which of these writers seem to you most conscious of the historical world they are in? How do they see themselves in that world? Which writers seem most nearly to be writing in a historical vacuum?

Recommended Readings (The Loeb Classical Library, published by Harvard University Press, has for over a century been assembling a complete series of bilingual--Greek and English; Latin and English-- volumes of all the significant literary work remaining to us from ancient Greek and Latin literature. Those volumes are a convenient source for the readings of our course; they can be found in most larger libraries, and are reliable. Be it said, though, that the translations provided in those volumes are sometimes good, but often only 'scholarly'. You can read all our texts in the Loeb version, as a default move, but I will indicate preferred translations for each week-- preferred meaning 'lively,' 'contemporary' but not necessarily more 'scholarly' than the Loeb version. Note, of course, that most of the material for this course can be accessed on line, sometimes in the "preferred translation," sometimes not. A Google search will inevitably generate many alternate translation choices, for the readings of this course. Suit your taste, pocketbook, and good sense in these matters, and remember that newness is not necessarily a virtue in translations from the Classics.)

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Will, Frederic, 'Shamans in Turtlenecks,' New Literary History, 1982, XIII, 411-419.

Syllabus

General Course Objectives: For Specific Learning Objectives, Refer to the Study Guide

O1. Identify major works and to analyze them from different critical stances.

O2. Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the works by responding to questions focusing on the context, authors, themes, and motifs.

O3. Compare works and documents from different periods, traditions, and sub-genres.

O4. Apply critical reading strategies to determine alternative interpretive possibilities, as well as motifs, figurative language, and potential interpretive possibilities,

O5. Discuss the historical, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of the works' production

O6. Compare and contrast themes, genres, and movements.

General Program Objectives

1. To provide students with a broad perspective of approaches to world humanities and an understanding of the various ways in which they manifest themselves and to assess students' ability to express their perspectives through exams and essays.

2. To provide students with a deeper understanding of diverse traditions in the humanities the course focus and to express this deepened understanding in written tests and a critical essay.

3. To provide an overview of textual analysis and interpretation methods at a graduate

level and help students apply these skills in writing essay examinations and a critical essay.

4. To read widely and critically in a variety of literary forms found in different genre studies and to demonstrate the depth and breadth of this reading in a critical essay.

5. To conduct graduate-level library research on a particular text or body of work, an individual writer, or an issue in the area of genre studies and to write a critical essay which incorporates their research.

Course Content:

1. Texts that have been designated as being produced within the category of the course topic.
2. Discussion of the historical, social, cultural and biographical contexts in which those works were produced.
3. Literary movements in various periods.
4. Discussion of the theoretical issues and questions related to historical, social, cultural, and biographical approaches to the study of the course topic.
5. Historical contexts.
6. Criticism and reflection upon political and economic systems as reflected in literature.
7. Discussion of the relevance of course readings to the understanding of contemporary global issues.
8. Critical analysis and interpretation.
9. Scholarly research on and off-line.

Course Outline:

For the detailed course outline, please see the Study Guide.

Course Readings:

For a list of course readings, please see the Readings page on the Study Guide

Course Preparedness:

This course is a graduate-level literature course. It assumes the mastery of prerequisite college-level skills in spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and essay writing. It also assumes the ability to read and analyze literary texts. This course provides instruction in world literature and does not address remedial writing issues at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level.

This course focuses on literary texts and analysis and requires college-level writing skills that exceed those required at the secondary level.

However, in some cases, students who have not yet completed a bachelor’s degree may be allowed to take the course.

Course Workload:

For a sixteen-week course, students can expect to devote a minimum of 6 hours of independent study per week in order to complete the coursework. If students are taking the course in an accelerated 8-week mode, they can expect to devote a minimum of 12 hours per week of study.

Assessment Strategy

Learners will demonstrate their knowledge of the subject and their ability to engage in critical thinking and problem solving activities.

- *Journal Entries/Discussion Questions.* Designed to help students identify authors, their works, literary terms, and concepts. Students will also analyze texts, connect the authors, texts, and critical concepts. Finally, students look at texts from multiple perspectives in order to evaluate their own thought processes.
- *Synchronous Online Activities.* Designed to help learners apply the concepts in the course to texts, and to share their insights.
- *Essay / Research Paper.* Designed to help students write scholarly papers and engage in literary analysis. Students will develop a clear thesis which they support with literary citations, a close reading of the text, application of critical theories and perspectives. Students will focus on developing multiple interpretations of a single text, or will look at multiple texts within a movement, genre, or author's oeuvre.