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Abstract:

Following the exposure of televangelist Jimmy Swaggart's illicit rendezvous with a New Orleans prostitute, the Assemblies of God simultaneously orchestrated a massive attempt to silence those who would discuss the tryst and arranged the most widely publicized confession in American history theretofore. The coincidence of a "silence campaign" with the vast distribution of a public confession invites us to reconsider the nature of the public confession. For what place has a public confession, the discourse of disclosure par excellence, in a silence campaign? This question is best answered, I argue, if we understand public confession not as a stable a-historical form, but as a practice that is informed by multiple, competing traditions. I argue that by situating Swaggart's performance in a philosophically modern and secular tradition of public confession we can understand both its complicity in a silence campaign and, more generally, the political logic of the modern public confession.

Text of paper:

On February 21, 1988, Jimmy Swaggart publicly confessed to the more than 8,000 people crowded into his Baton Rouge Family Worship Center. The confession was, by all accounts, quite a spectacle. The *Houston Chronicle* reports that Swaggart wept throughout the entirety of his nearly thirty-minute confession during which he was interrupted ten times for a standing ovation (Duin). Between ovations, Swaggart's confession apparently mesmerized the thousands of onlookers. *The Washington Post* recorded that a "hush fell over the sanctuary as stunned onlookers, some speaking in tongues, wept and then shouted support. Men bowed their heads and cried, and women dabbed at running mascara with tissues from boxes thoughtfully scattered about" (Harris). When it was over, Swaggart's wife, Frances, members of his Board, and hundreds of congregants gathered on the stage in what the *San Francisco Chronicle* termed a "giant huddle of hugging" ("A Plea"). Long after Swaggart was gone and the huggers dispersed, many congregants remained, kneeling at their pews praying, or laying prostrate on the floor crying (Seaman 341).

Time magazine called it "without question, the most dramatic sermon ever aired on television" (Ostling, "Now" 46). Rhetorician Quentin J. Schultze labeled it "one of the most masterful programs of all time, perhaps even the single most effective televisual performance of any American evangelist"

(104). Indeed, Michael J. Giuliano has argued that the confession was instrumental in Swaggart's unprecedented return to power. Reversing the precedents of Jim Bakker and Marvin Gorman, both televangelists whose recent scandals had led to their defrocking, Swaggart emerged from the scandal relatively unscathed. And, Giuliano concludes, until three years later when a California police officer pulled Swaggart over only to find him accompanied by a local prostitute and volumes of pornography, Swaggart was "clearly headed back to the top of the religious television ratings" (107).

Questions of effectiveness aside, Swaggart's confession was certainly the most publicized confession in American history theretofore. Some estimates suggest that Swaggart had a regular following of 300-500 million people world-wide and Giuliano concludes that it was "probably the most watched television sermon in history" (1, 35). As one of the "co-pastors" at the Family Worship Center put it, Jimmy Swaggart "confessed to the world" (qtd. in Harris). And the world, in turn, had no trouble identifying Swaggart's performance as a confession—the sermon was routinely (and almost unanimously) referred to as a public confession.

Although the entire world may have known that Swaggart confessed, precious few knew what he was talking about. Indeed, perhaps the single most important fact about Swaggart's confession—a fact widely noted—is that he did not specify what he was confessing for. Despite the fact that Swaggart began his confession with a promise to face issues "head-on," and despite his further insistence that he has never "sidestepped or skirted unpleasanties," Swaggart never disclosed the particular unpleasantry that had him confessing in the first place (qtd. in Giuliano 119).¹ To be sure, stories circulated in the media about a meticulous, detailed, ten-hour *private* confession delivered earlier in the week to the governing board (the Executive Presbytery) of the Assemblies of God. Moreover, the content of this private confession was eventually leaked, and the media had no problem constructing a detailed ledger of Swaggart's moral debts. But despite his promised candor, Swaggart never said a thing about the illicit rendezvous that had him crying in front of millions.

This silence was not just Swaggart's. As I will demonstrate, the Assemblies of God and Jimmy Swaggart Ministries combined in the execution of what the *Boston Globe* would later refer to as a protracted "silence campaign" (Muro). It seems that the entire denomination—at local, state, and national levels—was determined to conceal the details of Swaggart's secret pleasures. Given this concerted effort, the very fact of Swaggart's confession, not to mention the extent of its distribution, becomes problematic. For what place has a much-publicized confession—the discourse of disclosure *par excellence*—in a silence campaign? The simultaneous rigor of the silence campaign and massive publication of the confession, then, offer us the opportunity to rethink the public confession and the political work it is capable of accomplishing.

It is the object of this essay to explain how, and to what effect, Swaggart's public confession accomplished the political work of the Assemblies of God. I suggest that we can understand this work by focusing on the two competing traditions of public confession within which the meaning of Swaggart's confession may be discerned. The first tradition is Augustinian, Christian, and in an important sense classical; the second is modern and secular, with roots in the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rhetorically speaking, the two traditions are fundamentally at odds with each other. In the Christian

tradition, the public confession is, above all, the disclosure of sinfulness.² It is, I argue, a deeply classical tradition of public confession in the sense that it celebrates the arts of rhetoric—and the art of disclosure in particular—as an essential condition for political flourishing.

In the modern tradition, by contrast, public confession is understood as self-disclosure rather than the admission of sinfulness. Despite the common *topos* of disclosure, however, the modern tradition of public confession must be understood as a rejection of the classical emphasis within the Christian tradition. For the modern tradition of public confession suggests that the arts of rhetoric and disclosure stand at odds with each other. From the perspective of this tradition, speech may be necessary for a public confession, but it is woefully inadequate; the depths of the self are too personal and too real to be adequately disclosed through the conventions of speech. For these reasons, the modern tradition of public confession is what Bryan Garsten has recently referred to as a "rhetoric against rhetoric"—a theory and practice of rhetoric that substitutes a "prerational, quasi-religious sense of sympathetic identification" for the conventional arts of speech (12). This insistence that the arts of rhetoric are inadequate for self-disclosure is hardly innocent; Jay Fliegelman describes it as a means of "scripting silence" (49). To the extent, then, that the modern public confession posits a fundamental opposition between the arts of rhetoric and the arts of disclosure, and to the extent that Swaggart operates within this tradition, it is possible to see in his confession not an exception from the otherwise scrupulously pursued silence campaign, but rather a central component of that campaign.

I argue, then, that the modern, secular tradition of public confession is the tradition that best explains the formal features of Swaggart's confession and the unlikely political work it accomplishes. To be sure, Swaggart is a preacher and a self-proclaimed Christian, and there are, accordingly, references to the Christian tradition of confession. But we must not be deceived by the pervasive religious language, the constant references to sin and forgiveness, the speaking in tongues, or the much talked about consequences of the Swaggart scandal on the future of televangelism. For Swaggart's confession is, in fact, deeply indebted to a profoundly secular rhetorical tradition, and it is precisely this tradition which renders Swaggart's confession capable of accomplishing the political work of the Assemblies of God: a widely enforced silence campaign.

In order to explain the secular tradition of public confession, its differences from the Christian tradition, and its political capacities, I isolate three features of Swaggart's confession: his insistence on the inadequacy of speech, his disregard for syntactical and grammatical conventions, and his repeated emphasis on his own humanity. I argue that each of these features have their "primitive source" in a modern, secular tradition of public confession (Darsey 6).³ In the case of Jimmy Swaggart it is particularly important to insist that he is operating within an established tradition. For without this insistence, it is too easy to dismiss his devaluations of speech as simply the rhetorical trope of *adynaton* by which a speaker emphasizes a point by insisting on the impossibility of sufficient emphasis; likewise, without insisting on Swaggart's placement within a tradition it is too easy to dismiss his ramblings as sheer incoherence, or as a failure to achieve basic levels of rhetorical proficiency; and, finally, without insisting on tradition, it is too easy to dismiss Swaggart's emphasis on his own humanity as an innocent communitarian impulse. By locating each of these features within a specific tradition of public

confession, I seek to foreground the ways in which each of them contributed to the political work of the Assemblies of God.

In explaining the rhetorical and political capacities of a particular tradition of public confession, I address two areas of recurring concern in these pages. The first is genre theory.⁴ This essay does for public confession what Sharon D. Downey did for the *apologia*: demonstrate the historical variation of the genre (42).⁵ By demonstrating the historical variation of the public confession, I hope to provide a counterpoint to the scholar whose name is, unfailingly, associated with the study of confession, Michel Foucault.⁶ While Foucault's work is powerful, it is limited by the fact that he does not recognize fundamental differences between traditions of confession. Indeed, Foucault posits a "line going straight" from the Catholic Confessional to the anonymous *My Secret Life*—an eighteenth-century sex text that bears little resemblance to Christian penance—and from the thirteenth-century sacrament of penance to our own confessional culture (*The History of Sexuality* 21, 61).⁷ The Foucaultian approach thus precludes Downey's central insight: that historically divergent iterations of the same form serve different rhetorical functions. This essay suggests, *pace* Foucault, that the critique of public confession cannot proceed *pro forma*; the rhetorical function of a public confession is determined more by the tradition in which it operates than by its generic classification as a confession.

The second area of recurring concern addressed in this analysis is the critical evaluation of religious rhetoric.⁸ This essay challenges the ease with which we distinguish religious discourse from its secular counterpart. Is Jimmy Swaggart's confession an example of religious discourse because it is a sermon, because it is given in a church, because he quotes the bible? This analysis suggests that we must also ask questions about the rhetorical tradition in which a discourse operates. In this instance, I argue that despite the conspicuous religiosity of Swaggart's confession—it was in fact a bible-quoting sermon given in a church—its rhetorical form and political function can best be accounted for with recourse to a definitively secular tradition of public confession.

Does this mean that Swaggart's confession is not religious? This an important question, not because it treats "the classification of discourse as an end in itself" (Hart 292), but because, at least in the case of religious rhetoric, questions of classification have determined critical practice. To take only the most relevant example, the idiosyncrasies of American fundamentalist rhetoric have long been explained with recourse to an insular religious community. Giuliano argues that the success of Swaggart's confession depended upon an audience that shared the same basic theological assumptions (53-54, 56, 64). Martin Medhurst, likewise, suggests that understanding Pentecostal enthymemes demands understanding their Biblical premises (565). Finally, Susan Friend Harding argues that fundamentalists use a "language of faith" in which logical contradictions and other "infelicities" are harmonized in accordance with insular "interpretive conventions" (x-xi). To the extent my analysis holds, however, fundamentalist rhetoric cannot be accounted for with sole recourse to the interpretive conventions of religious groups or their distinctive theological assumptions. To do so would be to miss the extent to which religious discourses are indebted to widely shared rhetorical traditions. In sum, the example of Jimmy Swaggart, properly read, provides insight both into the historical evolution of the public confession and the varied resources of contemporary religious rhetoric.

The argument proceeds in three sections. First, I summarize the feud that led to Swaggart's televised confession and the efforts of the Assemblies of God to execute their "silence campaign." Second, I attend to the differences between the Christian and secular traditions of public confession. Here my focus is on the philosophical assumptions and stylistic markers of the modern, secular tradition of public confession. Third, I provide a close reading of two consecutive Swaggart sermons, his "I Have Sinned" sermon and his "Comeback Sermon." Although only the first of these is generally recognized as Swaggart's "confession," Professor Giuliano has astutely noted that they function together within Swaggart's "rhetorical campaign" to regain the pulpit (3). In this section I highlight the features of his confession noted above and foreground the political work they accomplish. I conclude by reflecting on how the various traditions of public confession might impact our understanding of religious discourse more broadly and by insisting on the relevance of Jimmy Swaggart.

Historical Contexts: Feuding Televangelists and Covert Operations

Throughout the early 1980s, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries competed with the Reverend Marvin Gorman's First Assembly Church of God for New Orleans parishioners and their pocketbooks. Located on the outskirts of New Orleans, the First Assembly Church of God was drawing five-thousand worshippers each week, operating on a budget of \$4.5 million a year, and producing a five-day-a-week TV show that aired in all fifty states—all under the dynamic leadership of the rising televangelist star, Marvin Gorman. In July of 1986, however, when Swaggart got news of Gorman's illicit habits, he nearly single-handedly orchestrated not only the resignation of Gorman, but also the dismantling of the entire ministry of the First Assembly Church of God. Following Swaggart's accusations, Gorman resigned his pulpit. This was not enough for Swaggart, however, who helped to write a lengthy statement accusing Gorman of "numerous adulterous and illicit affairs" to be read in front of Gorman's five-thousand member congregation. Three weeks after this letter was read, Swaggart personally wrote Louisiana District Superintendent Cecil Janway and demanded that Gorman not be given special treatment because of his large operating budget or TV show. In the letter Swaggart made his position clear: "I want it to be clearly understood that I will take whatever steps I feel are necessary to see that this situation is not covered up and that Marvin is not treated differently than any other minister" (qtd. in Harris). Immediately following Janway's receipt of this letter, Gorman was permanently dismissed from the denomination.

It was a little over one year later that a private investigator, hired by Gorman, took several pictures of Jimmy Swaggart entering and leaving a hotel room on the seedy Airline Highway not far from Gorman's now-defunct church. After capturing Swaggart on film, the private investigator called Gorman and then—to give Gorman time—let the air out of the right front tire of Swaggart's Town Car. When Gorman arrived, the two preachers sat in Gorman's car and talked for two hours. *The Washington Post* reports that during this conversation Swaggart wept throughout, confessed an enduring penchant for prostitutes, and begged Gorman to show mercy. In fact, if Gorman is to be believed, Swaggart did more than beg. According to Gorman, Swaggart offered him and his family jobs with Jimmy Swaggart Ministries if Gorman would agree to forget the incident (Harris). Swaggart, in other words, attempted to bribe Gorman and thereby buy the silence of the televangelist whom he had so forcibly silenced just a

year earlier. Gorman refused. He demanded that Swaggart confess and speak openly about his sexual addiction to ecclesiastical authorities. Swaggart agreed, but did not keep his promise. After four months of inactivity, Gorman expedited Swaggart's confession by sending the incriminating photos to the Executive Presbytery of the Assemblies of God. The following Sunday, Swaggart delivered the now-famous "I Have Sinned" sermon in which he claimed that although his "sin was done in secret" the Lord desired that it be revealed before the "whole world."

Although the Lord may have desired that Swaggart's trysts be revealed before the "whole world," Swaggart and the Assemblies of God were decidedly against the idea of disclosure. Consider, for example, the five-minute introduction of Jimmy Swaggart given by Forest Hall immediately preceding Swaggart's confession. Hall, the secretary-treasurer of the Louisiana District of Assemblies of God, explained that Swaggart had given a "detailed" but private confession of "specific incidents of moral failure" to the Executive Presbyters of the Assemblies of God. Hall emphasized that Swaggart had shown true humility in his willingness to speak privately of his sins, but the congregation should not expect to hear him speak publicly about transgressive details:

[N]o spiritual purpose would be served by answering questions about details. There has been a detailed confession to those wronged and to established church authority . . . No doubt much speculation will naturally find its way into the secular media. But for the church, the body of Christ, such speculation and rumor has no place. (qtd. in Duin)

Hall thus prefigured the public confession with an introduction that provided ecclesiastical justifications for silence. Those who would seek to know the details, he suggested, are not fit for membership in the "body of Christ," wherein such speculation, rumor, and detailed speech have no place.

Despite the inevitability of speculation in the "secular media," Hall emphasized that the church would do its best to stop it there too. He said that he was urging Swaggart to "resist the urgings of those outside the church to respond to questions" ("A Plea"). It quickly became the official policy of the Louisiana Assemblies of God that there was "no need for any details to be released" ("A Plea").

Hall's introduction mirrored a statement by the Louisiana District of the Assemblies of God which announced that there would be no public disclosure of the detailed confession and, accordingly, urged church members to "refrain from speculation and imagination about this matter" (qtd. in Buursma). *The New York Times* reported that parishioners were instructed not simply not avoid imagination and speculation, but also were "admonished not to discuss the matter" (King). Speculation and speech regarding Swaggart's unapproved sex was thus constructed as a moral infraction; silence was turned into evidence of spiritual superiority; and the old category of "sinner" was applied with as much vigor to the talkative parishioner as to the illicit pastor.

The church followed these prescriptions of silence resolutely. The following day, Cecil Janway announced that Swaggart would not talk to the secular media and he refused to answer any questions about the developing story (Stepp). Church members too apparently took the silence campaign quite seriously. William Treeby, Swaggart's attorney, parishioner, friend, and member of the Louisiana District of the Assemblies of God, refused to talk to reporters claiming "The Louisiana District has asked us not

to say anything." Likewise, a "Swaggart confidant," said this: "You'd love to let people know the real story, but I have to abide by church orders not to comment" (qtd. in Harris). Even students at Swaggart's Bible College abided by the mandate. *People Weekly* reported that "no comment" was the standard and expected response of students to reporters (Kaufmann 35). After a few days of the "no comment" response, students and faculty at the Bible College took an even harsher stance, asking journalists to leave the premises (Muro). Finally, even the informant and accuser himself, Marvin Gorman, the one who provided the incriminating Swaggart photographs to the Assemblies of God in the first place, now refused to break the silence. The *New York Times* reported that Gorman would make no comments about the specific details of Swaggart's mistakes (Marcus).

It is, then, in the context of a silence campaign pursued at several levels and instituted across a variety of social sites that we must understand Swaggart's public confessions. The best way to reconcile the fact of the confessions with the vigor of the silence campaign is to focus on the competing traditions of public confession that inform Swaggart's work. It is to these traditions I now turn.

Theoretical Contexts: Competing Traditions of Confession

It is well known that public confession in the Augustinian tradition is a response to the Christian category of sinfulness. What is less well known, but in this context far more important, is that Augustine's political understanding of sin entailed a political understanding of public confession. Sin was, for Augustine, always the result of a deep-seated self love constitutive of the natural human condition. Indeed, all the particulars that fill Augustine's *Confessions*—the pear stealing, the sexual trysts, the attachment to heretical beliefs—were simply so many surface effects of a natural but prideful independence that Augustine located at the root of transgression.⁹ This natural independence, Augustine insists, is not simply a turning away from God, but it is also a turning away from the "common good." In a crucial passage that reveals the influence of classical thought at the heart of Augustine's theology, he argues that pride, the very essence of sinfulness, is

the attitude by which a person desires more than what is due by reason of his excellence, and a certain love of one's own interest, his private interest, to which the Latin word *privatus* was wisely given, a term which obviously expresses loss rather than gain. For every privation diminishes. Where pride, then, seeks to excel . . . [it turns] from the pursuit of the common good to one's own individual good out of a destructive self love. (*Literal* 11.15.19)

Charles Mathewes summarizes; "human sin is 'privation' in a way that is not merely etymologically related to privacy: it is solitude, isolation, what Robert Markus calls 'man's liability to close in on himself . . . at bottom, sin [is] retreat into privacy'" (31-32). As Markus himself puts it, pride is "the basic disorder in the human self and the basic force disruptive in society: it isolates the self from the community with its fellows." Sinfulness, then, is politically "disruptive" because it is a form of "self-enclosure," a means of "living according to oneself" at the expense of the community (Markus xviii).

And this is the importance of the Augustinian confession. Public confession is a means of reversing the political currents of pridefulness. If sinfulness is a form of self-enclosure, the acknowledgment of transgression is a means of submitting the self and its deeds to the judgment of the wider community. To disclose transgression is to rob it of its self-enclosing force, to turn away from "private interest" and back towards the "common good." The Augustinian confession, in other words, is consonant with the classical assumption that political flourishing does not just happen, it needs to be fought for and maintained in the teeth of a natural propensity to "retreat into privacy."

Although Rousseau was reading Augustine's *Confessions* immediately prior to the composition of his own, it is important to remember that the two confessants are working with radically different assumptions regarding the relationship between speech and politics. *Pace* Augustine, Rousseau believed that political flourishing was a *natural* human capacity that has been obscured by the conventions of society: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (*Social Contract* 7). Political theorist Patrick J. Deneen sees in these famous words the "radical premise of democracy": that it requires for its achievement only "the realization of [humanity's] inherent decency" (2). This, then, is the fundamental disjunction between Augustine and Rousseau: Augustine understood the human condition as one of flawed self-enclosure rather than basic decency, and he deployed the arts of speech in the name of the common good. Rousseau, to the contrary, proclaimed the "inherent decency" of the human condition and the public confession thereby assumed an entirely new function.

To Rousseau's mind, the confession was a means of accessing this buried decency. "A man who can delve into himself," as Jean Starobinski puts it, "can rediscover the resplendent face of god" (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 18). In less grandiloquent terms, Charles Taylor explains the logic; once the good is located in the depths of the self, access to the good is earned via self-disclosure (*Sources of the Self* 368-92). It is then, not incidental that Rousseau shifts the form and function of the confession. Once about the disclosure of things done wrong, it is now about the disclosure of the self: "The particular object of my confessions is to make known my inner self" (*Confessions* 270). Yet this was no easy task, for Rousseau believed that the conventions of language were too blunt an instrument to disclose the recesses of the inner self. In fact, Rousseau was so critical of the arts of speech, Starobinski reports, that he believed "man has practically lost the ability to communicate what matters" ("Eloquence" 205). Confronted then, on one hand, with the necessity of accessing the "inherent decency" of the inner self and, on the other hand, with the paucity of language, Rousseau concluded that "to say what I have to say would require me to invent a language as new as my project" (*Confessions* 647). And thus the modern, secular public confession was born: philosophically modern because it is motivated by the "dream of shared interiorities" (Peters 65), secular because it is premised on the conviction that the natural human condition is sufficient for human flourishing (Taylor, *A Secular Age* 19).

The language Rousseau invents, and which he deploys in *The Confessions*, is developed theoretically in the now-famous "Essay on the Origin of Languages." It is worth attending to the "Essay" in some detail because understanding the theoretical investments that guided Rousseau's "invention" will help us understand the logic of Swaggart's confession. In the "Essay," Rousseau is trying to isolate the particular characteristics of speech that will enable it to disclose the passions, which function for Rousseau as the site of the truest self. To isolate these characteristics, he creates a fictional story

regarding the origins of speech. He claims that it originated in grunt-like sounds (which he calls the "voice"), evolved into speech proper, and finally terminated in writing. I will sketch the basic plot of his story, then demonstrate the influence of this story in the particular stylistic markers of his *Confessions*, and then, in the next section, demonstrate some of these same markers in the confessions of Jimmy Swaggart.

The decisive characteristic of the voice is its *naturalness*; the voice signifies those "simple sounds" that instinctively and unintentionally issue forth from the "naturally . . . open" human mouth and glottis—the vocative organs (Rousseau, "Essay" 295, 306, 318). Cries, groans, sounds, and especially accents—these are the rich and "natural" resources of the voice (Rousseau, "Essay" 296). Rich, because the myriad of possible ways in which these resources can be combined almost renders the further development of language unnecessary; "natural," because they are involuntary, unwilled, and reflexive (Rousseau, "Essay" 295). The decisive point is this: it is the *accents* of the voice—the sonorous distinctions and tonal variations by which the voice *sounds*—that render the voice capable of self-disclosure.

Immediately following the development of the "voice" is articulation. Like all "developments" in Rousseau's scheme, the emergence of articulation marks a degeneration of language. Articulation is conventional rather than natural; it is "mechanical;" it requires technique, practice, attention, and is learned only with difficulty (Rousseau, "Essay" 295). Whereas the voice is understood as the natural and spontaneous emission of sound, articulation is the mechanical modification of that sound; it is the technique of the lips modifying and thereby muting the natural and euphonic sounds of the voice. When articulation is carried to its logical end it eventuates in the silence of writing. Jacques Derrida, one of the "Essay's" most famous readers, explains: "[T]he more a language is articulated, the more articulation extends its domain, and thus gains in rigor and in vigor, the more it yields to writing, the more it calls forth writing" (226). Writing, for Rousseau, marks the perfect antithesis to voice; it is analytical, it "substitutes precision for expression," and, most importantly, it cannot communicate the inner self.

It is only after Rousseau has considered the degeneration of the voice into writing that he returns to consider speech (*parole*). Speech occupies for Rousseau a midpoint between the sounding of the voice and the muted silence of writing. Because speech is the speaking of *words* it requires articulation, and thus speech is complicit in that degenerative process that eventuates in writing (Rousseau, "Essay" 300). On the other hand speech *sounds*, even the most articulate turns of phrase are modified by a particular *tone of voice* (Rousseau, "Essay" 300). Speech, then, is situated between the competing extremes of the voice and writing. And as Rousseau continues to chart the degeneration of language, the capacities of speech to disclose the self will be determined by its position relative to these two poles. The closer speech remains to the *voix*—to the unreflective, unarticulated, sounding of the self—the more capacity it harbors for disclosure. And it is precisely this insistence—the insistence that confession becomes possible to the extent that speech bears the "mark of its father" (*sic*), i.e. that it retains its ties to the sounding of

the voice—that is decisive for understanding Swaggart's confessions (Rousseau, "Essay" 315).

To bear "the mark of its father" and retain the power of self-disclosure, the public confession must minimize the conspicuously artificial: tropes, figures of speech, "polite turns of phrase," complex chains of reasoning, logical arguments, and precise calculations. Inversely, it must maximize simplicity, instinctiveness, and reflexivity. In short, the confession must minimize anything that might suggest that it is the product of *techné* or conventional training and maximize anything that might suggest it is simply an expression of nature's inarticulate cries. Rousseau thus praises simple and unreflective speech, for the simplicity of speech suggests that it is a natural expression or an effusion of the heart—those properties by which it resists the encroachment of writing and retains its confessional power.

This ideal of speech as a simple effusion of the self is found throughout the *Confessions*; two prominent examples are the speech of Mme de Luxembourg and Rousseau's own speech in the presence of Mme de Warrens. In both of these instances, Rousseau equates the confessional power of speech with its unadorned simplicity and unreflective expressiveness. Consider first the speech of Mme de Luxembourg. Her speech "does not sparkle," is not "witty," has no "subtlety" about it, and is, above all, "simply expressed" (507). To Rousseau's mind, the simplicity of her speech indicates its purity; it is the unadulterated expression of her heart: "Her flatteries are the more intoxicating for being simply expressed; *it is as though they have escaped her lips without her having given them any thought and from a heart that pours itself out* for no other reason than that it is full to overflowing" (507-8, emphasis mine).¹⁰

This unreflective simplicity also characterizes Rousseau's relationship with Mme de Warens. What is important to Rousseau about his relationship is the intimacy and immediacy of their communion: "my heart lay open before her as before God" and there was a "sympathy between [our] souls" (*Confessions* 187, 50). This communion was achieved through simple and unreflective speech: "No sooner had [a] thought struck me than I expressed it; for when I was with her to think and to speak were one and the same thing" (*Confessions* 201). There is here no reflective pause between thought and expression that could detract from the power of speech. This is the sonorous ideal of the voice: speech understood as the uninhibited and spontaneous effusion of the heart.

This simplicity of confessional speech finds its antithesis in the carefully measured, ornate speech that bespeaks an artistic or technical training. The speech of Rousseau's antagonist Friedrich Melchior baron von Grimm provides a case in point. In Book Nine of the *Confessions* Rousseau approaches Grimm in order to apologize for his own mistaken assumptions. When he arrived at Grimm's residence, Rousseau used a "few words" to apologize and was then subjected to "a long harangue which [Grimm] had prepared in advance" (462). As Rousseau reports it, this lengthy rant was simply Grimm's cataloging of his own virtues, namely his ability to preserve friendships over great lengths of time: "He returned to this point so often and so ostentatiously that it occurred to me that, if he were *simply speaking from the heart*, he would insist less on this principle, and that he was turning it into an *art* that could be useful to him in his plans to succeed" (462, emphasis mine). In the person of Grimm speech has turned from the *simple* expression of the heart into an *artistic* rendering of the self, from an effusion of

nature's voice into a calculated contrivance. The language of confession now stands opposed to the traditional rhetorical category of *techne*.

In sum, the modern tradition of public confession, a tradition that finds its most concise expression in the work of Rousseau, denies articulateness and descriptiveness in order to approximate the speechless ideal of the *voix*. This is why, Starobinski explains, Rousseau's language is "so unhinged: exclamatory, syntactically disorganized, uncoordinated." This is why, he continues, Rousseau's words "no longer need to be organized as discourse" (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 137). For the unhinged and the exclamatory, in direct opposition to words "organized as discourse," bespeak the uninhibited effusion of the heart.

All this, of course, is absurd. And it has been recognized as such. To the extent that Rousseau's "Essay" now registers in the academy, it does so largely as the example *par excellence* of the excesses of eighteenth-century thought. Philosopher Newton Garver has argued that the "Essay" "is probably the most outrageous thing [Rousseau] ever wrote, and one of the least plausible of the numerous general treatises on language in the history of western thought" (663). Far more influentially, Derrida has made the "Essay" the centerpiece of his *Of Grammatology* and an iconic text in the Western logocentric tradition (97, 161). In the wake of Derrida's critique it is easy to miss the fact that the "Essay" describes a rhetorical ideal that is still profoundly influential. Theoretically speaking, Derrida is absolutely right to insist on the primacy of writing; practically speaking, this insight has done nothing to temper the emulation of Rousseau's (anti)rhetorical ideal. For evidence, we need look no further than Swaggart himself, for there can hardly be a better description of his prose than that Starobinski used to describe Rousseau's *Confessions*: "unhinged, exclamatory, syntactically disorganized, [and] uncoordinated." But to see in such a description only a failure to meet standards imported from a classical tradition of rhetoric is to miss both the tradition that authorizes syntactical disorganization and the political work such disorganization is capable of achieving.

Swaggart's Rhetorical Campaign

Despite the fact that he concluded his confession with an extended quotation from the Christian Old Testament, Swaggart's "I Have Sinned" sermon and his "Comeback Sermon" fit far more comfortably in the modern, secular tradition of confession described above. Within this tradition, Swaggart's confession can be successful without the explicit admission of misdeeds and it can function in harmony with the Assemblies of God's silence campaign. In what follows, I provide a careful reading of Swaggart's rhetorical campaign to return to the pulpit, foregrounding three stylistic tokens by which Swaggart forcibly situated his own confessions within a modern, secular tradition: his emphasis on the inadequacy of speech, his devaluation of grammatical sensibilities and logical coherence, and his emphasis on his humanity. Each of these tokens, I argue, contributes to the political work of the Assemblies of God.

First, consider Swaggart's preoccupation with the inadequacies of speech, it is evident from the first words of his apology sermon: "Everything that I will attempt to say to you this morning will be from my heart. I will not speak from a prepared script." This immediate dismissal of scripted speech in favor of speaking from his heart is not exceptional. Time and again he declares that he will disclose the recesses of his self, not via the spoken word, but in spite of it: "I am positive that all that I want to say I will not be able to articulate as I would desire. But I pray you would somehow feel the anguish, the pain, and the love of my heart" (119). Note the logic: despite the poverty of articulation (which functions similarly for both Rousseau and Swaggart), Swaggart hopes that his audience will nonetheless understand his heart. Swaggart is delimiting the form of the public confession by providing the essential criterion: if confession is to be successful, it must be understood as simple effusion, an uncontrollable overflow of the passions. Scripted or articulate speech indicates the manipulation of the inner self or its strategic deployment. In either case, the confession is compromised by the appearance of the arts of speech.

Rousseau is certainly not the only source for the devaluation of articulate speech. Such devaluations are a part of the much larger eighteenth-century anxieties over textuality. Kames' *Elements of Criticism*, Sheridan's *Lecture's on Elocution*, and Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric* all share these anxieties to a certain extent (Fliegelman 26-7). I choose Rousseau to explain Swaggart's rhetorical choices, not because Rousseau was unique, but because in him the anxieties over textuality are made ingredient in the genre of public confession.

In his "Comeback Sermon," three months after his confession, Swaggart thanked those friends and family who had helped him through the last three months. His gratitude is worth quoting at length because it nicely captures Swaggart's distrust of the arts of speech:

I could say an awful lot and I want to about so many of the people who have helped us and stood with us and the pastors of this church and the ministers in the ministry itself. But I would invariably leave out someone if I were to do that and that would be someone I would not want to leave out; so I will let discretion be the better part of valor on that. But I will ask Frances and Donnie and Debbie to step out here. And you can't know the load and the burden that these have had to bear the past months and I have leaned on them second only to the Lord. And to say that I love them would be the classic understatement of my life. They mean more to me than words could ever begin to say. (124)

Swaggart is so consistent in his denunciations of the arts of speech that the conventions of public address cannot exhaust their significance. To Swaggart's mind, even the most powerful expressions of speech—proclamations of love—can only ever be "understatements." That Swaggart loves his family more than "words could ever begin to say" has as much to do with the limitations of *saying words* as it does with Swaggart's estimation of his family.

In the two sermons immediately following the exposure of Swaggart's trysts, these denunciations of the arts of speech proliferate endlessly. I suggest that the sheer accumulation of examples in which Swaggart disclaims the power of speech suggests that expressions such as these are

not simply rhetorical devices used to convey magnitude. To the contrary, they signal the rhetorical premises from which Swaggart's confession operates. As Derrida wrote of Rousseau, it "is the *inadequation of the designation* . . . which *properly expresses* the passion" (275, emphasis original). In other words, within the tradition of the modern public confession, the inadequacy of speech is not to be construed as a rhetorical failure; it is, rather, integral to the form of the confession. When Swaggart claims that words could never describe the pain he has experienced, this is not only a comment on the magnitude of the pain. It is also a signal of the confessional tradition he operates in, a tradition in which the capacity to disclose the self hinges on the inadequacy of the words deployed. Thus it is that the much-proclaimed inadequacy of speech is not a defect of Swaggart's confession, but the perfect deployment of a longstanding rhetorical tradition.

What I wish to emphasize here is that the inadequacy of speech required by the modern public confession fit perfectly the politics of a "silence campaign." For within the confines of this tradition, Swaggart's insistence on the inadequacy of speech functions as a justification for not using speech to disclose his misdeeds. The only thing his tradition of confession demands of him was that the effusions of the voice not be wholly eclipsed. Thus the meaning of his confession is to be determined, not by words adequate to their object, but by tones, sounds, and gestures: "he who speaks varies the meanings by the tone of his voice, he determines them as he pleases" ("Essay" 300). And one need only recall the extremes of Swaggart's stage antics—the dancing, crying, crawling, and groaning—or the nasal, tear-choked tone of his confession to see the contemporary resonance of Rousseau's confessional language. The counterfactual ideal of pure effusion has as its tangible effect Swaggart's repeated insistence on the poverty of language and the compensatory exaggeration of tone and delivery. It is no wonder that Fliegelman refers to the insistence on the inadequacy of speech as a way of scripting silence, and it is no wonder that a public confession on this model could accomplish the political work of The Assemblies of God. The oblivion of Swaggart's misdeeds is effected by a tradition in which meaning is wholly remanded to the inarticulate.

I turn now to consider the second of Swaggart's tokens: the devaluation of grammatical sensibilities and logical coherence. The logic, to be sure, is not Rousseau's alone. The eighteenth century, Fliegelman reminds us, witnessed a large-scale movement away from "the conventions of grammar" (28). Yet in Rousseau this tendency is applied to the genre of public confession: "My narrative can no longer proceed except haphazardly and according to whatever ideas return to my mind" (*Confessions* 608).¹¹ Because Rousseau's words are legitimized only insofar as they are the product of emotional intoxications, he cannot be held accountable to such standards as order, logic, and arrangement. If speech is simply the outpouring or effusing of the heart, such speech cannot be subjected to social conventions.

Swaggart's rhetorical campaign is, perhaps even more than Rousseau's *Confessions*, marked by a devaluation of logic, arrangement, and order. Consider, for example, this representative but nonsensical exposition of some verses in the New Testament:

When we pertain to the past [Paul] said, first of all in the 13th verse, 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended' and then he said, 'but this one thing I do' the scripture related to

us singleness of heart. Paul writes to us, or it is Luke? Paul does, I think, and then the Master related singleness of eye. This one thing I do. I don't know in reading this of Paul's struggles. I have no idea. Paul to me is a giant of giants. I do not know when he wrote this, if he wrote it from his own experience, or he wrote it guided by the Holy Spirit. Either way, of course, for all of mankind that would name the name of Jesus. (131)

Notice all the things that are explicitly unimportant to Swaggart. Questions of who wrote the passage, how and when it was written, and even what it means in its context are unimportant to Swaggart. The standard principles of hermeneutics, in other words, have no impact on Swaggart's reading of the text. Perhaps more importantly, notice what is *implicitly* not important to Swaggart: sentence structure and logical coherence. Consider the jumbled first sentence in which the subject of the sentence changes, unannounced, from Paul to "the scripture." Consider also the inexplicable "I don't know in reading this of Paul's struggles." Consider finally that when Swaggart claims to "have no idea," he never explains what idea escapes him. But, and this is the point, within the confines of modern tradition of public confession, this failure to achieve coherence is not a failure at all. The modern public confession precisely reverses the classical operating premises of speech and turns Swaggart's very inarticulateness into first-order evidence of authenticity.

The connection between inarticulateness and authenticity reaches its apex near the end of Swaggart's "Comeback Sermon" when he begins speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues, or *glossolalia*, Medhurst explains, is a form of personal prayer that uses a language "unknown to anyone on earth." It functions as a sign of "complete surrender to the will of God and [it is] a language of praise and adoration" (556, 566). While sympathetic to these devotional functions of *glossolalia*, Giuliano invites us to interrogate it from a strictly rhetorical perspective: he explains *glossolalia* as a "form of nondiscursive prayer in an unintelligible language, which from a linguistic viewpoint, is meaningless but phonologically structured" (66). There could hardly be a more apt description of the Rousseauian confession: it depends for its force on unintelligible sounds. Without denigrating whatever else it might be on a spiritual plane, "from a linguistic viewpoint," Giuliano suggests, *glossolalia* is the pure expression of the *voix* unhindered by articulation. Thus *glossolalia* serves Swaggart on two registers. Given his audience and their religious tradition, *glossolalia* clearly functions as evidence of divine blessing (Giuliano 68-69); it also, and this is the point I wish to focus on, guarantees the authenticity of his confession in a tradition that distrusts techniques of speech. Articulation would suggest manipulation or the strategic presentation of his self, both of which are inappropriate within the modern tradition of public confession. For within the confines of this confession, formal structure and authenticity stand opposed.

If Swaggart's insistence on the inadequacy of speech justified his silence and thus furthered the politics of the Assemblies of God, his devaluation of syntax and the corresponding valuation of spontaneous talk harbor a broader political threat. Perhaps the best evidence of this threat is the fact that scholars as otherwise diverse as Michael Schudson and Daniel Bell agree that democracy requires syntax. Schudson argues that "an emphasis on the spontaneous draws attention away from the contrivances necessary for democracy." To Schudson's mind, a democratic style is rule-governed rather than spontaneous precisely because the rigor of rules ensures that the "slow of speech" have equal

access to decision making procedures. Schudson admits that rule-governed "democratic talk" is not good for the disclosure of the self, but it is, he argues, essential for democracy (298, 307). Schudson's critique, then, cuts to the heart of the modern public confession, suggesting that speech on the model of the *voix*—the *sin qua non* of confessional speech—is a hindrance to the practical functioning of democracy.

Daniel Bell, for his part, suggests that the advent and "debasement" of modernity can both be attributed to Rousseau's *Confessions*. He argues that Rousseau is the source of a distinctly modern aesthetic in which "thought should not mediate spontaneity" and in which "acting out of impulse, rather than the reflective discipline of the imagination becomes the touchstone of satisfaction." Without a distinction between impulsive action and reflective discipline, Bell argues, the very possibility of culture is undermined. And, in a phrase that foregrounds the connections between Rousseau and Swaggart, Bell argues that culture cannot be preserved by "speaking in tongues" (132, 22-34, xv). Thus Daniel Bell, whom Habermas has called the "most brilliant of the American neoconservatives" (6) and the liberal "genius" Michael Schudson come together in their insistence that political flourishing—democracy for Schudson, "culture" for Bell—requires the primacy of syntax over the spontaneity of "speaking in tongues."

Consider finally the third of Swaggart's stylistic tokens: the emphasis on his own humanity. This emphasis is couched in the theological language of sin and it would be easy to see in Swaggart's constant talk of sin evidence that he in fact operated in a Christian tradition of public confession. I believe this would be a mistake. While Augustine surely took the notion of sin quite seriously, and while he certainly believed that "all have sinned," the role of "sin" in the Augustinian tradition of confession is quite different than the role "sin" plays in Swaggart's confession. For Swaggart, the notion of "sin" functioned as an indicator of his humanity—it deindividualized his actions by folding them into the category of sin, a category from which no one is exempt. By contrast, for Augustine the notion of "sin" performed an opposite function. Rather than folding him into the general category of humanity in which no one appears worse than anyone else, "sin" for Augustine led him to recount his particular misdeeds and the things that set him apart from other sinners.¹² Although both Augustine and Swaggart confess their "sins," this "sin" functions quite differently in each case. Because for Swaggart, sin functions only to remind him of his common humanity, it is not inconsistent with the secular tradition of public confession in which he operates.

Less than two minutes into his "I Have Sinned" sermon, Swaggart offers the most quoted lines of the confession: "I do not plan in any way to whitewash my sin. I do not call it a mistake, a mendacity; I call it sin" (119). Swaggart was insistent on this; he referred to his deeds fourteen times in the sermon, each time with a cognate of the word sin, and Giuliano notes that in the three months following the confession, neither Swaggart nor the Assemblies of God ever referred to the events in question as anything but sin (61). It is important here to note that the decisive difference between "mistakes" and "mendacities" on the one hand and "sin" on the other hand is this: while "mistakes" and "mendacities" are political acts because they are committed by and against particular people, "sin"—at least in the Pentecostal tradition—is a *natural* or *human* condition because it afflicts everyone indiscriminately. Giuliano explains that Swaggart's audience "was convinced that sin was a universal experience" that

does not admit of degrees (61-2). In other words, sin is a part of the human condition and it is equally deplorable regardless of whether it manifests itself in the sexual forays of Jimmy Swaggart or the less visible but equally inevitable sins of Swaggart's congregation. Thus Giuliano concludes, "In this simple act of naming his deed a sin, Swaggart was invoking an entire systematized approach to wrongdoing that could only help him in his attempt at restoration" (61). It helped him by subsuming the particularity of his tryst into the general category of sin. Within this category, the particularities of Swaggart's tryst are of absolutely no relevance. It is no wonder he did not mention them.

It is this understanding of sin that renders Swaggart's deployment of the term consonant with the secular tradition of public confession. Because sin is defined as a natural rather than a political condition, its expression does not require the resources of articulation. In other words, Swaggart could not call his misdeeds "mistakes" or "mendacities" for the simple reason that the modern public confession, with its emphasis on the inadequacy of speech and its devaluation of syntax, is best suited to communicate the natural. Without the resources of articulation, Swaggart's *glossolalia* could communicate nothing more than his common humanity. The labeling of misdeeds as "sin," then, naturalizes the misdeeds and renders them fit for the modern public confession.

Referring to his past in terms of "sin," however, elides the fact that Swaggart's misdeeds *were* "mistakes" and they *were* "mendacities." This is to say, the modern public confession necessarily elides the political aspects of Swaggart's choices by suggesting that his tryst with a prostitute in a pay-by-the-hour motel was simply an expression of his human nature. For according to this logic, Swaggart's auditors would have seen in the self-proclaimed sinful Swaggart nothing more than exposed, and possibly magnified, versions of their own sinful selves. It is, then, perhaps not surprising that Swaggart explicitly connected his sinfulness to his humanity. Near the end of his confession he addressed the question of why he sinned. His answer: "I have asked myself that 10,000 times through 10,000 tears. Maybe Jimmy Swaggart has tried to live his entire life as though he were not human" (122). His sexual failures function here as a reminder of his humanity and humanity, in its sheer indiscriminateness, is not a political category. Swaggart's son, Donny, made this logic explicit soon after his father's public confession: "If there's no forgiveness for Jimmy Swaggart, there's no forgiveness for you either" (qtd. in Wuthnow 211).

According to this sinful logic, the tryst proved only that Swaggart was, like his would-be accusers, human. And—this is the point I want to emphasize—it is as if the more *human* Swaggart became, the less *politically accountable* he remained.¹³ This, then, is the political insidiousness of the modern public confession: folding his misdeeds into a natural category so that they are fit for expression within the terms of the *voix* precludes the sorts of discriminations needed for political judgment.

Conclusion: The Relevance of Jimmy Swaggart

It is tempting to ignore Jimmy Swaggart. His virulently anti-intellectual and financially lucrative version of Christianity that preys on the pocketbooks of an elderly and uniformed viewership is, to say the least, distasteful. Unlike so many in American religious traditions, his sermons and writings do not

reward careful criticism. His work has few carefully nuanced arguments, little thoughtful engagement with culture, and no careful replies to his critics. His sermons are, in many ways, simply an enumeration of *non-sequiturs* disguised by the magnitude of his performance. As the *Chicago Tribune* put it, Swaggart is simply a "disguised game-show host" enacting a "sweaty performance art" consisting of a "prowling, growling manipulation of the stage and camera" (Daley). Perhaps these are among the legitimate reasons that he has received little attention from rhetorical critics.

And yet, I've been trying to suggest that Swaggart's rhetorical style, although it eschews thoughtfulness and syntax, is nonetheless understandable as the product of a tradition—a tradition I have called the modern public confession. We should not, in other words, see in Swaggart's ramblings a failure to conform to the "norms of rhetorical culture," but rather the rigorous enactment of rhetorical norms drawn from a competing tradition (Farrell 12-13). And, at least in the case of Swaggart, this tradition provided the resources with which Swaggart could satisfy the demand for a confession while still executing a silence campaign.

The fact that the modern public confession was complicit in the execution of a silence campaign suggests something of its political character. As I argued above, the modern public confession entails a form of rhetoric that is incompatible with "democratic talk" and the sorts of discriminations necessary for political work. This suggests that a "rhetoric against rhetoric," to return to Garsten's phrase, is also a rhetoric against politics. For the particular *topoi* of Swaggart's rhetoric I have highlighted—the emphasis on the inadequacy of speech, the devaluation of syntax, and the emphasis on humanity—all functioned in the service of a silence campaign. And, indeed, Garsten writes that a "rhetoric against rhetoric" seeks to "minimize the space for persuasion in politics" and "obscure the work of ruling" (12).

It would, however, be unfair to extend this criticism to the genre of public confession *tout court*. In the spirit of Sharon Downey's work, mention at the outset, I have been at pains to suggest that the adverse political consequences of Swaggart's confession were the product of a particular tradition of public confession. And indeed, I briefly reviewed an alternative tradition of public confession to emphasize my point that the political consequences of public confession cannot be determined without considering the various forms that public confession may take. For, at least in the case of Jimmy Swaggart, the fact of his confession is less politically relevant than the tradition in which that confession stands. Traditions of public confession are not interchangeable and their divergent forms cannot be ignored, for there is, in fact, no "line going straight" between the Christian confession and its secular appropriation. It is, then, incumbent upon those of us invested in public discourse, to understand the public confession, not as a stable, a-historical form, but as a practice informed by competing traditions.

Finally, the fact that Swaggart's confession stands in a secular tradition suggests something of his continued relevance for rhetorical scholars. Rhetorically speaking, we cannot dismiss him as a religious fanatic. He may be a card-carrying member of the radical right, and for this reason tempting to dismiss, but his rhetorical choices cannot be explained as a "language of faith" or as the result of an enclaved ideological community. Would that it were so. Perhaps one of the most disconcerting aspects of Jimmy Swaggart's rhetoric is the fact that his virulent fundamentalist style draws so deeply on a

liberal political tradition—the same thinker who gave us social contracts also “invented” the modern public confession. The line between religious and secular rhetorics is less clear than it might seem.

In conclusion, it may be true, as *Nightline's* Ted Koppel has suggested, that Swaggart is a “master of communication” (qtd. in Rosenberg). But to the extent my analysis holds, he is the only the master of very particular type of communication. The political stakes of this type can be seen in its complicity with a silence campaign, and its continued relevance can be seen in the fact that Koppel mistook the modern tradition of public confession for communication as such.

Notes

¹ Swaggart's "I Have Sinned Sermon" and his "Comeback Sermon" are appendicized in Giuliano's *Thrice Born*. Hereafter all quotations from these sermons will be given parenthetically, the page numbers referring to the appendixes of *Thrice Born*.

² Thus Susan Wise Bauer who understands the modern public confession exclusively in Christian terms defines confession as such: "A confession is an admission of fault: *I am sorry because I did wrong. I sinned*" (n.p., emphasis original).

³ I intentionally borrow Darsey's language to capture the relationship between Swaggart's confession and the eighteenth-century tradition of confession. Darsey argues that radical rhetoric in America has its "primitive source" in the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. His argument is not, of course, that American radicals were consciously thinking of the Old Testament as they composed their arguments. Rather, he suggests that even without conscious emulation, the Old Testament tradition provides the clearest theoretical resources with which these latter-day radicals may be understood. In the same way, I argue that Rousseau provides the clearest theoretical explanation for Swaggart's rhetorical choices, without claiming that Swaggart was even aware of Rousseau.

⁴ On genre theory in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, see Measell, Gustainis, and Sharer.

⁵ While Downey emphasized the common characteristics of the *apologia* across time, I emphasize discontinuities across time (46, 52). This is why while Downey speaks of variable "subgenres" within the enduring category of *apologia*, I speak of two heterogeneous traditions. I believe that the modern tradition of public confession is too much of a fundamental rejection of earlier traditions of public confession to be called a "subgenre."

⁶ Anne Hartmann is correct that Foucault has "dominated critical conversation so thoroughly that it is difficult to conceptualize confession in other terms" (537).

⁷ Foucault's line-going-straight theory has, rightly, been criticized by some of his best readers. David Macey expresses skepticism (257) and Alain Grosrichard argued that it was inconsistent of Foucault, as a celebrant of capillary power, to argue that confession spread outwards from a single center: "Here the language you use still suggests a power beginning from a single centre which, little by little, through a process of diffusion, contagion or carcinosis, brings within its compass the minutest, most peripheral details." To this charge Foucault "inwardly blushed" and conceded the point (qtd. in Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 199).

⁸ On the critical analysis of religious discourse in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, see DePalma, Ringer, and Webber and Swearingen.

⁹ "What is iniquity? . . . It is a perversity of the will, twisted away from the supreme substance, yourself, O God, and towards lower things" (Augustine, *The Confessions* 7.16.22). Or, as R.A. Markus puts it, "Perverse self-love, rooted in pride, is the basic disorder in the human self and the basic force disruptive in society" (xviii).

¹⁰ Rousseau also praises unreflectivity in the *Second Discourse*: "I almost dare to affirm that the state of reflection is a state contrary to nature and that the man who meditates is a depraved animal" (*The First and Second Discourses* 110).

¹¹ See also: "[I]t is impossible for me to introduce any order into the events of my narrative" (Rousseau, *Confessions* 586). "The further I advance into my narrative, the less order and sequence I am able to introduce into it" (Rousseau, *Confessions* 608). Likewise Rousseau asserts that his panegyric that prefigures the *Second Discourse* must be excused from societal conventions: "If I were unfortunate enough to be guilty of some indiscreet excess in this lively effusion of my heart, I beg you to pardon it as the tender affection of a true patriot" (*First and Second Discourses* 90).

¹² Augustine: "I must now carry my thoughts back to the abominable things I did in those days, the sins of the flesh which defiled my soul. I do this, my God, not because I love those sins, but so that I may love you. For love of your love I shall retrace my wicked ways" (*The Confessions* 2.1.1).

¹³ For this formulation I am indebted to both Stephen H. Browne and Ralph Ellison. Browne writes of Crispus Attucks, "the more American he becomes, seemingly, the less African American he remains" (121). In *Invisible Man*, Ellison's narrator wonders what it means to become "more human": "Did [it] mean that I had become less of what I was, less a Negro" (354).

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