

Forewarning

A posthumous book, but even more a book broken off.

Jean-François Lyotard was not able to finish his *Confession of Augustine*. The essay to be read here, appearing under the title chosen by him, presents scarcely half of the projected work. A reading of the notes alone, accumulated over the last years, suggests something like the work that he was envisaging. While unable to give account of this, the present edition nonetheless demonstrates a concern to guard the trace, however modest, of the overall project. Added to the drafted text, then, there is a *Notebook*, a collection of scattered elements that have nevertheless been arranged, each being of a distinct kind: *Sendings* joins two working texts, reflexive supports, as it were, preceding and accompa-

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nying the writing of the book; *Fragments* assembles a number of paragraphs, kept in reserve in the penultimate manuscript, the writing of which JFL wished to take up again and develop; *Pencil Sketch* pertains indeed to sketches, to those first beginnings on a page, dreamy escapades that JFL enjoyed penciling out to give greater flexibility to his writing, but that remain of value for the argument announced in them, which he intended to develop in further work—that of the duplicity of confessional writing; *Fac-similes* needs no commentary.

As to the essay itself, it brings together two texts written in the course of 1997.* The first text should be seen as definitive and as forming the initial part of *The Confession of Augustine*. The second, older text was to be rewritten in the sort of tonal key that governs the first part and to be reworked so as to fit

*The first text was given in Paris in October 1997, on the occasion of a conference organized by the Collège International de Philosophie, under the title “The Confession of Augustine.” The second, given in Dunkerque in May 1997 for a colloquium organized by the Université du Littoral and the Collège International de Philosophie, appeared under the title “The Skin of the Skies” in *La Revue des Sciences Humaines*, N° 248, entitled “Night.”

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with the part that was to follow. For JFL, to “rewrite” meant passing from one state to another, the last almost foreign to the first. He would have undoubtedly blown on the embers, heated to incandescence the choreography of voices, made more giddy the jealousy of his ventriloquist phrase. He wanted a confessional chase, the author’s, as it were, faltering gait. For want of this particular “shedding,” unfinished, Jean-François Lyotard wished that the second text, one that had already appeared under the title “The Skin of the Skies,” be read in a version at least in tune with the first: held, then, to the curse of the address—to the pronominal, familiar “you”—broken up by the paragraph, with each quotation almost incorporated into the body of the text. We have tried to keep to his wishes, holding back as much as possible from any modification. Thus, from the first to the second text, neither repetitions nor the break in tone have been removed. They are testimony to a book that was broken off.

My thanks to friends Philippe Bonnefis, Michel Delorme, and François Rouan, who helped and worked on this edition.

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