

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term: SP 2008

Department: English

Degree: MA

Title: The Crisis Autobiography: Augustine, Rousseau, and Wordsworth

The comparative study of texts that belong to the confessional genre is, I believe, a field of literary studies in which there remains a great deal of work to be done. Despite the contributions of journals like *a/b* and the growing number of volumes published in what is often called "autobiography studies," there are still notable gaps in the critical literature. This project, which on the broadest level can be defined as a comparative study of Augustine's *Confessions*, Rousseau's *Confessions*, and Wordsworth's *Prelude*, is an attempt to bridge one of those gaps.

The primary aim of the essay is to explore the ways in which all three authors cope with both the anxiety of self-definition and the anxiety of self-narrative within the mode of the crisis autobiography. The focus is both historical and psychological, as the autobiographical act marks the moment of intersection of self and history. Through this comparative analysis, I hope to contribute to the field of autobiographical studies and to clear up some of the generic and conceptual vagaries which trouble that discourse.