THE PARALINGUISTIC IN AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS.
SPEECH ACQUISITION, GROANING, WAILING, WEEPING
AND SINGING

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Twenty-two words into the Augustine's Soliloquies—published in 387, shortly after the author's conversion back to Christianity—we arrive at the first main clause of the work: ait mihi subito sive ego ipse sive alius quis. The use of a third-person verb alongside a first-person subject is striking; if not discordant, it sets up strange harmonies. How can this be a soliloquy at all, if the speaker is unable to identify a single self to address?

The problem of language continued to fascinate Augustine when he came to write the Confessions ten years later; and there is a similar preoccupation with the sheer difficulty of using language as a vehicle for theology. Early in the first book he considers the nature of the God he is addressing: sumne, optime, potentissime, omnipotentissime (1.4.4). The virtual tautology of this final superlative is often pointed out; when God is the essence of all the qualities predicated of him, how is any description or invocation possible? The same passage ends with an explicit warning about the proper use of language: vae tacentibus de te, quoniam loquaces muri sunt. These loquaces are generally taken to be the Manichees, fluent dialecticians with a generous store of mythology; but, as O'Donnell has remarked, 'The oxymoron [loquaces/muri] has puzzled.' Some of the difficulty may be resolved if we take mutus in the well-attested sense of the Greek ὅλων foolish' or 'irrational', making the overall sense 'those who apparently use language, but without the exercise of reason.' The other adjective also deserves attention: while loquax may be an acceptable translation of the Greek λογίκος in the sense 'vocal, endowed with speech', it does not capture the equally-important sense 'rational, endowed with reason'. Moreover, the pejorative connotations of the suffix -ax (as in audax, edax, fugax, rapax) means it is at best a loaded translation even in the former sense.  

2 Compare the frequent use of parire 'to chatter away' (often used of talking birds) of Augustine himself and other Manichees (4. 15. 26. 5. 6. 10; 6. 4. 5).
The Paralinguistic in Augustine’s Confessions. Speech Acquisition, ...

The Acquisition of Language

The processes by which Augustine acquired language are treated in some detail at various instances in Book One of the Confessions. The first stage in his reconstruction is that of gestures and cries which are intended to represent his inner meaning:

Confessions 1.6.8: et voluntas meas volebam ostendere eas per quos impleverunt, et non poteram... itaque iactabam membra et voces. signa similia voluntatibus meis... non erant vere similis. Even at this stage, there are philosophical and theological dimensions to his inarticulacy. The anaphora of voluntates... volebam exemplifies the difficulties of self-knowledge and the infinite recursus of the will which are so important in the later books of the work. God is his will (Confessions 12.28.38); humans, however, are often incapable of forming a 'full wish' (plena voluntas) and so incapable of acting on the rational impulse of the mind (8.8. 19-8. 9.21). How, then, can voluntas be the object of verba?

Then there is the question of the voces uttered by the infant Augustine. In his commentary de Genesi ad Litteram 1.15.21, Augustine describes the sound made by babies as an informis vox, a 'shapeless' or 'ugly' noise: [infans] prius emitit informem vocem, quam possit postea conligere atque in verba formare. If we import this definition into Book One of the Confessions, we may again see an overlap with the themes of the later books. Much of Book Twelve is taken up with the opening verses of Genesis, terra erat invisibilis et incomposta — in Greek ἡ γῆ ἄκρας καὶ ἄκατο σκεύος also translatable as sine specie et informis. The process of creation, for Augustine, involves the imposition by God of forma and species, the key Neo-Platonic concepts of form and beauty, on a shapeless world — a process replicated by in the child's imposition on language on mere noise.

The arrival of boyhood, then, is marked by the acquisition of language. Augustine himself makes explicit the familiar etymology of in-fans as 'non-speaker'. However, language acquisition also has other and more ambivalent results. At Confessions 1.8.13, Augustine summarizes the relationship between language acquisition and wider social integration: Sib cum his, inter quos erant, voluntatem exueniendarum signa communicavi et vitae humanae procellasam societatem altius ingressum sum pendens ex parentum auctoritate nutuque maiorum hominum. Societas is often a two-edged word for Augustine: some fifteen years later, in writing The City of God, he would write variously of the societas mortalium, societas angelorum, societas daemonum, and societas diabolica. In the de Ordine (2.35) he had written positively about language as the product of reason and the precondition for stable society. Here in the Confessions, it is human society which imposes language on its members, not vice versa; that 'society' may be no more than a bond of mutual self-interest. This impression is strengthened by the adjective procellasam: Augustine makes frequent use in the Confessions of the Old Testament imagery of the sea as a primal force held in check by the power of Yahweh, often as a metaphor for the human condition.

Furthermore, language involves a submission to authority — a key concept in Augustine, and again an ambiguous one. Within Latin linguistic theory the concept has a long pedigree. Authority, custom (conseguto), reason (ratio), form an acknowledged triad in Latin linguistic theory as far back as Quintinius.
Augustine Abandons Monica. Groaning, Wailing, and Weeping

We turn now to the scene in Book Five of the *Confessions* where the young professor Augustine, fed up with his rowdy students in Carthage, leaves Africa to go to Rome. To avoid an emotional farewell with his mother, he leaves her at the shrine of S. Cyprian by the harbour in Carthage, pretending he has an appointment with a friend. He then slips away secretly by night before his mother can see him off. Monica is distraught:

> *Confessions* 5.8.15: *[mater] me profectum atrociter planxit... sed fellei eam violenter me tenentem... et evas... illa autem mansit orando et flendo... Flavit ventus et implevit vela nostra et litus subtraxit aspectibus nostris, in quo mane illa insaniebat dolore et querelis et gemitu implebat aures tuae... flebat et eaulabat atque illis cruciatus arguebatur in ea reliquiarium Evae, cum gemitu quaerens quod cum gemitu pepererat...

The passage is a famous one, not least for the invitation it gives for a reading of the *Confessions* as a ‘spiritual Aeneid’;[13] there are probably echoes also of Tobias 10: 49; *flebat igitur mater [fui]vomens irremediabilibus lacrimis... et cruxiger spiritus [paren]tum*. Monica’s response is clearly portrayed as excessive, even unhealthy (*insaniebat*). It is also characterized through a number of paralinguistic activities: *planxer*, *querela*, *gemitus*, *fle
tus*, and *eiulabas*. These activities form part of an evolving tradition on the correct use of language and the human voice.

On the question of groaning, Augustine inherited a set of complex ideas from both classical and Christian sources. Cicero had already laid down in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* (2.55) that although groaning might on occasion be appropriate for a man, *eiulabas* was always inappropriate even for a woman (*ingemiscere nonnumquam viro concedum est... eiulabas ne mulier be dignas*). Later Stoicism distinguished ‘passion’ (*πάθος*) from ‘pre-passion’ (*πρόπαθος*), a distinction exploited by various Christian authors to explain Biblical references to apparent displays of passion by Jesus and others. Au-

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[12] The language of divine economy in the *Confessions* has not, to my knowledge, been fully explored. For some initial references to the key terms, see *Confessions* 11.2. 2; 12. 23. 32; 12. 27. 37 (*dispensatio*); 12. 16. 23; 12. 26. 36; 12. 31.42 (*administratio*).

[13] See BENNET, C., "The Conversion of Vergil. The *Aeneid* in Augustine’s *Confessions*", *REA* 34, 1988, 46-9; the subject is more cautiously treated by MacCORMACK, S., *The Shadow of Poetry: Vergil in the Mind of Augustine*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1998, 96-100. Most discussion concentrates on Book Four of the *Aeneid*, but no less important is the allusion to Aeneas’ final words to Dido at *Aeneid* 6. 465; *saepe gradum teque aspera ne subtrahat nostrum*: it is Augustine who is the shade here.

[14] If we are right in discerning echoes of Tobias 10, then it may be apposite to quote Tobias senior’s response to his wife’s crying: *tace et noli turbare*: reticence and self-control go together.
be improper even for a woman, but it is presumably more likely from a woman also. It is also distinctly non-human, or at least not the sound of anyone past infancy, being (like an infant’s wailing) characteristically ‘shapeless’ or ‘unformed’ and irrational; compare Augustine’s own description of it at Sermo 288.3: [eiulatio] informis quidam somus est... sine aliqua ratione intellectus.

The same may be said of querela, ‘moaning’, often associated with birds and other ‘irrational animals’. If Monica was Augustine’s first teacher of the art loquendi, then it is his pursuit of a rhetorical career which has reduced her to literal speechlessness.

Curiously, Monica’s weeping might be viewed less negatively than her wailing. Weeping is famously recorded of Jesus himself (John 11:35), an incident cited by Augustine in his account of the emotions in Book Fourteen of The City of God, and only one of numerous occasions in the Scriptures where weeping is described or even recommended. It is particularly associated with Monica’s concern for Augustine during his Manichee period (compare the anonymous bishop’s description of him as filius iisatum lacrimarum at 3.12.21), and again linked with gemitus in Augustine’s account of his grief at his childhood friend’s death (4.7.12). In the latter passage it is ‘groaning and tears’ which provide what little rest he finds (in eis solis aliquantula requies); given the importance of requies as a leitmotif of the work, this is surely a positive assessment, given the overall movement of the Confessions from restless searching at the beginning to the cosmic Sabbath rest at the end. His final decision to embrace Christianity and celibacy is likewise marked by a shower and ‘rivers’ of tears (8.12.28), further positive imagery.

Augustine’s attitude towards weeping may be set against a wider debate in contemporary Christianity about the extent to which weeping is a legitimate response to a fallen world, and the extent to which it represents a regrettable loss of self-control and articulacy. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the two versions of Sulpicius Severus’ letter to his mother-in-law Bassula describing the death of Martin of Tours (Epistola 3, PL 20.181-5). The version of the text reads: tum virginius chorus fletu abstinuit praepustu... siquidem fides fleret probiteret, geminum tamen extorquebat affectus... ignoscere fletibus. Here weeping is treated as something to be abstained from; but presumably it is not per se culpable not to abstain. At worst, it is a venial offence; while groaning is inevitable (at least for females). However, the vulgate text of the passage adds a gloss, quia et pium est gaudere Mar- tino, et pium est flere Martianum. This suggests a quite different response, a Christianity in which emotional outbursts are a religious duty.
The Death of Monica.

We move now to another great set-piece passage of the Confessions, the death of Monica in Book Nine. Monica dies; Augustine shuts her eyes, and forces himself not to cry. However, his fifteen-year-old son Adeodatus does burst out crying—and is restrained by the adults present. Then Augustine’s friend Evodius seizes a psalterium and starts singing a psalm, to which the whole company sing the response. Thereupon, as the funeral arrangements are made, Augustine gives a disputation on a topic suitable for the occasion.

Confessions 9.12.29-31... puer Adeodatus exclamavit in planctu utque ab omnibus nobis coercitus tacuit. hoc modo etiam meum quidam puerile, quod labebatur in fetus, iuvenali voce cordis coerebetur et tacebat... psalterium arripuit Evodius et cantare coepit psalmum, cui respondebamus omnis domus 'misericordiam et iudicium cantabo tibi domine'... ego... quod erat tempore congruum disputabant.

This passage is remarkable not least for its emphasis on the correct use of language and paralinguistic. Augustine’s heart speaks with an ‘adult voice’, iuvenali voce; while Adeodatus, at the end of his boyhood, still has ‘something childish’ about him (quidam puerile), and is compelled (rather than persuaded) by his elders to be silent. The word auctoritas is not used here, but the principle is clearly at work, and its ambiguity is nicely illustrated; it is not ideal, but it is the best restraint available given that Adeodatus had not reached the full adult exercise of reason.

Next, Evodius seizes the psalterium (psalterium arripuit). The verb arripere offers a fascinating case-study to students of Christian Latin. It seems to occur with particular frequency in the Christian authors; and whereas in classical Latin it may refer to good or bad actions, its connotations in Christian authors are almost universally good, denoting decisive spiritual actions. In the Confessions it occurs outside this passage four times, the object being once the contemplative life (8.6.15) and three times the Scriptures (7.21.27; 8.10.24).

When words are revalorized in this way in the Christian writers, it is usually through their use in a familiar Biblical passage. Unusually, there seems to be no one Biblical source for this; the best candidate is Matthew 11:12. ab lohanne baptista regnum caelorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud.

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The psalterium too has connotations of its own. For O’Donnell this is ‘clearly the Psalm-book, not the instrument.’ However, Evodius could surely have sung a psalm from memory; and if the term refers to the musical instrument, then it is one rich in symbolic associations. Classical philosophers from Plato onward generally preferred stringed instruments to wind instruments, as tending to soothe rather than to arouse the passions. Stringed instruments in particular are useful for illustrating how musical harmonies work according to mathematical ratios, and hence how the pleasures of the sensible world are really expressions of underlying immaterial truths; ideal for Augustine the Christian Platonist. Moreover, the ‘ten-stringed instrument’ has already been used by Augustine as a metaphor for the Ten Commandments (Confessions 3.8.16: et viviunt male adversus trita et septem, psalterium decem chordarum, decalogum tuum); thereby linking mathematics and music to ethics and revelation. The responsoir nature of the singing also has its symbolism, being at once dialogic and univocal. Augustine’s own disputation, though a solo performance, has a similarly dialogic character (disputatio = ὅ διδαξας).

But even so, Augustine does not yet achieve full closure. Not satisfied with the consolation of philosophy, he also seeks the consolation of bathing, having heard that baths are so called in Greek because they expel anxieties (βαθαλει τα άγαμα).

Confessions 9.12.32-3. audieram inde balneis nomen indi- tum, quia græci balanion dixerint, quod anxietatem pellat ex animo... lavi et talis eram quals priusquam lavisset... deinde dormivi et evigilavi et non parva ex parte mitigatum inveni dolorem meum... recordatus sum veridicos versus Ambrosii tu. tu es enim deus, creator omnium polique rector, vestiens diem decoro lumine, noctem soporis gratia, artus solutos ut quies reddat laboris usui mentesque fessas allevit luctuque solvat anxios...

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19 This positive use of arripere is perhaps especially visible in the hagiographic literature. Compare, for instance, the two instances in Sulpicius Severus’ Life of Martin: at 9.5. Martin is elected bishop of Tours after an anonymous layman seizes on (arripuit) a prophetic verse of Scripture; at 17.5, Martin rescues (arripuisset) a householder from the savage demon lurking in his atrium.

20 More remotely, perhaps 1 Timothy 6:12. apprehendat vitam aeternam in qua vocatus es.

21 See entry by FERGUSSON s.v. ‘music’ in FERGUSSON, E. (ed.). Encyclopedia of Early
et nunc, domine, confiteor tibi in litteris: legat qui volet, et interpreteretur ut volet, et si peccatum invenerit, flevisse me matrem exigua parte horae... non inrideat sed potius... pro peccatis meis fleat ipse...

It is a remarkable aberration on Augustine’s part to have thought that a visit to the baths would help, solely on the basis of a Greek etymology. Everything we have seen so far in the Confessions suggests a strong sense of the arbitrary nature of language, and a healthy disrespect for Greek cultural supremacists. The appeal to etymology itself is reminiscent of those found in the older traditions of Latin linguistic theory, in particular Books 2-7 of Varro’s *De Lingua Latina.* At all events, it proves unhelpful: a misunderstanding not only of the nature of baths, but also of language.

More useful is the second musical interlude: Ambrose’s hymn *Deus, creator omnium.* This hymn is a key intertext for our reading of the Confessions. The first line is both a straightforward Biblical citation, and a contradiction of the position Augustine had held as a Manichee; all creation is the work of a single good God. It is also a line which he had already discussed in the *De Musica* 6.2.2: *deus creator omnium, istos quattuor iambos quibus constat et tempora duodecim ubiam esse arbitreris... an quia notus versus est, in memoria quoque nostras hos numeros esse fatendum est?* Notable here is his emphasis on the form of verse and music as lying within the hearer’s memory, rather than in the externals of their performance (compare Confessions 11.27.35 *et seq.*). The consolation Augustine derives from the hymn comes from his recollection of it (*recordatus sum*).

Ambrose’s hymn is thematically important also as an example of Augustine’s wider concern about singing in the Confessions. We first encounter it in Augustine’s description of his arithmetic lessons at school, where he observes how ‘one and one are two, two and two are four’ was an *odiosa cantio,* a nasty little ditty. On music in church he is ambivalent. Ambrose himself, no less, introduction to Milan the oriental custom of antiphonal psalm-singing.

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*Christianity, New York/London 1997. The relevant passages are Plato, *Res publica* 399E; *Leces* 669E; Philo, *Nec. 2. 126; Porphyry, de Abstinencia 2. 34.*

*Note in particular the Varroian technical use of *indire* ‘to put a name’ on something; originally a semantic extension on the basis of *ekeμεν,* and by Augustine’s day apparently obsolete except in this sense.

The *popular* character of *cantio* as opposed to *carmen* does not, of course, in itself mean that the word necessarily had pejorative connotations. However, the evidence of the relevant entry in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (III. 286. 75ff) suggests that alongside a neutral sense (*'song’*) there was a tendency among some Christian authors to reserve it for unfavourable contexts. So alongside examples of *cantio* referring to the Psalms of David, we find also two examples of *obscura cantiones* in Anulius, *meretriciae cantiones* in Eustathius, *vinoleuta cantio* in Augustine himself.

The language here is carefully chosen. The art of music is often described formally as *peritia modulandi* or similar; and *modus* is to be observed both in chanting (*modico flexu*) and in one’s wariness about its charms (*immoderatius cavens*). And the distinctive phrase *melos cantilenarum* may recall another instance of the ambivalent nature of music in a recent work of Augustine’s: in the *de Ordine* (1.8.22) he describes how his friend Licentius, while on retreat, is reproved by Monica for psalm-singing (*laete et garrule*) in the lavatory: *ipsum cantilenae modum nuper hauserat et amabat... melos inustitum.* Augustine’s recollection of Ambrose’s hymn here is clearly of a very different order.

Augustine’s mourning for his mother finally takes the form of weeping (*confiteor... bevisse me*) —a fact which is recalled with a certain anxiety about his readers’ potential response (*legat qui volet, et interpreteretur ut volet*), yet is an inridete sed... *fleat ipse...*. The debate within Christian circles on the moral status of weeping has been touched on above; it appears that Augustine had not yet reached the positive evaluation of the emotions found in the *The City of God.* It is notable also that his concerns focus on various other linguistic and paralinguistic topics: reading (*legat*), intensionalism (*volet*), and laughter (*inrideat*). But these lie outside our present scope.
Conclusión

It is perhaps an ethical commonplace that one’s control of one’s language is a metonymy for one’s wider capacity for self-control and self-definition. However, the ramifications of this commonplace were explored in some depth in ancient thought.

Augustine is by no means the first or only intellectual to reconsider these traditions of reflection on language and the paralinguistic from a Christian standpoint, or to apply their insights to his reading of the Scriptures. However, he is arguably the most important thinker to do so, and certainly the most influential. Our reading of the Confessions is enriched if we attempt to discern the way he has adapted them in his own discourse on language.

FACTORES CONDICIONANTES EN LA EXPRESIÓN DE LA "POSESIÓN" EN LATÍN CLÁSICO Y TARDÍO*

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0. Introducción

Sobre la cuestión enunciada en el título de este trabajo existen controvérsias de opiniones; algunas de ellas1 son ofrecidas más como hipótesis que como hechos demostrados: otras2 expresan tendencias generales que un análisis más promenorizado de los textos puede matizar. Por otra parte, un estudioso del tema como H. Seiler, señala en su monografía dedicada a la posesión3 que: (1) "many languages show more than one verb of POSSESSION: translation equivalents of the copula, of 'to be', 'to have', 'to belong', 'to grasp', etc. Neither number of such elements nor the choice among them is accidental; but the rationale still remains to be discovered"4. Más re-

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1 Este trabajo ha sido realizado en el marco de Proyecto de investigación BFF2001-0195-C04-04, financiado por la DGI y el FEDER.