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The Sentence, The Novel, and Autobiography: The Histories of Reading and Self in Bunyan and Rousseau

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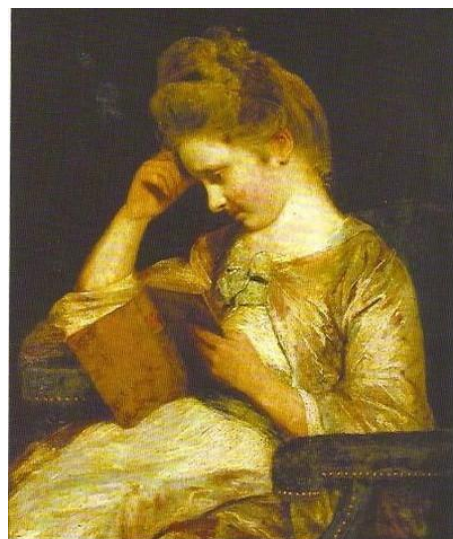
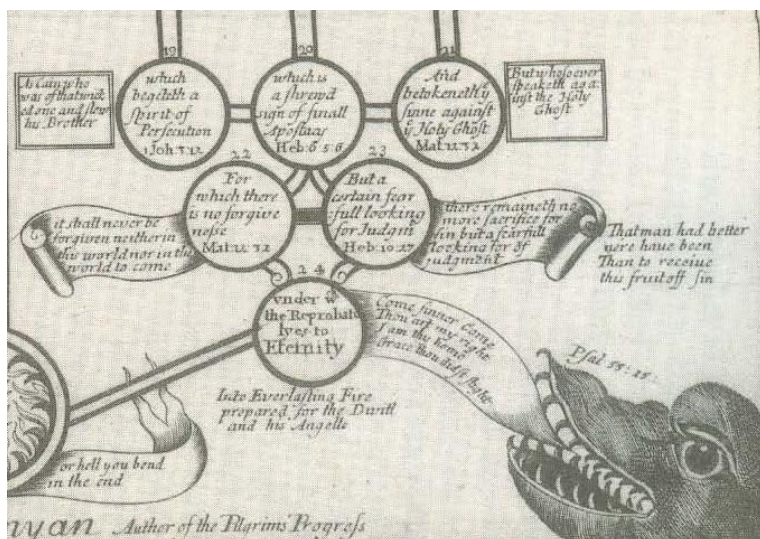
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The Sentence, the Novel, and Autobiography: The Histories of Reading and Self in Bunyan and Rousseau

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English Honors Essay
Spring 2011
Advisor: Laura Baudot

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Title Page Images:

John Bunyan: detail from *A Mapp Shewing the Order and Causes of Salvation and Damnation*, 1664. Engraving.

Sir Joshua Reynolds: *Theophila Palmer Reading Clarissa*, 1771. Oil on canvas.

Abundant thanks are due to my advisor, Laura Baudot, and to all of my teachers, particularly Pat Day, for their patient assistance in the development and execution of this project.

I. Introduction: The End of Autobiography, the Beginning of Autobiography

Though consisting apparently of a series of ‘ideas,’ this book is not the book of his ideas; it is the book of the Self, the book of my resistances to my own ideas [. . .] (Barthes 199)

Here is a series of outdated propositions (if they were not contradictory): *I would be nothing if I didn’t write. Yet I am elsewhere than I am when I write. I am worth more than what I write.* (ibid. 169)

It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel [. . .] (ibid. 1)

These epigraphs are drawn from an autobiography written, it would seem, at the end of autobiography. They are written from a historical and ideological position in which the cleft between “*I am*” and “*I write*”, between “the book” and “the Self”, has been sutured shut; in which the pronoun “I” cannot refer to a site “elsewhere” than in writing or in excess of writing; in which the equivalence of “being nothing” and “not writing” is self-evident and therefore tautological. It is with Barthes’ “book of the Self”, we might say, that autobiography, the work of writing the self, reaches its horizon. As Barthes’ own epigraph tells us, it is at this point that the discourse of the self can “be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel”, which is to say, can be regarded as fictive. It might be suggested that the revelation of the self’s fictitiousness—its identity with the book—marks the end of history, and more particularly the end of the history of the self. Indeed, it probably does, but it might also be suggested that this history does not extend backward interminably. We know, for instance, that the emergence of the novel in the eighteenth century was characterized by a certain amount of confusion between autobiography and fiction,¹ and that the culture of experimental Protestantism in the late seventeenth century regarded spiritual life as being almost entirely conducted within the compass of one text (the Scriptures). One way to read this essay is as an attempt to imagine the possibility

¹ The seminal novels of Fielding, Richardson, Defoe, and Rousseau, for example, were all “lives”, many of them narrated in the first person, and Rousseau’s *Julie*, at the very least, is reported to have been regarded as factual by some readers. The texts associated with the “rise of the novel”, therefore, express a presupposition that, first, the “life” and the “book” have roughly the same domain and scope, and second, that no particular importance inheres in making firm distinctions between the fictitious life and the actual life.

that Barthes, rather than residing at the teleological endpoint of the history of selfhood (and the history, for that matter, of textuality), represents only another inflection in its continuous development; as an explication of the resonances between the situation that makes it possible to equate “the book” and “the Self” (a situation we might call postmodernity) and the situation that produced some of the earliest explicit attempts to write the self. The success of such an explication, it seems clear, would produce an ample supply of questions about the status (perhaps in some circles still privileged) of the events that come in between.

This essay examines the autobiographies of John Bunyan and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in an attempt to engineer a convergence between two established critical-historical narratives, one in the history of reading, one in the history of selfhood. Its methodology is similarly syncretic: it is Foucaultian in that it is primarily concerned with the construction of a historical narrative or *récit*, but ultimately views “history” as a tactic for the production of difference and the denaturalization of the present; it is Derridean (and perhaps also Barthesian) in that its topics are texts and subjects, and more particularly in that it proceeds with an ethics of suspicion towards any metaphysics which would seek to clearly distinguish between subject and text (between the subject of language and the texts it reads and writes). Though the thesis of this study is a historical one, its techniques are not those of conventional historicist criticism (research and contextualization in biography, culture, sociology, politics, etc.) but rather can be described as formalist (confining themselves largely to the text in order to show “how it works”) or deconstructive (confining themselves to the text in order to show how it doesn’t work). It takes autobiography as its topic, since the autobiographical text is a direct transcription or performance of the writing subject and therefore a particularly fecund site for accessing questions about the structure of that subject. Indeed, the autobiography, in light of the Derridean ethics described

above, is not the mere echo of its creator, the imprint of a vanished historical presence; rather it is a subject literally inscribed as narrative, a self rendered as a textual surface (which, according to the same Derridean ethics, is probably what the self was all along). The thesis, which within an essay of this scope will necessarily remain more of a suggestion or a theme than a thesis, is that the discovery, in literature and philosophy, of the human self's resistance to representation and the widespread development, in public and individual praxis, of a fluid and prolific form of reading (the former occurring, the story goes, around 1800 and the latter during the late years of the eighteenth century), are in fact one event; that at least in this instance historians of reading and historians of the self (or the subject, or consciousness) have been viewing a single object through their respective disciplinary prisms. However, before attempting to fuse these dual accounts of the developments in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, it is first necessary to establish the parts that are to be conjoined.

Scholarship on the history of reading has long held that a "reading revolution" occurred in the late eighteenth century, when a complex cluster of developments in economics, cultural practices, institutional infrastructure, and book production led to (and perhaps in turn were helped along by) a transition from "intensive" to "extensive" reading practices. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, while subscribing to a certain degree of the skepticism with which this narrative has come to be regarded, offer a concise description of this transition:

During the second half of the eighteenth century, an 'intensive' reading gave way to another sort of reading, called 'extensive'. The 'intensive' reader had access to a limited, closed corpus of books, which were read and reread, memorized and recited, deeply understood and possessed, and transmitted from one generation to another. Religious texts (in Protestant lands, primarily the Bible) were privileged objects of a reading style profoundly imbued with sacrality and authority. The 'extensive' reader [. . .] devoured a large number and wide variety of ephemeral print materials. These new readers read rapidly and avidly, subjecting what they read to a critical regard that spared no domain from methodical doubt. A communal and respectful relationship to written matter made of reverence and obedience gave way to a free, more detached and irreverent sort of reading. (Cavallo and Chartier, eds. 24-25)

The movement from intensive to extensive reading, then, involved both the extent of the textual domain to which a reader might have access (from a handful of cherished texts to a “large number and wide variety” of them), as well as the mode of the reader’s relation to texts (from rumination to rapidity, from veneration to criticism). Cavallo’s and Chartier’s reluctance to fully commit to the intensive-to-extensive narrative is motivated by recent work establishing the existence of something resembling extensive reading practices before the eighteenth century (among Renaissance humanists, for example), and on fact that the eighteenth century is notable for the invention of a newly intensive form of relationship between reader and text (namely, a nearly fanatical enthusiasm for novels, especially Richardson’s and Rousseau’s seminal and wildly popular ones). (Cavallo and Chartier 25) Nevertheless, as Reinhard Wittman demonstrates, the model remains largely intact as a way of summarizing a variety of undisputed developments in textual practices that occurred throughout the eighteenth century: explosions in literacy and publication rates, the adoption of reading by women and the middle classes, the meteoric ascent of the novel and the periodical, the invention of the lending library, and aesthetic and industrial refinements in print technology. This study, however, will be most concerned with the history of the relationship between the reading subject and text, and as such will rely on the contested thesis that the eighteenth century was a crucial point of inflection not only in the sociological, economic, technological, and institutional histories of reading, but in the history of the singular event that occurs when an individual sits down and opens a book.

To restate this idea within the phenomenological framework within which it will be deployed here: during the course of the eighteenth century, the quantity of text that enters the reader’s consciousness and the rapidity with which it passes through it both expand enormously; as a result, a practice of applying sustained attention to small quantities of text cedes to a hasty

consumption and subsequent disposal of much larger quantities. This theorized pattern is supported by the texts that are the subject of this essay: Bunyan hardly reads anything besides the Bible, and indeed has read it so much that he hardly needs to open it to access his favorite passages, Rousseau reads novels, scholarly works, periodicals, and letters rapidly and then pushes them aside; Bunyan's intertextual references are aphoristic quotations of single Scriptural "sentences", Rousseau refers off-hand to works hundreds of pages long as if they constituted unitary objects. The historical shift from intensive to extensive reading can certainly be glimpsed in Bunyan's and Rousseau's *descriptions* of reading, but one of the foundational conceits of this essay (that the consciousness of the subject of autobiography and the content of the autobiographical text can be viewed, perversely and productively, as indistinguishable) allows for another point of access to questions of reading: if the content of texts read by the subject constitutes, at least in part, the surface of consciousness, and if to read an autobiographical text is to peruse that surface, then intertextual reference and quotation becomes another textual phenomenon which can be used to describe reading practices. In my reading of Bunyan, especially, this will become crucial: it is not only the fact that Bunyan references Scriptural fragments in isolation from the textual continuity in which they originate, but also the curious mode with which these fragments are put into autobiographical discourse that will provide insight into reading's inflection of selfhood in seventeenth-century experimental Protestantism. In the reading of Rousseau, I will direct my attention towards reading practices primarily on the register of description, but with a particular eye for the relationship Rousseau posits between the act of learning to read and his early development as a subject, and ultimately the relation between autobiographical textuality and self in general. It will, I hope, become clear that a comparison between the *Confessions* and *Grace Abounding* provides an apt metonym for

the historical transition in reading practices whose broadest outlines remain undisputed even as its particulars undergo revision.

One of the two historical narratives which I intend to interarticulate in this study is now, hopefully, in place. For the other, I will turn to Michel Foucault's classic archeology of Western intellectual history, *Les Mots et les Choses* (*The Order of Things*). Foucault's text certainly holds a privileged place within the genealogy (or, the archeology) of this project in that it is a seminal attempt to write the history of the self; indeed, an attempt to demonstrate that the self is among those things that have histories. Specifically, it describes the transition from "the Classical age" to "modernity" (or, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), a historical juncture in the development of Western knowledge which for Foucault ultimately amounts to the "appearance of man". The most immediately striking thing about this thesis, of course, is its implicit assertion that "man" was absent from most of Western history, including the Enlightenment:

In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists, and who represents himself within it, recognizing himself therein as an image or reflection, he who ties together all the interlacing threads of the 'representation in the form of a picture or table'—he is never to be found in that table himself. Before the end of the eighteenth century, *man* did not exist [. . .] (Foucault 1973; 308)

For Foucault, Enlightenment thought is characterized by the production of knowledge on a horizontal field uninflected by the position of the subject of knowledge; the subject can be described (variously, as a body, an animal, a *cogito*, an economic producer) within this field but can never disrupt its horizontality by becoming a focal point; the taxonomy and the encyclopedia are the genres proper to the prehistory of man. This is not to say that Enlightenment knowledge is "objective", but rather that it does not organize itself around the subject who produces it. Or, perhaps preferably: the "Classical" subject of knowledge is not the type of subject who demands that knowledge always be arrayed around and articulated with reference to itself, since it has yet

to discover its own subjectivity. Foucault describes how, in the decades surrounding the year 1800, this pre-subjective subject gives way to man, the subject whose production of knowledge is always reducible to self-reference:

In contrast, the analysis of man's mode of being as it has developed since the nineteenth century does not reside within a theory of representation; its task, on the contrary, is to show how things in general can be given to representation, in what conditions, upon what ground, within what limits they can appear in a positivity more profound than the various modes of perception; and what is then revealed in this coexistence of man and things, through the great spatial expanse opened up by representation, is man's radical finitude, the dispersion that at the same time separates him from his origin and promises it to him [. . .] (Foucault 1973; 337)

In the nineteenth century, Foucault argues, man becomes an object of his own knowledge and thus constitutes his own being. Or rather, the human being was always an object of knowledge but never the subject (and thus *the* object); intellectual labor had always attempted to theorize the human, but had never conceived of this work as indelibly marked by its situation *within* the human. Man appears at the moment when the human becomes both the subject and object of knowledge, both the topic to be studied and the precondition for study.

For Foucault, one of the most significant consequences of the appearance of man is the establishment of intercourse between the thought and “unthought” elements of consciousness. This development emerges, in part, out of man's sense of disidentity with his own language: “How can he be the subject of a language whose organization escapes him [. . .] and within which he is obliged, from the very outset, to lodge his speech and thought [. . .]” (Foucault 1973; 323) In the nineteenth century, the human is no longer reducible to the linguistic, and thus must begin to encompass the extralinguistic or unthought: “Man is a mode of being which accommodates that dimension [. . .] which extends from a part of himself not reflected in a *cogito* to the act of thought by which he apprehends that part [. . .]”² (Foucault 1973; 322) The inclusion of the unthought within the domain of the human, however, does not function by

² Foucault's suggestion here and in the previous quotation that man constantly labors to “apprehends” and attempts to express the unthought in language even as it is incommensurable with language will resonate very strongly with Rousseau's treatment of affect and the prehistory of reading, described later in this essay.

simple induction; the unthought, the point at which man is irreducible to his status as an organism, a subject of language, or a producer of labor, enters the domain of the human not through a mere redrawing of boundaries but via a breach and a crisis: “What is this being, then, that shimmers [. . .] in the opening of the *cogito*, yet is not sovereignly given in it or by it?” (Foucault 1973; 325) “Man” is implicitly an unstable term in that it designates an epistemic formation encompassing both the subject (of language, labor, embodiment) and that which can be glimpsed through its “opening”; “man” incorporates both the necessity and the impossibility of “his” own representation (in the discourse of philology, biology, economics, and, I might add, literature). Thus, Foucault’s archeology describes the emergence of a modality of selfhood which is, I would argue, distinguished primarily by its uniquely complex relationship to representation, by its simultaneous affinity for and incommensurability with the language that attempts to describe it. Foucault’s “man” is a subject whose discourse is directed towards the acquisition of self-knowledge, yet whose extension into the domain of unthought experience ensures that there are boundaries beyond which this discourse cannot pass; the appearance of man is the simultaneous emergence of a demand that knowledge of man—and in terms of man—be produced, and of a conviction that he (or she, or ze) is the one object about which a comprehensive knowledge could never be erected.³

One issue that *The Order of Things* does not address explicitly, however, is the medium in which representation—the representation that is both foundational of and incommensurable with man—is embedded. Given Foucault’s reliance not on evidence of economic, social, political, or material conditions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but instead on the

³ Within the domain of literary texts, the “appearance of man” can be glimpsed most plainly in the phenomenon of Romanticism, with its unbridled enthusiasm and profound skepticism in regard to verbal “expression”: in Romanticism, the function of the literary work is to allow the writing subject to express itself, yet expression is stifled by the inevitable finitude imposed on attempts to give full voice to the passions or to experience.

canon of theoretical texts in the emergent “human sciences”, it seems that reasonable to suggest that *textual* representation is ultimately what is being invoked. Indeed, just a few years after writing *The Order of Things*, Foucault theorized the domain of the historian’s inquiry as a “density of discursive practices”, or a composite of “systems of statements” known as “the archive”, and asserted that “the description of [historical] statements does not attempt to evade verbal performances in order to discover behind them or below their apparent surface a hidden element”, but instead does its work at the level of the (archival) statement itself, does not seek to reconstruct the events, bodies, and institutions “behind” discourse but instead regards “the surface of discourse” as its object. (Foucault 1972; 128, 109) Both in his practice and in his methodological statements, Foucault comes tantalizingly close to acknowledging that his archeological techniques imagine history in a very specific way: archeology seeks to tell not the history of the real but the history of texts. By seeking to link Foucault’s thesis regarding the “appearance of man” to the history of reading, this project attempts to fill the lacuna Foucault leaves us with by declining to equate “discourse” with “text”. In the readings below, the autobiographical subject’s relationship to representation, and particularly to representations of itself, will hopefully begin to seem inextricable from its relationship to texts; resonances will emerge between the birth of man (which is, essentially, the birth of man as the unrepresentable locus of representation) and the birth of extensive reading (the birth, on a large scale, of rapid and uninhibited intercourse between texts and consciousness). Or, at the very least, it will become clear that Rousseau’s and Bunyan’s autobiographies, which occupy such different moments in the histories of reading and selfhood, both utilize representations of reading to work through problems related to the manner in which the self relates to other selves, to its emotions, to God, and to its own history.

In the interest of clarifying my intent, I will indulge in a brief account of the genesis of the current form of this essay. Originally, this project was intended to be, more or less, an “archeology” of selfhood in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries conducted through the genre of autobiography. I studied a constellation of autobiographical texts from each period in an attempt to extract the theorization or modality of selfhood that each enacted, hoping to collate these extractions into an inclusive statement about their common structures. The result of this labor turned out to be not the crystallization of deep structural concepts but a set of “readings”—not discoveries of elemental resonances “behind” the texts but a series of movements across their surfaces. The readings, moreover, seemed to invariably find their way to questions of reading practices and textuality. This pattern led to the development of the thesis of this project, which is indeed born out by the texts that generated it: the autobiographies of Restoration-era Protestants (Bunyan, Agnes Beaumont, Lodowick Muggleton, John Crook) are notable for an absence of problematics regarding the boundary between text and self, while the autobiographies of eighteenth-century writers from England, the continent, and America (Rousseau, James Boswell, Jonathan Edwards), all express in some form a preliminary version of Foucault’s “man”, and do so as a response to the problem of (reading or writing) subject and (read or written) text.⁴

Even if the textual record I drew on did seem to support what turned out to be the central narrative of the project (the emergence of a problematics of reading and textuality in the mid-eighteenth century, attributable to the historical transition to wide-spread extensive reading practices, and the subsequent imagination of a self irreducible to textual representation and expression), each individual text diverged tangentially from this central unity. In the seventeenth

⁴ Merely for the sake of accuracy: Edwards is the sole exception here. His “Personal Narrative” both expresses an anticipation of the “appearance of man”, and also transforms the protocols of the seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography into a new space inflected by extensive reading practices, yet these two phenomena remain correlated rather than interinflected.

century, each autobiography documented (or performed) the formation of selfhood via reading of Scripture, yet the characteristics of the selves thus formed were hardly uniform: in Bunyan, Scripture cleaved consciousness even as it founded it, providing the linguistic content for a subject otherwise constituted by bodily and affective phenomena; in Beaumont, Scripture was essential to gender identity and to the integrity of the private sphere; in Muggleton, Scripture served as the basis for theological polemics by providing the tautological justification for discursive violence, a violence by which the spiritual subject was constituted; in Crook, the acquisition of competence with Scripture (competence, specifically, with the mode of relation to Scriptural texts proper to intensive reading) was necessary for the formation of a social subject capable of full participation in a spiritual community. In the eighteenth century, reading remained essential to the constitution of the subject, but the newly problematic status of its foundational role in selfhood necessitated the discovery of new locations for the ontic core of the self, locations utterly beyond the reach of text. Yet, as in the seventeenth century, the locations proposed for this unrepresentable self varied widely: for Rousseau, in affect and its fundamental incommensurability with textual representation; for Edwards, in the irreducible a-sociality of sin; and for Boswell, in death, the absolute horizon of textual communication.

Thus, the product of my investigations turned out to be not a history of selves so much as a history of their boundaries and limits: a narrative establishing the historical development of the problematics of self and text may have been in place, but the textualities and practices of self deployed within the space opened up by this problematics, or by its absence, remained riotously plural. Given my reliance on literary-critical techniques not customarily employed in the praxis of historicist criticism, such plurality was perhaps inevitable. Rather than importing biographical, cultural, and sociological research, the readings adopted the critical techniques of

formalism and deconstruction, techniques better suited for the production of problems and questions than for the reconstruction of context. My decision to confine the discussion in this essay to only two texts thus represents not only an editorial reduction to a scope more suitable to the format, but also an embrace of the eccentricity that necessarily comes with a dual commitment to formalist criticism and to the creation and transformation of historical narratives, or more precisely a commitment to doing history through the literary. It represents, yes, an attempt to pare this essay down to a manageable size, but also a critical praxis that privileges gaining access to central questions and problems over accumulating historical data or “examples”. Of course, as an attempt to craft a broad historical narrative using only two exemplary texts, this essay must remain merely a suggestion for or a gesture towards further work. Indeed, within our current vocabulary for the typology of critical practices, it is probably not a historicist project at all. That said, it is possible to speculate that the formalist “gesture” and “suggestion” are not the mere prototypes for the historicist “case”, “argument”, or “proof”, but rather its Dionysian cousins. Further work towards theorizing the relationship between the suggestion and the proof, the formalist reading and the historicist reading, the ethics of the literary and the ethics of the historical, I suspect, might be useful in working through the (ultimately rather strange) interdisciplinary space which historicist criticism finds itself, a space whose inescapable strangeness is only accentuated in my study due to its unusual melding of the formal and the historical. Offering such a theorization is beyond my scope in this essay, but I will attempt, perhaps slightly stubbornly, to inhabit a critical ethics that sustains the force of both history and text, context and form, the historical and the literary, the real and the fictive. The resultant theoretical space, while by no means completely worked through, might be viewed as

the convergence of the Derridean and Foucaultian theoretical strains work invoked at the outset of this introduction.

II. Scripture, Self, and Intratextuality: Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*

John Morris' seminal 1966 study of autobiography, *Versions of the Self*, reads John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666) as a preliminary emergence of the "version" of selfhood later expressed with full force in Wordsworth's *Prelude* and John Stuart Mills' *Autobiography*. Morris seeks to incorporate Bunyan's text, despite its idiosyncrasies, into the autobiographical canon, and *Grace Abounding*'s place in that canon is justified by its perceived anticipation of literary Romanticism. More particularly, that which defines Wordsworth and Mill and appears incipiently in Bunyan is "the experience of private neurotic suffering", an experience which involves the succession of "despair, crisis, collapse, and rebirth" (Morris 5, 6-7). Morris' reading of *Grace Abounding*, according to this emphasis on successive subjective states, focuses on long periods in Bunyan's spiritual development (his sinful pre-religious life, his tormented striving to attain the effortless piety of the women at Bedford, his eventual finding of peace and call to ministry). Morris also conceptualizes Bunyan's narrator as inhabiting a meta-experiential position and fully capable of reflecting objectively about experiences recounted, praising Bunyan's prose for its "analytic tone" because "good autobiography is not merely a chronicle of experience, but a judgment of it." (Morris 96) While Morris reads *Grace Abounding* at length and with nuance, the reason for the work's presence in his project is never in question: Bunyan's

autobiography it significant because it is one of a handful of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts that “foreshadow the autobiographies of Wordsworth and Mill.” (Morris 34)

Morris’ history of autobiography therefore extends Romanticism, along with its implicit theorizations of selfhood, backwards into the centuries preceding it, treating the (long) nineteenth century as frame of historical reference from which previous epochs are differentiated. Accordingly, the Reformation, along with the texts it generated, holds no self-sufficient historical density for Morris; its literature is leveraged into a position of precursion, and Bunyan’s autobiography can only be read in order to establish a prehistory for Wordsworth’s. This is not to attack Morris’ work, which was written from quite a different location in the history of criticism than the current study, but rather to identify more precisely an asymmetrical distribution of “historical density” which, despite myriad critiques, can perhaps still be recognized, at times, in our discourse today. One component of my intention here is to elide a history of the self in which certain periods serve as centers and others only as antecedents and aftereffects, and as such I will attempt to avoid Bunyan’s autobiographical work—his “version of the self”—in order to absorb it into a genealogy of the Wordsworthian subject, or for that matter the contemporary subject. This methodological ethics has a personal justification in addition to the preceding ideological one: for me, the most striking feature of *Grace Abounding* is not its potential to offer up a proto-modern self, to serve as a kind of distorted mirror to Romanticism and modernity, but rather its profound, inexhaustible alterity: Bunyan’s autobiography is, simply put, exceptionally weird. My intent is to approach Bunyan’s weirdness, his irreducible historically alterity, with sufficient respect to render his inclusion in this study more than merely assimilative; to incorporate *Grace Abounding* into the narrative of the “appearance of man” but also to allow it to speak its own strangeness.

As an initial framework for entry into Bunyan's autobiography, I will adopt Vera Camden's psychoanalytical reading of *Grace Abounding*, which reverses Morris' reading in two significant respects. First, Camden notes the larger narrative arc (sinfulness, torment, salvation) which Morris views as characterizing the work's formal structure, but argues that this narrative is subsumed within a more localized, and much simpler, form of narrativity: the constant oscillation between the despair of reprobation and the joy of election. Furthermore, while Morris views Bunyan's text as saturated throughout by an analytical consciousness capable of locating itself outside of and providing commentary on its spiritual experiences, Camden's reading of *Grace Abounding* as oscillatory rather than progressive or teleological in its narrative structure suggests that the work presents not a unified autobiographical subject, capable of arranging its remembered experiences as a coherent sequence and of generating meta-discourse about their "meaning", but rather as a series of drastically partitioned, inescapable subjective states. If Bunyan's narrative is, as Camden argues, characterized primarily by "obsessionality", by the Freudian compulsion to repetition ("the primitive 'tom-tom' of dull reiteration"), it seems that there is no "outside" to the binary affective states Bunyan's text records, no possibility of reflection from a conceptual distance. The two states—election and damnation—may be juxtaposed and sequenced but they are fundamentally irreducible and may not be reconciled within one narrative procedure (Camden 150).

I wish to take Camden's description of *Grace Abounding* (as a sequence of oscillatory and consuming affective or psychological states and not a story of sin and redemption) as a point of departure, using this notion to begin to describe the modality of selfhood that Bunyan's narrative both enacts and, implicitly, theorizes. *Grace Abounding's* preoccupation with the reading of and rumination on Scripture, and its consequent abundance of Scriptural quotation (a

characteristic which is by no means unique among seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographies), suggest that an investigation of texts and textuality within Bunyan's work will be a powerful implement in this description (and in addition, will begin to produce a convergence between the history of the self and the history of reading). Accordingly, I will translate Camden's notion of oscillating obsessionalities from a Freudian space into a (more or less) Derridean one, considering the role of Scriptural texts in fomenting Bunyan's affective fluctuations (and, more generally, using questions about textuality to access questions about subjectivity out of a suspicion that they are, in fact, the same questions). I will allow "textuality" to function at two levels: in addition to describing how Bunyan's "treatment" of reading and Scriptural texts inflects the mode of subjectivity that his autobiography enacts, I will consider how the characteristics of the autobiographical text itself can be shown to manifest that modality; I will consider texts and textuality in *Grace Abounding* as both "content" and "form". This distinction, however, merits caution: having acquired a certain skepticism regarding distinctions between selves and texts, we must extend that skepticism to distinctions between the real historical practices that the text represents and its manner of representing them, between its denotative elements and its intrinsic characteristics as a text. We must consider the possibility that *Grace Abounding* does not record but *constitutes* a subject, a subject which is not identical with that embodied, in this case, by a seventeenth-century tinker and preacher in Bedford, but is nevertheless the subject about which the historian-critic must write.⁵ Description of the "Bunyanesque self", accordingly, will involve not the deciphering of signs deposited by a phantasmal subject but the reading—in the most literal sense—of a textual subjectivity which, in its formal, lexical, and rhetorical characteristics, remains transparent and readily accessible.

⁵ Which is not to suggest that this subject is wholly differentiable from the historical mind and body of which it is a trace: as long as the concept of "history" remains irreducible to the concept of "historical narrative", the tinker of Bedford will retain a spectral presence in this study.

And, in my view, it is the presence of other texts within this self-text—which is to say, its accounts of reading practices—that will provide the most fecund description of its structure.

Both Morris and Camden, along with countless other critics of *Grace Abounding*, have emphasized the rigorous “subjectivity” of the work’s narrative, a characteristic that will be vital in my reading as well. The text is consistently disinterested in its author’s social life, material and economic conditions, and day-to-day activities, which only constitute only a marginal portion of the narrative. Bunyan’s wife and children are mentioned only in passing, and the residents of Bunyan’s town and members of his congregation hardly appear at all. Indeed, often the only reference to materiality or sociality is a brief situational preface which precedes a plunge into extended self-reflection: “one day, as I was travelling into the Countrey [. . .]”; “At another time, as I was set by the fire [. . .]” (34). Bunyan’s autobiography is, to the extent that such distinctions can be made, an account of consciousness rather than material or social existence.⁶ In attempting to describe precisely the mode of this “internality”, it seems that Bunyan’s liberal use of Scriptural quotation is a potentially productive, if hitherto somewhat neglected, point of entry. Scriptural fragments, from both the New and Old Testaments, entirely saturate Bunyan’s text and Bunyan’s consciousness (or, Bunyan’s text/consciousness). It is tempting to say that this abundant Scriptural reference provides a sort of gloss or commentary upon Bunyan’s consciousness, working to imbed fundamentally subjective experiences within cultural, social, and linguistic matrices—indeed, this analysis would be consonant with Morris’ assertion that “good autobiography is not merely a chronicle of experience, but a judgment of it.” However, a closer examination of the intertextual deployment of Scripture within Bunyan’s

⁶ Fascinatingly, the body is not marginalized in the narrative in the way that social, material, and political experience are. Rather, consciousness mingles freely with embodied life, as will become clear below in the discussion of Bunyan’s bodily and affective responses to Scriptural fragments.

prose will render the “commentary” model inadequate and the notion of “subjective experience” in *Grace Abounding* decidedly less than transparent.

The question of how Scripture functions in *Grace Abounding* might be best broached by examining the local, specific procedures the text enacts for the insertion of Scriptural sentences into its narrative. As sentences make their appearance in the narrative, they are very often introduced with one of a constellation of tropic rhetorical flourishes: “these words broke in upon my mind” (22); “the word came in upon me” (24); “that sentence fell in upon me” (28); “this sentence bolted in upon me” (40); “that Word dropt upon me” (92). These flourishes appear countless times in the narrative of *Grace Abounding*, and are striking for several reasons. First, they consistently materialize, spatialize, and corporealize the entrance of Scripture into consciousness, describing this entrance in terms of impact, speed, force, and motion (“dropt”, “fell”, “bolted”), in terms of the corporeal and kinesthetic relation of the embodied narrative consciousness to its surroundings. Second, they dislocate the Scriptural text’s presence in consciousness from the act of reading by declining to specify the originating site of “the Word” that “drop[s]” into consciousness, implicitly depicting Scripture as immanent within the texture⁷ of consciousness rather than entering it only with the act opening the Bible. Third, and most importantly, their grammatical structure almost invariably locates the subjectivity referred to by the pronoun “me” in an object position relative to the Scriptural text; the conjunction between narrative consciousness and Scripture is brought about not by deliberate recollection, free association, or situational appropriateness, and certainly not through the reading of an actual Bible; rather, text appears within consciousness as a *determined* process. The logic, locality, and agent of this determination remain unspecified, but the narrative subject’s absolute lack of control over the inflow of Scriptural material into its consciousness (or, the inflow of intertextual

⁷ Pun intended.

material into its autobiographical text) is clear; indeed, it is visible on the very syntactical surface of the text.

The corporeality, abstraction, and determination which characterize Scripture's relation to narrative consciousness on the register of localized rhetorical and grammatical phenomena are also operational on the register of large-scale narrative structure. In fact, Scriptural quotation is instrumental in establishing the oscillating (rather than teleological) narrativity that Camden describes. Each of the episodes in the oscillation that Camden cites—oscillation between election and reprobation and their corresponding affective states—is centered around Bunyan's preoccupation with a particular Scriptural passage. For example:

Then I began to give place to the Word, which with power did over and over make this joyful sound within my Soul, *Thou art my Love, thou art my Love, and nothing shall separate thee from my love*; and with that *Rom. 8. 39.* came into my minde. Now was my heart filled full of comfort and hope, and now I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me. (28)

Now I blessed the condition of the Dogge and Toad [. . .] That Scripture also did tear and rend my Soul in the midst of these distractions, *The wicked are like the troubled Sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt: There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God, Isa. 57. 20. 21.* (31)

Scriptural sentences, in these episodes and countless others, are not cited in order to illustrate, reinforce, or comment upon the affective state which Bunyan attempts to describe. Rather, they initiate, sustain, and stabilize that state. Just as the Romans passage makes possible (rather than “expressing”) the belief “that my sins should be forgiven me”, the Isaiah passage initiates (rather than providing an illustration of) the torment undergone by Bunyan's “Soul”. If we adopt Camden's assertion that *Grace Abounding* is not structured by spiritual progress but by ceaseless oscillation, it seems that this oscillation is driven by—indeed, originates in—Scriptural quotation. Put differently: each appearance of intertextual material within the narrative provides a point of inflection in its structure. Put still differently: each entrance of Scriptural text into the content of consciousness initiates a new affective and spiritual state, and it is simply a sequence of such entrances and corresponding states that constitute the autobiographical subject.

The determination of affective state by Scriptural text thus produces the psychological oscillation that Camden describes. Indeed, at one point, Bunyan describes this oscillation himself, and does so explicitly in terms of Scriptural passages:

[. . .] these words did with great power suddainly break in upon me, *My grace is sufficient for thee* [Corinthians 12:9] [. . .] it continued with me for several weeks, and did encourage me to hope. But so soon as that powerfull operation was taken off my heart, that other about *Esau* [Hebrews 12] returned upon me as before, so my soul did hang as in a pair of scales again, sometimes up and sometimes down, now in peace, and anon again in terror. (59-60)

If the state of Bunyan's soul is determined so unequivocally by the presence of Scriptural sentences within his consciousness, then it seems that Bunyan exists within his autobiographical text less as a subject of thought or consciousness than as a subject of *affect*. The narrative's response to the Scriptural quotations it deploys is strangely privative: the texts are not submitted to hermeneutics (of God's intent, of election or reprobation), comparison (with other passages from Scripture, with extra-Scriptural writings, with experience), or contextualization (within the chapters they are drawn from, within the events of Bunyan's life). Rather, Scripture absolutely determines the linguistic content of the subjective space it inhabits, permitting only an extra-linguistic response to its binary signification (election or reprobation). This response often takes the form of high affect: "this [Corinthians 12:9] sent me mourning home, it broke my heart, and filled me full of joy, and laid me as low as the dust" (59). At other times, this extra-linguistic response is located in the body: "by the very force of my mind in laboring to gainsay and resist this wickedness, my very Body also would be put into action or motion, by way of pushing or thrusting with my hands or elbows."⁸ (39) At times, the body's response to Scripture is imagined as a form of resistance to temptation ("pushing and thrusting"), but elsewhere it is wholly involuntary: "I also felt such a clogging and heat at my stomach by reason of this my terrour, that I was, especially at some times, as if my breast-bone would have been splint in sunder." (46) In

⁸ According to John Stachniewski and Anita Pacheco, "with my hands or elbows" appears only in a later edition of the text (Stachniewski and Pacheco 1998, n. 241).

many instances, Bunyan's responses to Scripture express affect in bodily terms, or otherwise render unstable the distinction between the subject of emotion and its embodiment: "[. . .] did work at this time such a strong and hot desire of revengement upon my self for the abuse I had done unto him, that, to speak as then I thought, had I had a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could freely have spilt it all at the command and feet of this my Lord and Saviour." (55) In each case, Bunyan's narrator exists within a subjective state in which the signification of the Scriptural fragment is irrevocable, in which only two such irrevocable significations (John Bunyan is elect, John Bunyan is reprobate) are ultimately possible, and in which the subject's response to that signification is both exterior to language (affective, bodily, or both) and absolutely determined.

Thus, the function of Scripture within *Grace Abounding* begins to become clear. The Bunyanesque self is constituted at the moment of its determination by text: Scriptural sentences, signifying either election or reprobation for the reading/recollecting subject, produce an emotive or bodily response, a response that is the self's only resource for answering the determining text. It would seem, then, that Bunyan conceptualizes himself as not only without agency in relation to God's will (a conceptualization that is certainly consonant with Calvinist metaphysics) but also without hermeneutic agency in relation to God's text. Responses to text that take place within language—interpretation, commentary, intertextual comparison—are unavailable to Bunyan's narrator, and thus the portions of narrative that surround Scriptural quotations are curiously privative, confined to regions of experience alien to language. Allowing as I am a certain degree of slippage, or in fact, identity, between autobiographical texts and the selves they represent(/constitute), this last statement can be rewritten: intertextual quotations deployed in *Grace Abounding* impact the text which surrounds them such that it narrativizes only emotive

and embodied life—indeed, the entire work might be viewed as a mere sequence of intertextual breachings and their affective/bodily “impacts”.

Another work in Bunyan’s output may be useful in clarifying the strange (from a contemporary perspective) function of Scriptural intertextuality in *Grace Abounding*. In 1664, Bunyan published a broadside titled “A Mapp Shewing the Order & Causes of Salvation & Damnation” (see title page). Bearing strong resemblances to an earlier “Table” designed by the theologian William Perkins (Stachniewski 1991, 90-91), the beautifully engraved “Mapp” schematically depicts the two narratives within which the Puritan self can be embedded: “Election” and “Reprobation”.⁹ Each spiritual path, moving from the top to the bottom of the page, is constituted by a series of closed circles containing text. While these circles are connected by complex, branching paths, they are also numbered, suggesting that the soul moves through the subjective states represented by the enclosed spaces on the page according to a specific and inalterable sequence. Thus, just as the oscillating narrative structure of *Grace Abounding* depicts/theorizes the self as a series of bounded spaces—as a progression of subjective states from within which no exterior position for reflection or large-scale narrativization can be accessed—so the “Mapp” (which is none other than a schematic representation of the Puritan self) literally “inscribes” (or even more literally, “engraves”) the self as sequence of interior spaces whose localized density supercedes the large-scale narrative within which they are imbedded. Most relevantly to this study, the text printed inside each of the circles on the “Mapp” is not an affective state, as in Perkins’ “Table”, but a Scriptural quotation. The “Mapp” therefore locates Scriptural text as internal rather than external to the self (or, to the series of bounded subjective states which are grouped together as a self); Scripture does not

⁹ Both Perkins’ “Table” and Bunyan’s “Mapp” are reproduced in Stachniewski 1991.

comment upon, supplement, illuminate, or even initiate subjective experience, but rather *constitutes* subjective experience.

Bunyan's "mapping" of Scripture as within the confines of the self provides an important insight into the self represented and/or theorized in *Grace Abounding* by allowing a central paradox to emerge. Above, I attempted to describe how the rhetorical flourishes which often introduce Scripture into the narrative seem to implicitly posit Scriptural text as originating "outside of" the referent of the pronoun "me", and as making its entrance into "me" with physical movement or force. Yet, at the same time, the dislocation of Scripture from the act of reading seems to suggest that it resides within memory, that is, within the boundaries of the subject. Similarly, the structure of the Bunyanesque self (textual stimulus and determined affective/bodily response) is inscrutable in its localization of text: Scripture determines the experiences of the subject, and as such is seemingly external, but it also provides the linguistic content of those experiences, and as such is seemingly located within the confines of subjectivity. Which is not to say that Bunyan's text "engages" this paradox; rather, it holds the paradox in silent suspension. This silence is the very source of the fecundity Bunyan's autobiography holds for a "textualist" reading, as well as the source of the fascination it holds for this critic. The boundary between text and self, the place where reading ends and consciousness begins, is certainly difficult to locate within *Grace Abounding*, but the crucial point is that its location is never even sought within the narrative and rhetorical procedures of the text. The text-self boundary is not just elusive, it is irrelevant; the question of text and self is *unproblematic*, which is to say, not productive of questions that demand to be answered. The epistemic space through which Bunyan's narrative moves allows the boundary to undergo diffusion and plurality in its representations, simply because it does not occur to the narrator to control this

representational dispersal. The text's silence on this boundary is not a pregnant one, indeed, it is the opposite: the mark of a pervasive disinterest in the question of whether Scriptural text belongs "inside" or "outside".

In Bunyan, Scriptural sentences do not supplement, augment, inflect, or transverse subjectivity. These accounts of the presence of text within consciousness begin to describe the texture and quality of Bunyan's autobiography, but they remain invested in a problematic of consciousness and text, of inside and outside, that is a historically bounded phenomenon—in fact, the primary aim of this study is to describe the conditions of that historicity. *Grace Abounding*, it seems, falls outside of the historical bounds of this problematic: in Bunyan, the (textual) sentence does not supplement or inform consciousness; the sentence *provides the content* for consciousness. Directing scrutiny towards the type of reading practice Bunyan's work seems to describe, a type of reading which is embedded within a larger historical arc described above, will begin to establish a case for my proposition about the causality of the historical moment which Bunyan's conceptualization of self inhabits.

Within the opposition between "intensive" and "extensive" forms of reading, Bunyan's reading practices—focused almost exclusively on one text, a text so familiar that it permeates and shapes (indeed, constitutes) consciousness—can certainly be described as the former. Bunyan's peculiar relationship to the Bible, idiosyncratic as it may appear, was perhaps not unique among seventeenth-century Calvinists (the next chapter will establish that it is certainly not unique among seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographies). In fact, Cavallo and Chartier describe how the "traditional thesis" about the history of reading in the modern era specifically links intensive reading with early-modern Protestantism's relationship to Scripture: "Religious texts (in Protestant lands, primarily the Bible) were privileged objects of a reading style

profoundly imbued with sacrality and authority.” (Cavallo and Chartier 25) While Cavallo and Chartier seek to undermine this “traditional thesis” as a holistic historical model, they nevertheless seem to remain invested in the distinction between intensive and extensive reading practices as an analytical tool. This analytical tool can certainly be adopted in reading *Grace Abounding*, and what Cavallo and Chartier view as its questionable accuracy as a univocal historical model can be elided by confining analysis to the text itself: if Bunyan is an intensive reader, it is not because his cultural and historical situation suggests that he ought to be, but because his narrativized reading practices demonstrate that he is. Within his autobiographical text, Bunyan certainly seems to conform to what Cavallo and Chartier describe as the characteristics of intensive reading: “the ‘intensive’ reader had access to a limited, closed corpus of books, which were read and reread, memorized and recited, deeply understood and possessed [. . .]” (Cavallo and Chartier 24) The “limited, closed corpus of books” to which the intensive reader has access is in Bunyan’s case severely restricted: only one reference to a non-Scriptural work (Luther’s commentary on Galatians) appears in *Grace Abounding*. Furthermore, the manner in which the appearance of Scriptural sentences in Bunyan’s consciousness is disassociated from the physical act of reading suggests that the Bible, for Bunyan, is not so much read as “memorized and recited, deeply understood and possessed.”

Therefore, the dualistic structure of the self implicitly theorized by *Grace Abounding*—composed of determining Scriptural text and determined affective or bodily response—begins to appear as a product of a certain kind of reading practice: a reading practice involving sustained, privative interaction with small amounts of text and extensive internalization of textual materials. The fixation (according to Vera Camden’s psychoanalytic reading, a neurotic one) on isolated Scriptural quotations is enabled by a mode of reading that prioritizes extended engagement with

individual texts over the accumulation of a plural, mutable textual corpus, a mode in which the fragment eclipses the intertext. Likewise, Scripture can be described as originating both in the exteriority and interiority of the subject without apparent contradiction due to the contiguity of the two activities of reading and memorization—importing text from without and storing text within—in intensive reading practices. The noteworthy (from our vantage point) absence of a problematic regarding the boundary between Scriptural text and the subject is therefore attributable to historically specific practices of reading, practices that render irrelevant distinctions between consumption and internalization of textual material.

If the mode of selfhood described(/enacted) by Bunyan's autobiography is structured according to reading practices, it should come as no surprise that a modification in the autobiographical subject's relationship to text will modify this structure. Such a modification occurs in one extended and pivotal (if obliquely so) passage in *Grace Abounding*, a passage that is the primary object of Camden's psychoanalytic reading, and which will sustain productive examination within a textualist methodology as well. Camden's reading centers around an incident that, she asserts, constitutes the true climax of the work, rendering Bunyan's ascent to ministry and "movement from guilt to relief [. . .] oddly anticlimactic". (Camden 161) In fact, the incident in question is hardly an incident at all in the customary sense: what Camden views as the work's climax is "merely" a sustained meditation on two Scriptural texts, Corinthians 12:9 and Hebrews 12:16, 17. The former ("My grace is sufficient for thee") signifies Bunyan's salvation and the latter (concerning Esau's selling of his "birthright") his unworthiness for God's kingdom. The narrative's affective oscillation reaches its greatest density with increasingly rapid contraposition of the two passages in Bunyan's subjectivity/text: "my soul did hang as in a pair

of scales again, sometimes up and sometimes down.”¹⁰ (60) Eventually, this oscillation reaches a climax followed by a resolution of sorts, an event which Camden attributes to the libidinal sublimation and transcendence of Kierkegaardian repetition, which allows for “Bunyan’s escape from the death instinct which according to Freud drives repetition compulsion.” (Camden 154)

The working through of the anguish caused by the two passages is initiated with the expression of a simple desire which has considerable implications for a textualist analytics:

[. . .] I was in divers frames of Spirit, and considering that these frames were still according to the nature of the several Scriptures that came in upon my mind [. . .] Lord, thought I, *if both of these Scriptures would meet in my heart at once*, I wonder which of them would get the better of me.” (61, italics mine)

A desire, that is, for *intertextuality*, for the simultaneous presence of multiple text-fragments within consciousness. Or perhaps more precisely, Bunyan articulates the conditions for an *intratextuality*: a parallel deployment of multiple “monotextual” fragments within the same subjective/textual space which, though it never escapes the circumference of the Scriptural corpus, perhaps nevertheless retains something of the intertext’s dual tendencies towards semantic productivity and dispersion. Bunyan’s narrative intuits that if two Scripturally determined “frames of Spirit”—subjective states to which there is no “outside”—can be enacted at once, the affective and bodily determination of the monotext will no longer function in the same way; the intratextual “folding” of the Scriptures upon themselves will fundamentally alter the composition of the “frames” and the affective oscillation they constitute.

The intratextual disruption of fragmentary monotextuality that Bunyan anticipates with his desire that multiple “Scriptures would meet in my heart at once” receives its proper initiation in the narrative by a striking shift in reading practices:

[. . .] those most fearful and terrible Scriptures [Hebrews 12:16, 17] [. . .] on which indeed before I durst scarce cast mine eye [. . .] but now, I say, I began to take some measure of encouragement, to come close to them, to read them, and consider them, and to weigh their scope and tence. (63)

¹⁰ See page 20 above for the passage from which this quote is extracted in its entirety.

The difficulty of making distinctions between reading and remembering within intensive reading practices (and also within a critical methodology that elides the difference between text and consciousness) does merit caution here, but the reference to the “eye” suggests strongly that Bunyan describes not the involuntary and spontaneous process through which Scriptural text normally enters consciousness, but the actual act of opening a book and reading. Consequently, new forms of response to Scripture become available, forms of response involving not affective or bodily determination but something resembling analysis (“to consider them, and to weigh their scope and tence”). This new mode of interaction with text leads to an accumulation of passages proximate to Hebrews 12:16, 17:

And first, I came to the sixth of the *Hebrews*, yet trembling for fear it should strike me; which, when I had considered, I found that the falling there intended was a *quite away*, that is [. . .] an absolute denial of, the Gospel of Remission of sins by Christ [. . .] By all these particulars, I found, to Gods everlasting praise, my sin was not the sin in this place intended [. . .] Then I considered that in the tenth of *Hebrews*; and found that the *willful* sin there mentioned, is not every willful sin, but that which doth throw off Christ, and then his Commandments too [. . .] But the Lord knows, though this my sin was devilish, yet it did not amount to these. (64-63)¹¹

Reading the book of Hebrews not as a collection of self-sufficient dicta but as a continuous, chronologically sequenced unity, Bunyan integrates the significations of multiple fragments into a cohesive interpretation, an interpretation which replaces the binary schema that normally structures salvation and damnation with a schema of gradation: “though this my sin was devilish, yet it did not amount to these”. This integrative reading practice allows the reading subject’s response to Scripture to supersede the domain of affective and bodily determination; Bunyan’s

¹¹ In addition to mitigating Bunyan’s anguish, the reading of Hebrews as an intratext serves a startling secondary function: it dislodges the signification of the Scriptural fragment from Bunyan’s own spiritual state, and thus allows for the entrance of the Other into textual consciousness. If, as Bunyan asserts, “my sin was not the sin in this place intended,” then the “sin intended” must belong to another subject. Thus, this deferral of sin to an Other disrupts the privative hermeneutics (or ahermeneutics) of Bunyan’s customary reading practices, in which the binary signification of Scriptural passages can only refer to Bunyan himself. Intratextual reading allows the fragment’s signification to be deferred to an altern subject, present in the text only silently, as an articulation of displacement (“my sin was not the sin [. . .] intended”), but nevertheless discernable. This phenomenon might very well sustain further inquiry, but it will suffice for now to note that, for the purposes of this project, a perceived correlation between intersubjectivity and intertextuality cannot come as a complete surprise.

response to Hebrews is not an emotive or corporeal event but an *interpretation*, an interpretation which can only be made from a position outside of the binary affective states of election and reprobation. The reading subject acquires a certain degree of hermeneutic agency, an agency which disrupts the causal field of the reading process by “pushing back” against the determining force of the Scriptural fragment.

After transversing Hebrews as a totality, Bunyan’s integrative reading expands to include other Old Testament books (specifically, Genesis) and finally to encompass the entire Scriptural corpus (by including the Gospel of Luke):

Now as touching this, That *Esau sought a place of repentance*; thus I thought: First, This was not for the *Birth-right*, but for the *Blessing*; this is clear from the Apostle, and is distinguished by *Esau* himself, *He hath taken away my Birth-right* (that is, formerly); *and now he hath taken away my Blessing also*, Gen. 27. 36. Secondly, Now this being thus considered, I came again to the Apostle, to see what might be the mind of God in a New-Testament stile and sence concerning *Esau’s* sin; and so far as I could conceive, this was the mind of God, that the *Birth-right* signified *Regeneration*, and the *Blessing* the *Eternal Inheritance* [. . .] When I had thus considered these Scriptures, and found that thus to understand them was not against but according to other Scriptures, this still added further to my encouragement and comfort [. . .] And now remained only the hinder part of the Tempest [. . .] (64-65)

In this pan-Scriptural reading, the signification of individual terms (“*Birth-right*” and “*Blessing*”) comes under scrutiny, dissolving the impenetrable semantic unity of “the sentence” both through contextualization and dismemberment. Once an indissoluble unity, the Scriptural sentence is reduced to its constituent parts, a procedure which allows the binary signification of the unified sentence to be elided and replaced with a more complex signification inflected by the sentence’s intratextual situation. Such simultaneous reduction and synthesis across the Scriptural corpus renders all elements of the intratext readily available for the absorption of localized semantic dissonances and the construction of larger consonances, for the production of structures characterized not by oscillation and binary opposition but by continuity and synthesis; it makes possible the reading of Scriptural fragments “not against but according to other Scriptures”, not as monotexts but as elements of larger intratexts. It is a syncretic, comparative, hermeneutical

reading practice, a reading practice dependent on a modification in the subject's relationship, in the most physical, literal sense, to the book, which ruptures the affective privation of monotextuality and opens a space for large-scale narrativization of experience. This modification in reading practices produces a subject able move laterally across the different monotexts that form the content of its consciousness, and thus able to construct inclusive and synthetic narratives about its subjective experiences, to locate discursive positions outside of its affective states, and to "fold" its constituent texts together into recursive metatexts/metathoughts. The autobiographical subject/text gains the ability, valued so highly by John Morris, to present "not merely a chronicle of experience, but a judgment of it"—an ability that embeds it in Morris' literary history as a precursor of Wordsworth and Mill. Indeed, this temporary modification in Bunyan's mode of reading/thinking Scripture—this brief rupture in the otherwise consistent structure of his self-text—suggests, if only briefly, partially, and on the most localized level, the basic morphology of the historical shift from intensive to extensive practices of reading, along with the ensuing shift in practices of self.

III. Affect, Authenticity, and the Book: Rousseau's *Confessions*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, almost from the very beginning of his autobiographical *Confessions*, is always reading. A true child of the eighteenth century, he begins at the age of five or six with novels: "My mother had possessed some novels, and my father and I began to read them after our supper. At first it was only to give me some practice in reading. But soon my interest in this entertaining literature became so strong that we read by turns continuously,

and spent whole nights so engaged.” (19-20) The Rousseaus’ voracious enthusiasm for novels soon outstrips their supply:

The novels gave out in the summer of 1719 [when Rousseau was seven years old] and that winter we changed our reading. Having exhausted my mother’s library, we turned to that portion of her father’s which had fallen to us. Fortunately it contained some good books [. . .] Lesueur’s *History of Church and Empire*, Bossuet’s *Discourse upon Universal History*, Plutarch’s *Lives*, Nani’s *History of Venice*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* [. . .] (20)

The list goes on. Even as a young boy, Rousseau devours text after text, a practice which he continues throughout the *Confessions*. Rousseau reads novels, philosophical tracts, and histories. He reads Rameau’s foundational works in music theory and Richardson’s novels. He spends immense amounts of time reading and writing letters. Like Bunyan and other Reformation-era Protestants, Rousseau also habitually reads the Bible, but reads it rapidly and cover-to-cover as if it were a novel. (535) Rousseau’s fluid movement across the seemingly boundless textual surface available to him is, clearly indicative of the historical modulation in reading practices which was taking place during his lifetime and which is, in part, the subject of this study. Of course, the *Confessions* inhabits not only a juncture in the history of reading but also in the history of Western literature (a juncture that I would choose to characterize, first and foremost, in terms of its innovations in the representation—and construction—of selfhood). Examining Rousseau’s text attentively, we can see the first emergences of a cluster of topoi—the natural, the authentic, the sublime, and the affective¹²—or rather of a certain way of treating these topoi, which will come to be identified with the nineteenth century and with literary Romanticism, and which may bear a certain familiarity (a certain claim to *naturalness*) for us even today. Most importantly, the formation of these thematic tropes in Rousseau occurs through engagements with a problem that is by now familiar to readers of this essay: the problem of the relationship between the text and the subject who reads or writes it. Or more precisely: in the *Confessions*,

¹² Had the readings of Jonathan Edwards and James Boswell been retained here, this list could be extended to include sympathy, sin, privacy, and death.

the aforementioned loci of thematics, and the mode of selfhood they are proper to, emerge as a result of the fact that the relationship between text and subject has begun to be a problem.

One of Rousseau's first narrative acts in the *Confessions* (completed 1769, published 1782) is an account of learning to read as a young boy. Situated nearly at the beginning of the text, after only a brief prolegomenon regarding the unprecedented nature of Rousseau's autobiographical endeavor and a description of his parents, this event marks the first time that Rousseau's narrating "I" is synchronous with the "I" described within the narrative, the first point at which the subject of narration and the events he describes converge. Thus, at the level of form, Rousseau's acquisition of reading does nothing less than initiate his existence as an autobiographical subject. Indeed, this initiation is registered at the level of narrative content as well:

I felt before I thought: which is the common lot of man, though more pronounced in my case than in another's. I know nothing of myself till I was five or six. I do not know how I learnt to read. I only remember my first books and their effect on me; it is from my earliest reading that I date the unbroken consciousness of my own existence. [. . .] In a short time I acquired by this dangerous method [the voracious reading of novels], not only an extreme facility in reading and expressing myself, but a singular insight for my age into the passions. I had no idea of the facts, but I was already familiar with every feeling. I had grasped nothing; I had sensed everything. (19-20)

For Rousseau, the prehistory of reading is characterized by an utter absence of self-knowledge—an absence of recursion.¹³ It is with the acquisition of reading that Rousseau becomes a recursive subject, attains "unbroken consciousness of [his] own existence". For Rousseau, reading (the entrance of textual materials into the fabric of consciousness) is somehow indispensable to recursive thinking; to absorb text into consciousness is to think about oneself.

¹³ The concept of "recursion" should here be understood as derived from the mathematical sense of the term, pertaining to functions that perpetuate themselves by using their own outputs as inputs. The recursively-thinking subject, similarly, is structured according to its own repetition and return; it is the subject that is indistinguishable from its own knowledge of itself. Early-modern theories of consciousness and person-hood are useful here: thinking about itself (Descartes) or remembering itself (Locke) the recursive subject verifies (Descartes) or defines the limits of (Locke) its own existence. The recursive subject is the subject that is continually summoned before itself, continually summons itself before itself (a process variously called memory, reflection, thought, and, I might add, autobiography). Rousseau's narrative, I will argue very shortly, proceeds upon the assumption that this gesture of recursion is not only characteristic but constitutive of consciousness.

Thought about oneself, in fact, is constitutive of, or at least chronologically synchronous with, thought in general: in Rousseau's first encounters with novels, intuition ("passions", "feeling[s]", "sens[ing]") is transformed into cognition ("thought", "facts", "grasp[ing]"). Or, more precisely, these textual encounters signal the beginning of a state in which intuition is the constant object of ratiocination, is continually filtered into the realm of ideas while always retaining its difference from them: reading grants "insight [. . .] into the passions." This "insight", this mediation of intuition through intellect, requires a labor of recursion: just as Bunyan's intra-textual "folding" of the book of Hebrews produces a syncretic hermeneutics that anticipates the historical shift to extensive reading, the young Rousseau's novel-reading allows for a "folding" of the subject (of its constituent 'thinking' and 'feeling' parts) upon itself. For Bunyan, the folded Scriptural text makes available new reading practices, and consequently new practices of self; for Rousseau, consciousness itself is a product of a folding.¹⁴ The thinking subject exists only insofar as it is conscious of its "own existence", and such consciousness can only occur when the content of subjectivity has begun to mingle with the content of texts exterior to it.

Thus, for Rousseau, thought is implicitly recursive, can only proceed when the conditions for self-reference have been established within the thinking subject. It is reading that establishes these conditions, provides the language that the reading subject requires to describe itself. Or, more directly: reading provides the reading subject with a self. When a slightly older Rousseau reads Plutarch (having abandoned novels in favor of histories, philosophy, and the classics), his practices of self-stylization originate, very explicitly, in the text he is reading: "I became indeed that character whose life I was reading [. . .] One day when I was reading the story of Scaevola

¹⁴ The analogy between Bunyan and Rousseau can only function with an implicit reliance on the notion, perhaps somewhat perverse, that texts and subjects can be "folded" in similar ways, and therefore that they are "cut of the same cloth." This is, of course, exactly the point. I find myself unable to entirely resist the temptation to refer here to the common etymology of the words "text" and "textile" (the latter an eminently foldable substance), and their connection to the commonplace, "the fabric of consciousness".

over table, I frightened them all by putting out my hand and grasping a chafing-dish in imitation of that hero.” (20-21) Rousseau’s formulation here is startling in its apparent ingenuousness: he does not pantomime Scaevola’s act or endeavor to present himself “in the style” of Plutarch’s hero; rather, the young Jean-Jacques simply *becomes* the character he is reading about. The transmission between the content of Plutarch’s text and the content of Rousseau’s actions occurs with no resistance or refraction whatsoever; there is no attempt to posit a boundary or bulwark around subjectivity which would impede this wholesale reproduction of textual events within Rousseau’s own practices.

It may have become apparent that, thus far, this reading of Rousseau has done little to alter the model of reading and subject formation established earlier in the context of Bunyan’s autobiography. For both Bunyan and Rousseau, reading, the process of assimilating texts into consciousness, is absolutely crucial for the representation and enactment of the self. Indeed, this assimilative process *produces* the self, specifically, it produces a self that is dualistically self-referential in structure (in Bunyan, consciousness is constituted by interaction between Scriptural fragments and the affective and bodily states they produce; in Rousseau, it arises from the filtering of intuitions through cognition and subsequent deployment of intellectual efforts in attempting to describe affective states). The crucial differentiation which can be made between the two accounts of self and textuality (a differentiation which, I am attempting to suggest, can be viewed as a metonymic distillation of a broad historical narrative) is encapsulated in the simple statement that opens Rousseau’s account of reading: “I felt before I thought”.¹⁵ An equivalent statement, in this context, would be: I felt before I read. It is somehow vitally important that “feeling” or affect precede textual self-production, that it participate within the

¹⁵ As discussed above, this phrase not only opens the account of reading acquisition but also, at a formal level, marks the beginning of the autobiographical narrative proper; it opens the book that is Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

recursive structure of the reading subject but also provide a prehistory for that subject. For Bunyan, affect is also the object or other of (Scriptural) textuality, but always circulates only within the economy of textual determination, never extending itself beyond the subjective spaces articulated by Scriptural “sentences”. Rousseau’s account of learning to read, in contrast, is painstakingly concerned with pushing affect outside of (or more precisely, *before*) textually-produced recursion: “consciousness of” and “insight [. . .] into” affect (and into the self at large) unequivocally originate with reading, yet the affective, intuitive self that becomes articulable with reading nevertheless extends beyond the temporal limits of the domain in which it can be spoken about. Reading brings the subject of consciousness into existence but does so as a translation or gloss¹⁶ of an entity that is essentially unknowable; the purpose of discourse on the self is to endlessly describe a region of the subject that is essentially indescribable, or more precisely, is in a prehistorical position in relation to the very possibility of description.

Thus, at the very moment that it articulates the emergence of the autobiographical subject, the *Confessions* theorizes reading and the subsequent possibility of thought as interruptions of a primordial period in the history of the subject, a period characterized by utter resistance to thought. This is not to say that affect, the constitutive property of this primordial period, does not have an investment in the subject’s “consciousness of [its] own existence”, its recursive production of self-knowledge. Rather, it is this recursion that allows affect to appear in consciousness (and in the autobiographical narrative). It is only from his position as a reading/thinking individual that Rousseau (Rousseau as the subject of autobiography) can posit

¹⁶ The use here of terms that refer to processes of textual production and transformation might, upon reflection, be viewed as a “Lacanian slip”, betraying this project’s historical situation in the wake of theoretical developments suggesting that those areas of consciousness which appear to be the most inaccessible to description are in fact themselves constituted by text or “language”. Their use here is accordingly, and regrettably, somewhat abusive towards Rousseau (abusive, that is, towards his historical difference); they are retained in the service of honesty, in order not to erase the traces of the ideological and theoretical infrastructure that makes this project possible.

and describe the prehistorical, prelinguistic region from which he emerged; it is only as a reader (and it is important to keep in mind that he is specifically and emphatically an extensive reader) that Rousseau can speak the silence of affect. Yet the speaking of affect, or the translation of “the passions” into “thought”, “facts”, or “insight”, retains its status as a *loss*. Before learning to read, experience is constituted by a superabundance and omnipresence of affect and intuition: “I had no idea of the facts, but I was already familiar with *every* feeling. I had grasped nothing; I had sensed *everything*.” (italics mine) Reading makes the expression of this superabundance possible, but it also diffuses it within the recursive work of thinking and self-production, and as such entirely forecloses the possibility of the full presence of affect within autobiographical discourse. Which is to say, forecloses the possibility that the self’s prehistory can be fully expressed in textual representation. This is perhaps why Rousseau regards his ravenous consumption of novels as a “dangerous method”: reading forms the thinking subject, but the subject formed thereby can consist of nothing other than the site of a loss. Perhaps this is also why the moment of loss itself, relived in microcosm with each attempt to express “feelings” or “passions”, must remain both outside of the autobiographical text and (perhaps redundantly) outside of the memory of the subject that it represents: “I do not know how I learnt to read.” The moment when young Jean-Jacques learns to read, both the horizon of selfhood and the place where its full presence is irrecoverably lost, remains emphatically outside of the text(/self), as if the disclosure of that crucial juncture would jeopardize the integrity of the narrative (since to “know” the beginning of reading would be gaze directly and without mediation at the point from which “knowing” in general originated).¹⁷

¹⁷ Foucault’s discussion of the role of the “origin” in the emergence of modernity is immensely useful in understanding the strange excision of this crucial juncture from (the text of) Rousseau’s memory: “What is conveyed in the immediacy of the original is, therefore, that man is cut off from the origin that would make him contemporaneous with his own existence: amid all the things that are born in time and no doubt die in time, he, cut

The essential elements for a deconstructive reading of the *Confessions* (a reading describing the text's fundamental reliance on a semantic core that is in fact vacuous and unstable, on an axiomatic truth that is in fact formulated only to support the propositions that follow from it) are now in place. However, since my motivations here are historical (and also because the text in question has already been thoroughly and fascinatingly deconstructed by Paul de Man, if from a different vantage point), it will suffice to note that Rousseau's account of learning to read is an early, if not prescient, iteration of the phenomenon referred to variously as the "appearance of man", the creation of the "individual", the invention of the "deep self", et cetera. In the *Confessions*, we can see the expression of affect, of the incommunicable core that unifies the self, becoming problematic; furthermore, we can see this problematic fomenting very explicitly around the issue of *reading*. In the texts of Bunyan and his contemporaries, Scripture initiates and stabilizes practices of self, and does so from a position in relation to the self that is wholly polyvalent in response to questions of "inside" and "outside". Novels perform precisely the same function in Rousseau, yet it is somehow necessary to posit a prehistory for the self that is utterly incommensurable with texts, to unequivocally locate texts outside of the self even as they constitute it. The brief passage from the *Confessions*, when viewed in apposition to seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography, provides the most forceful, concise articulation that I am able to locate of the historical rupture being meditated upon here. Moving to the latter portion of Rousseau's autobiography, I will examine the implications of the preceding discussion for the text's prescient formulation of autobiographical "authenticity" (a formulation which, I will

off from all origin, is already there." (Foucault 1973; 332) For Foucault, the "appearance of man" is made possible by the fact that "his" origin disappears from the domain of discourse; it is vitally important that this origin be speculated about, but the discovery of such speculation is always that man's origin endlessly recedes before attempts to locate it. Thus the fact that Rousseau's historiography of reading (of his own reading) is in fact a prehistoriography: the task is not to locate the origin but to establish the inadequacy of the origin to contain that which it supposedly generates, to demonstrate that the subject which seems to originate at the moment of reading acquisition has in fact only emerged into the domain of discourse from its silent, unspeakable prehistory.

attempt to demonstrate, can be productively viewed within the context of eighteenth-century print culture), thus bringing this essay full-circle by transitioning from questions of reading to questions of writing.

In framing the *Confessions*, Rousseau provides an overwhelmingly ambitious yet disarmingly simple description of his autobiographical project: “The true object of my confessions is to reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life.” (262) That is, to write the text that is indistinguishable from the interiority of the subject who produces it.¹⁸ Elsewhere, the same notion is expressed with an explicit acknowledgement of the consumer of the autobiographical text, the one who gains access to Rousseau’s “inner thoughts” via its production: “Since I have undertaken to reveal myself absolutely to the public, nothing about me must remain hidden or obscure. I must remain incessantly beneath his gaze [. . .]” (65) Using the self-consciously confessional modality of Rousseau’s text as a starting point, Paul de Man proposes a differentiation between the confession (certainly a “discursive” act, but one that is constrained by “a principle of referential verification that includes an extraverbal movement”, a statement that puts a shameful act into discourse for the first time) and the excuse (which is “verbal” rather than “factual”; describes “an ‘inner’ process to which only words can bear witness”) in order to address questions about the relationship between the Rousseau’s pretence to utter “referentiality” in his self-disclosure and the rhetorical and grammatical structures that are necessary to articulate this disclosure, and indeed may even interfere with it. (de Man 281) For de Man, this schism between the confession and the excuse, between referential processes and

¹⁸ Or at least, as indistinguishable as is possible: the preliminary reading of Rousseau above suggests that the mere use of the word “thoughts” (as opposed to “feelings”) already establishes a certain hesitation about the depths to which textual representation can penetrate. Rousseau’s designation (or, as will come to seem appropriate with the invocation of de Man below, the designation that his text-machine performs) of “inner thoughts”, and not inner feelings, as the domain of his narrative can be viewed as a tactic within a tactic; as the deployment of a certain reserve which retains a location for the subject against the threat of inevitable diffusion in its attempt to wholly represent itself.

verbal processes, between what the autobiographical subject wants to say and what the formal constraints of autobiography demand that it say, constitutes a threat to that subject. This threat takes the form of “a radical estrangement between the meaning and the performance of any text”, between the self that is to be portrayed wholly and without reservations and the discursive procedures available for such portrayal.¹⁹ I wish to extend de Man’s reading by considering “text”, at least for the moment, not as a machine-like iteration of predetermined linguistic procedures, but as a material and social object, subject to modification or erasure, readerly acclaim or censure, circulation or lack thereof. I hope to demonstrate that, viewed from this vantage point, text continues to pose a threat to the autobiographical subject’s project of self-referentiality, and then to suggest that the solution Rousseau finds to this crisis (this *necessary* crisis) of referentiality engages the most elemental material aspect of text: the ambiguity of its simultaneous status as a verbal and graphic object.

Late in the narrative, Rousseau, already in his early fifties, begins the arduous²⁰ task of writing his “projected memoirs”. These are, of course, the *Confessions*, and the very origin of the text is thus inscribed (imprinted?) recursively within itself. In gathering his correspondence and journals in order to organize his work, Rousseau encounters a problem: there is a six-month gap in his letters. Rousseau believes that the letters “had quite certainly been removed” intentionally, probably while they were being stored at the estate of the Count of Luxembourg,

¹⁹ One detail that de Man does not consider is the fact that different discursive procedures are proper to different textual genres. Perhaps one way of extending the discussion about the dissonance between Rousseau’s referential intentions and their linguistic realizations would be to consider the generic characteristics displayed by the *Confessions*. One likely candidate would be the novel. This should come as no surprise, not least due to the fact that many of the seminal works of eighteenth-century prose fiction were presented either as biographies or autobiographies; in fact, Rousseau reports that his own *Julie* was, in a handful of instances, mistaken for an autobiography (Rousseau 506). If there is, then, a certain fluidity in the eighteenth century’s distinction between the autobiography and the novel, the specter of fictionality becomes another means by which the project of autobiographical self-representation is jeopardized. There is, unfortunately, no space to consider the *Confessions* as a novel within the present study.

²⁰ For Rousseau, writing is a tremendous, agonizing labor—perhaps because of a certain resistance that occurs in transcribing “inner thoughts” into textual form? See Rousseau 113-14.

and concludes (without proof) that his frequent antagonist Jean d'Alembert is the culprit. (560-61) The absence of the letters is so troubling because they were necessary to "guide my memory in the order of facts and dates": Rousseau's "memory", it would seem, is in need of assistance from pieces of paper, fragile material objects that can easily be slipped from the trunk in which they are being stored, or for that matter modified, duplicated, or destroyed. Rousseau declines to mention how he compensates for this gap, and so we must assume that he simply does the best he can to write the six months of his life in question accurately. Therefore, paper becomes a problem in the attempt "to reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life"; specifically, it becomes a problem because some of these "inner thoughts" turn out to be stored nowhere else but in pieces of paper. To state the point more indirectly but also more succinctly, the mere fact that Rousseau must gather his papers (not his texts but his papers) in order to begin to write (to begin to write *himself*) casts a rather strange light on the notion that the *Confessions* is an purely expressive or self-referential text.

In another episode, the status of texts as socially circulated objects and the volatility of the eighteenth-century publishing industry similarly interfere with Rousseau's autobiographical project. After publishing a pamphlet entitled *Letters Written From the Mountain* (1764), an incendiary attack on the Genevese political establishment, Rousseau becomes a pariah both among his rural Swiss neighbors (who pursue him on his habitual walks through the countryside "by the hoots of the mob and sometimes by stones") and also among his erstwhile literary and political allies. (575-85) The most notable censure of the *Letters* comes in the form of an anonymous pamphlet that Rousseau attributes to a former literary friend:

In it I was accused of having exposed my children in the streets, of dragging a common whore around with me, of being worn out by debauchery and rotten with pox, and treated with similar politenesses. (583-84)

Rousseau, attempting to control the damage already done, responds to this pamphlet by republishing it with a preface asserting its complete falsehood and exposing the identity its suspected author. The problem, however, is that the material, economic, and social structures in place for the distribution of print materials, in the eighteenth century just as now, are not susceptible to such attempts at control. For eighteenth-century consumers of the book, there is ultimately no method for distinguishing between authentic representations of the writing subject (representations of the facts of her life as well as her intentions, ideas, emotions, etc.) and subversive counter-biographies. The printing and distribution of text within books, pamphlets, or periodicals subjects it to a radical equalization and anonymity, obscuring the intentional presence and the body of the writing subject.²¹ Folded into the *Confessions*, the summary of the pamphlet's text enacts a slight disturbance in the coherence of Rousseau's autobiographical project; it opens a minute breach in the surface of Rousseau's self-representation through which can be glimpsed the wildly heterogeneous, polyvocal discursive manifold in which Rousseau is represented in print by others. Rousseau's preoccupation with the pamphlet episode can be understood as a response to the necessarily uneasy relationship between autobiography and biography (since slander is a form of biography), an uneasiness heightened by mediation in print: some biographical discourses may be more authentic than others, but all paper is created equal.

Thus, the materiality of the book (and to some degree, the specific modality of material "embodiment" that it begins to have in the eighteenth century) interferes with Rousseau's endeavor to "reveal my inner thoughts exactly in all the situations of my life" at two levels. First, the labor of autobiography largely takes the form of the manipulation of papers (the recovery, collation, and copying of archived paper documents and the production of new ones),

²¹ More specifically, the book functions not so much by suspending intention and embodiment as by replacing one body with another. (By happy accident, the framing of this last sentence leads us to the question of whether books, just as they have bodies, can also have intentions.)

and as such is materially supported by objects that are exceptionally susceptible to loss, theft, damage, and destruction. Second, once complete, Rousseau's transcription of his "inner thoughts" will enter the public economy of textual circulation and production, a space in which multiple representations of Rousseau may coexist, none of which (due to their common status as more or less interchangeable material objects and economic commodities) ultimately has a greater claim to truth in its representation of "inner thoughts". The very last utterance in the text of the *Confessions*, a brief addendum appended to the narrative after its completion, perhaps represents Rousseau's solution (or Rousseau's text's solution) to the problem of containing autobiographical writing within the book:

I added what follows on the occasion of reading these *Confessions* to [some of Rousseau's acquaintances] I have told the truth. If anyone knows anything contrary to what I have here recorded, though he prove it a thousand times, his knowledge is a lie and an imposture; and if he refuses to investigate and inquire into it during my lifetime he is no lover of justice or of truth. For my part, I publicly and fearlessly declare that anyone, even if he has not read my writings, who will examine my nature, my character, my morals, my likings, my pleasures, and my habits with his own eyes and can still believe me a dishonourable man, is a man who deserves to be stifled.

Thus I concluded my reading, and everyone was silent. Mme d'Egmont was the only person who seemed moved. She trembled visibly but quickly controlled herself, and remained quiet, as did the rest of the company. Such was the advantage I derived from my reading and my declaration. (605-06)

Certainly, this codetta to Rousseau's protracted text is curiously colored by aggression. Perhaps its most notable feature, however, is that it cannot be content with a mere reiteration of the trope that has recurred again and again, and which perhaps provides the *Confessions* with its (intended) "theme": "I have told the truth." The logic of the text (according to de Man, a set of "machine-like" generative principles) demands that a further step be taken, and that the text articulate its own performance ("Thus I concluded my reading [. . .]"). More specifically, that it articulate itself as a *verbal* performance: the *Confessions* closes with the silence that follows speech. Indeed, the entire text, according to these few closing sentences, turns out not to have been a written document at all but rather an enunciation. Something in the narrative logic of Rousseau's autobiography demands that the text must have recourse to a position outside of

itself; that is, it must indicate via the graphic means available to it the phonological performance that it transcribes. This closing gesture retroactively transforms the *Confessions* into a book dreaming its own vocality, a book that desires to escape from being a (silent) book.

Crucially, this closing leap into the domain of vocality follows an iteration of the great “theme” (“I have told the truth”) that has something shrill about it, as if the authenticity of the truths revealed by the text was particularly fragile at the narrative’s end. This shrillness can be traced to the double aspersion cast on Rousseau’s detractors. First, anyone who “knows anything contrary to what I have here recorded”²², who produces a representation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau that differs from that provided in the *Confessions*, is advised that “his knowledge is a lie and an imposture”. The anxiety surfacing here—that the slanderous and the authentic biography cannot ultimately be distinguished from one another within the larger economy of textual circulation—has already been discussed above. Second, there is the desire to “stifle” anyone who peruses the breadth of the subject that has been laid out in the course of the autobiography (its “nature”, “character”, “morals”, “likings”, “pleasures”, and “habits”) and yet persists in appraising that subject as “dishonourable”. (Or, in *reading* the subject as “dishonourable”. In this instance the slippage between subject and text, intersubjectivity and reading is explicitly encoded by the text: “even he who has not read my writings”, he who has gained some other form of access to the text of Jean-Jacques besides picking up the book that contains it, is being addressed.) Here we see the expression of an anxiety closely linked to the first: that the text/subject will be read incorrectly. For just as the mass distribution of print materials amplifies the possibility for slander and counter-biography, it also exponentially increases the number and variety of readers available to “misread” texts.

²² The use of “knows” rather than “says” or “asserts” here is absolutely fascinating, and probably requires no explication.

It appears, then, that the transformation of the book into the spoken word that closes Rousseau's narrative is the logical consequent of a discomfited meditation on the problems which the economics and sociology of eighteenth-century book distribution pose for the autobiographical project, for the attempt to wholly and authentically transcribe the self in textual form. Simultaneously, in its assertion of vocality, it seeks to escape a characteristic of the book that is not so historically specific: its composition by silent, dead matter. At this point, reference to Jacques Derrida's well-known reading of another text by Rousseau seems inevitable. According to Derrida, "*The Essay on the Origin of Languages* opposes speech to writing as presence to absence [. . .]", an opposition that has much to do with the material immediacy and corporeality of speech and the distortions, reductions, and elisions to which speech is subjected when represented in writing. (Derrida 168) Certainly, Rousseau's tactic of transposing (or gesturing towards a transposition of) the text into an oral utterance might be viewed as a recovery of a presence that has been eviscerated by its expression in writing. Yet, as Derrida points out, Rousseau's statement in the *Essay* that "writing serves only as a supplement to speech" retains a certain function for writing even as it dismisses it; writing-as-supplement amplifies and extends the power of speech so long as it never supercedes its status as a mere vessel for the spoken word to become a self-sufficient signifier. (Derrida 144) Derrida's discoveries in his readings of Rousseau (along with Levi-Strauss, Saussure, and others) might be viewed as indications of the fecundity—and the profound confusion—that results when the supplement is no longer entirely secondary in its signifying function: as Derrida demonstrates, such treatment of the "supplement" amounts to its displacement by the "substitution". The substitution, unlike the supplement, overflows the boundaries of its obedience to the signification of the spoken discourse; it initiates an endless chain of substitutions that endanger the coherence

and primacy of speech and the speaking subject by diffusing the effects of speech, and ultimately by making speech unintelligible to itself.

Rousseau also writes (speaks?) of a supplement in the final gesture of the *Confessions*, though not by quite the same name: “Such was the advantage I derived from my reading and my declaration.” The “reading” and “declaration”, of course, refer to the verbal performance of the *Confessions*. The “advantage” they grant Rousseau, it would appear, is that of an affective/bodily power over his audience. As he completes his “declaration”, Rousseau’s vocalic force is inflicted on a body that absorbs the impact with exquisite delicacy (“She trembled visibly but quickly controlled herself”), and a silence settles as the aftereffect of an overwhelming univocality. The “advantage”, then, designates a certain corporeal and affective force possessed by the speaking voice that “supplements” the silence and inertia of the book; it is both the speaker’s advantage over the audience of his “declaration” and the advantage of speech over writing. The “advantage” or supplement is found in those elements of the autobiographical utterance that are irreducible to their equivalents in the autobiographical text. If we take the strange codetta to Rousseau’s text seriously (and this is by far the most interesting way to take it), the text has been a vocal one all along, and as such has inhabited this “advantage”. It is by recourse to speech’s supplement to the book, then, that Rousseau finally must establish the authenticity of his text. Just as Derrida discovers the dispersion of the subject in the supplement constituted by writing, Rousseau rediscovers the possibility of its coherence (its coherence as autobiographically authentic) in the “advantage” (the supplement to the force of written expression) given by speech. Of course, for Bunyan and his contemporaries, no such recourse to the supplement of the Scriptural text was necessary; text itself possessed sufficient, even overwhelming, affective and bodily force, was perfectly capable of sustaining (indeed,

determining) the consciousness of the autobiographical subject. In Rousseau, we are witnessing the historical emergence of a subject (and a corresponding mode of consciousness) that does not “fit” within textual or bibliographic representation, a subject that can be spoken of in texts only via gesture towards their referential and formal horizons.²³ The project of creating an authentic autobiographical text, a text that corresponds perfectly to the subject of its writing, is put under constant pressure by the (newly discovered) unsuitability of the form for such endeavors, and thus authenticity can be maintained only by transforming the book into vocal sound. Just as Rousseau’s narrative begins with a gesture towards the prehistory of reading, which is also the prehistory of thought and of narrative itself (that is, the recursive narrative that produces the subject by doubling it upon itself), it ends by suggesting its own disappearance into phonological sound. In order to do the work of autobiography, in order to adequately contain the self, the *Confessions* must indicate precisely the places where it is no longer capable of doing such work; it must speak/write the site that cannot be spoken/written (a site *defined* by its inaccessibility to speech and writing), and must do so because this unspeakable, unwritable topos has become the only habitable terrain for the self.

IV. Epilogue

Hopefully, the preceding examinations of the autobiographies of John Bunyan and Jean-Jacques Rousseau have made comprehensible the suggestion that the historical emergence of

²³ We are also, it would seem, incidentally historicizing Derrida. Perhaps the birth of the subject that does not “fit” within written language is also the historical emergence of Derrida’s “writing”, which is always a writing specifically opposed to spoken language and the self-presence of the speaking subject. Rousseau’s discovery of a region of the self residing beyond text might accordingly be viewed as the precise inverse of Derrida’s innovations; indeed, it might be seen as signaling the historical emergence of the very necessity for Derrida’s work.

“man”, the invention of the unrepresentable subject of representation, can be viewed as a response to the roughly simultaneous development of the widespread dissemination and rapid consumption of texts; that it was an exponential increase in the amount of text passing through the consciousness of the reading subject that created the necessity for a self whose outlines might be traced in texts, but whose essence could never be contained in them. As texts were transformed from terse, immobile, inescapable aphorisms into boundless intertexts roiling with internal dissonance and contradiction, their suitability for containing the reading subject waned, and new locations for its ontic core needed to be posited. Yet even as the self leveraged itself outside of or prior to text, it retained a certain investment in its own textual representation: the mode of selfhood that emerged in response to the rise of extensive reading was, at least within the domain of literary autobiography, characterized by a simultaneous compulsion to express itself in texts and conviction of the futility of such expression. The convergence of the histories of reading and selfhood within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century autobiographies suggests a fundamental role for changing textual practices and technologies in the emergence of modernity. More precisely, a fundamental role in the form of the human that is proper to this modernity: a human that cannot designate its own being yet is constituted as an endless desire for such designation; a human that is always reading and writing, but yet must remain a phantasm within its own texts, deferred beyond the horizon of textual practices to an indeterminate location. The names for this location are various (affect, sin, death; the natural, the vocal, the authentic), but its necessity is never in question.

Perhaps we can still recognize ourselves in Foucault’s (extensively reading) “man”—but perhaps not. To return to the epigraphs that opened this essay: we can now be sure that Barthes’ “book of the Self” describes a historically specific phenomenon, but not a phenomenon unique to

the twentieth century. Rather, Barthes rediscovers a mode of relation to text that was, at one point, wholly natural. Indeed, the necessity for his discoveries, and for the elaborate theoretical, rhetorical, and critical procedures enacted in service of them, only arose with a fairly recent historical event, and event which Bunyan predates and which can be glimpsed in its early stages in Rousseau. This is not by any means to suggest that Bunyan's practice of selfhood can be equated or even analogized to Barthes'—indeed, they could hardly be more different. But they do share a common status as the other of “man”, the spectral figure that intercedes between them. Perhaps the work that still needs to be done involves crafting historical narratives, as I have preliminarily attempted to do here, in which history is not constituted by the before and after of “man”, but instead inhabits the regions of alterity that fall outside of “his” tenure.

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