

## The Writing of Paranoia: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Celebrity

ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1776, Jean-Jacques Rousseau visited the cathedral of Notre Dame carrying a manuscript. This manuscript, on which he had been working for four years, was entitled *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*; it was meant as a denunciation of a plot against Jean-Jacques and a defense of his innocence. Not knowing to whom he should give the manuscript, as he suspected his closest friends of belonging to the conspiracy, Rousseau preferred to confide his text to “Providence.” And so he decided to leave the manuscript on the great altar of Notre Dame, in the hope that it would be found and given to the king. God and the king: nothing less was needed to break the circle of conspiracy and do justice to Jean-Jacques. But a terrible surprise was waiting for him. As he approached the altar, he found that the chancel was separated from the nave by a grate that he had never before noticed, and that blocked his way. It was a dreadful shock: “I was overcome by a dizziness like a man with apoplexy, and this dizziness was followed by an upheaval of my whole being” wrote Rousseau in a text he composed afterwards, and added to the manuscript as an appendix.<sup>1</sup> “All the more struck by the unforeseen obstacle because I hadn’t told anyone of my project, I believed in my initial transport that I was seeing Heaven itself collaborate in the iniquitous work of men.” And this revelation tore from him a “murmur of indignation.”

Did God himself belong to the plot? Is it possible to imagine a more striking image of paranoia? It is worth noting that this famous episode, after all, is only known to us because Rousseau himself tells the story, in a text in which the denunciation of the plot takes on such incredible dimensions, approaching delirium, that the suspicion of madness weighs on every page. It is hardly an unremarkable fact that this text, of which critics long held an exceedingly poor opinion, is one of the least read and least discussed of its

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ABSTRACT This article proposes a historical account of Rousseau’s paranoid writings by showing how he experienced the contradictions of celebrity, which deeply transformed his status as a writer and his relations with readers. It thus stresses some hitherto unnoticed paradoxes of the eighteenth-century public sphere. / REPRESENTATIONS 103. Summer 2008 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 53-83. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintinfo.asp>. DOI:10.1525/rep.2008.103.1.53.

author's works. Yet it is precisely on this text that I would like to concentrate to address the question of Rousseau's madness from the perspective of social and cultural history.

Is it reasonable to bring up yet again the question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's paranoia? The topic has given rise to a considerable number of diagnoses and controversies, both medical and methodological. Early psychopathological approaches to paranoia owe a great deal to Rousseau, as psychiatrists in the early twentieth century made the "case of Rousseau" a privileged subject of analysis, offering a multitude of hypotheses and verdicts.<sup>2</sup> Literary critics have generally rejected the psychiatric categories that cast Rousseau within retrospective diagnoses, but they remain divided on the pertinence of psychoanalytic approaches. One of the most famous of these critics, Jean Starobinski, has left an enduring mark on the field of Rousseau studies with a reading of the texts that is based both on a stylistic analysis and on an interpretation partially inspired by psychoanalytical concepts. Yet the extreme rigor and care with which Starobinski described the psychological structure of Rousseau's personality, based on a painstaking reading of the texts, has not prevented other authors from challenging the legitimacy of such approaches. Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man rejected the idea that Rousseau's psychology could be accessible through his writings, as if there existed a sort of "pre-text" of which the works were a product, and to which they served as a key.<sup>3</sup> As for philosophers and historians of ideas, they have mostly tried to confine the question of Rousseau's madness to the "extratextual" sphere of his biography, the better to preserve the integrity of his theoretical and philosophical works (*The Social Contract*, *Emile*, *The Discourse on Inequality*). It is true that Rousseau's adversaries did not hesitate to disqualify his work by relating it to his madness. But for this very reason, Rousseau experts have often succumbed to the opposite temptation: namely, to safeguard the theoretical coherence of the work—especially its philosophical portion—by excluding the most disturbing texts in which Rousseau denounced the conspiracy of which he claimed to be the victim.

But can we really rule out Rousseau's paranoia in this way? The wager I am making in this article is that it is possible to analyze his paranoia from the historian's perspective—not, of course, in order to determine the truth of Rousseau's madness, still less to treat him as a pathological personality, but rather to probe his paranoia for what it reveals about the transformation of the status of writers in this period and, more broadly, about the ways people seek for social and personal recognition. For what we call Rousseau's paranoia, the most visible sign of which was a syndrome of persecution, was first and foremost, as we will see, a distorted understanding of the way other people saw him.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore a pathology of recognition that operates in the relationship between Rousseau and his readers and concerns the well-known

public personality that he became. It therefore requires us to confront the following question: why did the most famous and celebrated writer of his day become convinced that he was unanimously hated by his contemporaries? Could this paradox not have something to teach us about the status of authors in Enlightenment society and about literary success as a “test of greatness”?<sup>5</sup> In other words, the problem of Rousseau’s paranoia is not a biographical one, and still less a psychopathological one. It is a problem of social history, which puts celebrity, as a particular form of consecration, into question.

As an object of historical enquiry, celebrity has not received enough attention. It is too often assumed that celebrity is a recent notion, associated with mass media or even with contemporaneous transformations of the public sphere, but I argue that the mechanisms of celebrity and the uses of the word can be traced back to the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In French, the word *célébrité* (translated in English as either celebrity or fame) has been in frequent use since the second half of the eighteenth century and the Frantext lexical database reveals a historical peak during the decades 1760–80. In these same years when Rousseau was writing *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, his contemporary Nicolas Chamfort coins this definition of celebrity: “the privilege of being known by people who don’t know you,” stressing the essential distinction between reputation—in small networks of mutual acquaintance—and celebrity. Celebrity, thus, can be defined as a specific form of notoriety, in which a person is well known, during his lifetime, by people who don’t know him personally but who may identify with him. This new mode of social recognition, different from glory, reputation, or even fame, appeared, at the end of the eighteenth century, to be a consequence of important social and cultural shifts, with the growth of publishing, the rise of literacy, and the development of newspapers.<sup>7</sup> Celebrity brought about unexpected results for certain writers who had to come to terms with their public image, with the expectations of their readers and their admirers, and with discourses and rumors about them. If the century of the Enlightenment has often been presented as the one that saw the birth of modern public opinion, it is also, as we shall see, that of the first celebrities: specifically, those great writers to whom one pays quasi-ritual visits and writes letters.<sup>8</sup>

Rousseau’s celebrity, like Voltaire’s, has been much studied. But what is intriguing is Rousseau’s ambivalent feeling of anguish about celebrity. The question I am addressing here is therefore not whether Rousseau was insane, but rather what his obsession with persecution tells us about dramatic changes in the way writers were recognized and legitimized. My hypothesis is that Rousseau experienced in a particularly sharp manner the paradoxes of celebrity, to which he was exposed more than others because he became, during his own lifetime, such a famous person and such a successful author. But the image of himself that the public reflected back at him was one that

Rousseau could neither accept nor escape. What his paranoid writing reveals is his difficulty in maintaining his own image of himself while in the public eye. But the paradox is that Rousseau himself eagerly sought celebrity and strongly put forward his personal image as an author writing for a wide public, not just for social elites. He constantly blurred the distinction between intimacy and publicity, making his private life a public matter and a literary topic. Thus what we call his paranoia may be deeply rooted in his conception of reading and his representations of an ideal public.

In order to support this hypothesis, it seems pertinent to examine the core of the paranoid syndrome rather than its margins, so as to grasp the specificity of Rousseau's writing. Let us, therefore, begin with this too little read, yet crucial text: *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*, to understand it through the lens of Rousseau's trajectory as a writer and to reinterpret this trajectory, in turn, in light of a text that fully expresses all the contradictions of his position as an author.

### **In the Heart of Conspiracy**

The text entitled *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*, but also known as the *Dialogues*, was written between 1772 and 1776 in a discontinuous process, by successive accretions, which makes it quite difficult to date the different parts with any precision. It was written in a context of solitude and isolation, during Rousseau's last stay in Paris. It was only published after his death: 1780 for the first dialogue and 1782 for the complete text (in volume 11 of Rousseau's first complete *Works*).<sup>9</sup> Curiously, the release of this unpublished work drew little attention. Those who reacted to the text insisted on the madness of the author, often in very strong terms. For the critic Jean-François La Harpe, this piece of writing was "the strangest perhaps to have ever existed, and the most shameful for the human spirit."<sup>10</sup> Jacques-Henri Meister did not doubt that "in writing this Rousseau was perfectly insane," and the *Mémoires Secrets de la République des Lettres* speaks of a "dark imagination, exalted to the point of delirium."<sup>11</sup> Even more significant, admirers of Rousseau such as Johann-Gottfried Herder convinced themselves that the book was a forgery published by Rousseau's adversaries in order to harm him.<sup>12</sup> Later commentators were no more indulgent toward the text. Rousseau specialists, and literary critics in general, either neglected it or treated it with contempt. It was not until the 1930s that a positive judgment appeared. In this "expression of delirium" Pierre Trahard saw a "powerful and dark work, where our own well-bounded inanity finds nothing but madness."<sup>13</sup> But it was Michel Foucault who first devoted a serious study to the *Dialogues*, in the preface to its first freestanding publication in 1962.<sup>14</sup>

Foucault's reading is absolutely essential, and in many ways remains highly relevant today. He insisted on the presence in the texts of several of Rousseau's key concepts and concerns (the world as a universe of symbols to be deciphered; the obsession with surveillance; the dream of a world of transparent feelings), and he set it in the framework of the autobiographical works, between the *Confessions* and the *Reveries*. But above all, he tore the text away from the theme of madness, in stressing its coherence and hidden rigor. With this move, the text escaped from the paradigm of insanity to be integrated fully into the body of Rousseau's work. As Foucault memorably put it: "the work, by definition, is non-madness." Yet at the same time, by the very gesture of breaking the link between the text and its author, and claiming to do a purely semiotic reading, Foucault also broke with what is at the heart of the text: the affirmation of an existential suffering and the demand for its recognition. Foucault treated *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques* entirely as a literary text, when the work itself was intended first and foremost as an action—one meant entirely as a denunciation of injustice.

The complexity of the text's composition is quite puzzling. It is composed of three dialogues whose protagonists are first, "Rousseau," a personality that strongly recalls Jean-Jacques Rousseau without being exactly identical to him; and second, "the Frenchman," an individual who has scarcely any distinctive qualities or psychological or biographical depth, and who is defined exclusively by his nationality and initial belief that "Jean-Jacques" is guilty. The conversation itself concerns this third person, who is identified as the author of *The New Eloise*, *Emile*, the *Discourses*, and so on. "The Frenchman," persuaded, like all of his compatriots, that Jean-Jacques is a cruel and vicious man, candidly admits the plot that has been devised, which aims to ruin "Jean-Jacques's" reputation without ever giving him a chance to defend himself. Everything proceeds as if "Jean-Jacques" has already been declared guilty, without a trial, of unspecified crimes. The conspiracy is therefore presented as something self-evident, known to all, legitimately serving the public good. "Rousseau," having gone to meet "Jean-Jacques," takes up his defense and sketches a positive moral portrait of him, which prompts "the Frenchman" to have his first doubts about the conspiracy. "Rousseau" then persuades "the Frenchman" to read "Jean-Jacques's" works, which he clearly had never before even opened. This is the decisive step, convincing "the Frenchman" fully of "Jean-Jacques's" innocence. "Yes, I feel and assert just as you do: the moment he is the Author of the writings that bear his name, he can only have the heart of a good man."<sup>15</sup> But this revelation, surprisingly, does not lead to a campaign of public rehabilitation. The two men decide to keep the secret of "Jean-Jacques's" innocence for themselves, feeling that it will serve no purpose to challenge such immense hostility. They settle for moving in with "Jean-Jacques" so as to comfort him.

This brief summary cannot show the complexity of the text, which includes a series of repetitions, digressions, occasionally interminable elucidations, and moments of true eloquence. The most unlikely hypotheses are laid out with such coherence and precision that the reader is sometimes left speechless by what resembles “rational folly.” The very arrangement of the dialogues allows the author to multiply the points he makes (through the characters of “Rousseau” and “Jean-Jacques” and through the footnotes whose author is clearly Jean-Jacques Rousseau), to say nothing of the two texts that frame the work and comment on it in the first person.<sup>16</sup>

The arrangement also allows the author to give “the Frenchman” the role of describing both the plot and the numerous maneuvers undertaken to isolate and harm “Jean-Jacques,” without his account ever being challenged. Thus the existence of ubiquitous persecution, taking the form of silence and enforced isolation, is not presented as a suspicion, but as something so well known as to be self-evident, with nothing more to be determined about it than whether or not it is just. The three dialogues are therefore built around this theme of a plot initially devised by Rousseau’s enemies, but including all those close to him as well, and which he himself has finally become aware of: “Could I remain unaware of the fact that for a long time now, no one has come near me without having been deliberately sent, and that throwing myself on the mercy of those around me would mean delivering myself up to my enemies?” The very purpose of the text is to find logical reasons for something completely illogical: this “unanimous decision of an entire generation” to ostracize Jean-Jacques.

For this reason, the text is dominated by themes of imprisonment, darkness, surveillance and deceit. Persecution has plunged “Jean-Jacques” into an all-embracing silence and deprived him of all means of acting, even to defend himself. *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques* thus describes at length—indeed, almost indefatigably—the fate of a “Jean-Jacques” left misunderstood and alone against the world, the plaything of his enemies and the victim of an all-embracing alliance of “the *Messieurs*.” “They have discovered the art of making a solitude for him in Paris more awful than caves or the woods, so that in the midst of men he finds neither communication, consolation, nor counsel, nor enlightenment, nor anything that could help to guide him: a vast labyrinth where he is allowed to see in the darkness only false routes that lead him further and further astray” (713). The universe described here corresponds to a reverse Enlightenment, to a shadowy and nightmarish dark side. Here are the author’s obsessions and fears: impenetrable shadows, labyrinths where the author is led astray; the distortion of all signs and symbols; even torture.

In many ways, the *Dialogues* marked a rupture with Rousseau’s earlier *Confessions*, even if they share its concern for self-justification. On the one

hand, as we will see, the later text was born out of Rousseau's disappointment about the public reception of the *Confessions*, whose third and final part went unwritten. On the other hand, in formal terms, the *Dialogues* seem a sort of "anti-*Confessions*."<sup>17</sup> The first-person narrative, which, in the earlier text, expressed Rousseau's desire to account for himself from his own point of view, is replaced in the later one by a dialogue that amounts to a shattering of enunciation. Rousseau is now trying to imagine the motivations of enemies by speaking in their name, and by judging himself as he supposes he would judge others. "I needed to say how, if I were someone else, I would view a man such as myself."<sup>18</sup> It is obviously an unrealistic project, but one that responds with almost perfect symmetry to the great promise of the *Confessions*, namely, the revealing of his intimate self. This shift indicates that for Rousseau the issue is no longer the private sense of oneself—no longer justifying oneself by affirming the coherence of one's conscience—but rather understanding the complex and perverse mechanisms of opinion, which is to say the way the view and judgment of others is constructed. The start of the first *Dialogue* describes an imaginary world in which hearts and symbols are equally transparent. This surprising beginning aims at introducing the true subject of *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*: the paradoxes of the formation of public opinion in a society in which all views and judgments are utterly distorted by prejudice, intrigue, and rumor. The principal question here is no longer the authenticity and sincerity of the self-narrative, as in the *Confessions*, but the mechanisms of alienation, one of the main topics of Rousseauist anthropology.

In this context, public opinion is given an entirely negative value. It appears as nothing but the result of widespread manipulation carried out by the powerful, by intermediaries, and by makers of opinion. The text therefore returns to Rousseau's well-known criticism of the worldly mechanisms of reputation-making, but it goes much further: it is not the judgment of high society that he denounces, but the unanimous opinion of the public. From this point of view, the *Dialogues* are quite fascinating, because they completely reverse the positive vision of the triumph of public opinion as a rational and enlightened tribunal that was formulated by many contemporary writers (including Charles Pinot Duclos, Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes and Louis-Sébastien Mercier), and has become a commonplace of the political and cultural discourse of the Enlightenment.<sup>19</sup> Duclos, for example, wrote in 1767: "le puissant commande, mais les gens d'esprit gouvernent, parce qu'à la longue, ils forment l'opinion publique, qui tôt ou tard subjugué et renverse toute forme de despotisme," and Mercier affirmed: "Depuis trente ans seulement, il s'est fait une grande et importante révolution dans nos idées. L'opinion publique a aujourd'hui en Europe une force prépondérante à laquelle on ne résiste pas."<sup>20</sup>

For Rousseau as well, public opinion is a new phenomenon, but it is in no way a legitimate tribunal to which men of letters can appeal against despotism. To the contrary, it is itself a sort of hegemonic despotism that allows small, well-organized groups to render false judgments everywhere and to persecute the innocent. Thus the plot devised against “Jean-Jacques’ brings together nobles, authors, doctors (that wasn’t hard), all the powerful men, all the courtesans, all the official bodies, all those who control the administration, all those who govern public opinions.”<sup>21</sup>

“The Frenchman” scores points by reminding Rousseau that he is opposed by everyone else in society: “do you count the number of votes for nothing, when you see things in a different manner from absolutely everyone else?” To which Rousseau replies with a critique of the effects of imitation and intimidation, which ensure that the very mechanisms by which opinion is fabricated remain hidden and allow the public to be easily deceived: “To what extent could the public be deceived if all those who lead it either by force, or authority, or opinion, made an agreement to delude it by hidden dealings whose secret it would be incapable of finding out.” Ironically enough, public opinion as Rousseau describes and denounces it here is the precise opposite of the general will described in *The Social Contract*. Where that book described the formation of a positive political unanimity, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques* completely reverses the value placed on unanimity, which in the final analysis can only be created by a conspiracy, and by the ostracism of a scapegoat, however innocent he might be: “One could see Socrates, Aristides, one could see an Angel, one could see God himself with eyes thus fascinated and still believe one were seeing an infernal monster.” It’s worth thinking at greater length about this praise of dissidence in an author generally seen as the prophet of unanimity in the political body.<sup>22</sup> But I would like to focus here on what this condemnation of public opinion means about the relationship between authors and their publics.

The alleged conspiracy of Rousseau’s enemies, especially the *philosophes* involved with the *Encyclopédie*, is indeed the most sensational aspect of the text, and the one that has attracted the most attention from commentators. Yet it only develops and amplifies a feeling of persecution that Rousseau had expressed, in his writings and in his life, since at least the start of the 1760s. By contrast, the text represents an important turning point in Rousseau’s representation of the public. For the first time, the reading public is no longer seen as an antidote to salon culture and worldliness, but as a possible danger. What is at stake here is the self-representation of Rousseau as an author. To understand it, we have to come back to the way he devised his public image in conscious opposition to what he saw as the mechanisms of elite sociability.

## From the Denunciation of Worldliness to the Quest for Recognition

Throughout the 1750s and 1760s, Rousseau constructed a figure of himself as a writer who had broken with elite norms of behavior. This rupture was evidenced by his quarrels with many friends—above all Diderot, whom he reproached for having yielded too readily to the illusions of high society (*le monde*): “Diderot is now a man of the world [*un homme du monde*],” he wrote with disappointment.<sup>23</sup> Most significantly, Rousseau constantly affirmed his refusal, in his relations with the aristocrats who admired him and sought his company, to accommodate himself to prevailing conventions of protection and patronage. He refused all gifts offered to him and ostentatiously rejected the obligations of a *protégé*, refusing to appear at elite social gatherings when he did not want to. This refusal of protection and protectors earned him a reputation as a madman whose reactions were unpredictable and incomprehensible.<sup>24</sup>

Such an attitude, which amounted to a frontal assault on the basic mechanisms of the cultural system of the Old Regime, led Rousseau to break successively with those *gens du monde* most favorable to him. He refused to accompany Madame d’Epinay on a journey, contemptuously rejected offers of a pension, and furiously returned the fowl sent to him by the Prince de Conti. To justify such gestures, which appeared eccentric in the context of aristocratic sociability, he wrote: “For me, nothing can be accepted without consequences. When one begins accepting something, soon one refuses nothing. When one receives everything, one starts to ask for more, and soon will do anything to have it.”<sup>25</sup> No clearer denunciation could be made of the relations of dependence and alienation that were implicit in the elite gesture of gift-giving.

Among the numerous episodes that rendered Rousseau’s relations in high society so difficult, his quarrel with David Hume was particularly revealing.<sup>26</sup> In 1766, Rousseau—banished from France—took refuge in England with Hume. There he quickly became convinced that Hume had joined a conspiracy of his enemies to harm his reputation. When Hume suggested that he could receive a pension from King George III, Rousseau found his suspicions confirmed—in his eyes, Hume was seeking to force him to contradict publicly the positions he had taken in his writings. He wrote a long accusing letter to Hume, who complained bitterly to his Parisian friends, which in turn generated a harsh polemic against Rousseau, orchestrated by the salons of baron d’Holbach and Julie de Lespinasse.

Rousseau’s attitude is interesting, because his anger was sparked by the attempt to secure a pension for him. His suspicion of Hume’s bad faith was literally incomprehensible to members of the elite, whose ethic ran in entirely

different directions and who regarded a pension as an obvious benefit, an honor. As A. R. J. Turgot noted in a letter to Hume, “No one in the *monde* could imagine that you sought a pension for Rousseau so as to dishonor him. Because no one but he would think that a pension *could* dishonor him.”<sup>27</sup> And yet Hume and his friends did harm Rousseau’s reputation by circulating, in Parisian salons, accounts of the quarrel that put him in a very bad light. For his part, Rousseau ostentatiously refused to defend himself. He claimed that his own convictions were sufficient and that the only judgment that mattered was posterity’s. The opinion of the salons, by contrast, did not matter to him. Finally, when Madame de Boufflers, who considered herself his protector, proposed to mediate and asked for his version of events, he responded insolently that he did not need her advice. Thus, while Hume sought to protect his reputation at any cost by relying on his aristocratic and literary links to polite society, Rousseau adopted a posture of contempt toward the verdict of that society and claimed a position exterior to it. He denounced the “petty female gossip” and assured his correspondents that his honor was not in question. He thus affected disinterest in his own reputation and adopted the rhetoric of the outcast who refused to be drawn into an unequal struggle—because he would answer in the end only to his own conscience. At the same time, he was still threatening to publish his memoirs some day.

This position of mute contempt for the opinion of the salons and the appeal to future readers was at odds with the social codes of the period, but it had a powerful echo. Many readers wrote to the newspapers or even published essays to defend Rousseau and to accuse Hume. They strongly believed that the famous author of *The New Eloise* could not be guilty. As an anonymous writer puts it, one may find in the letters to Hume “the features of a beautiful soul, generous, delicate and too sensitive, as Rousseau has revealed it in his writings and, more, by his conduct.”<sup>28</sup> His celebrity, built on the success of his books but also on the publicity of his life, seemed to earn him protection in public opinion.

The refusal to accommodate himself to the demands of elite culture was not confined to Rousseau’s social relations; it was a central topic of his writings, the *Letter to d’Alembert*, *Émile*, and *The New Eloise*. His position functioned as both a general critique of elite sociability and at the same time an attack on the figure of the writer as a man of the world, which was the ideal of many writers of the time, notably Voltaire.<sup>29</sup> Despite the way things appeared to many contemporaries, Rousseau did not merely use traditional and satirical themes, but developed a genuine social and political critique that engaged with the very identity of the writer and the choices made in writing.

Rousseau’s position essentially was to be suspicious of all criticism of polite society that was not accompanied by a stylistic break with the literature of

elite sociability and, above all, by a personal renunciation of the world of elite salons. This is why his autobiographical texts hold such importance: they allowed him to demonstrate, to himself and to others, that his lifestyle conformed to his principles. For him, the authenticity of his behavior was the sole guarantee of the truth of his speech. The second part of the *Confessions* is presented as the story of Rousseau's progressive break with elite sociability. The book recounts and defends his struggle to acquire and retain his autonomy by repulsing "those who find glory in overcoming my resistance and forcing me to be obliged to them, despite myself."

In all his texts from the 1760s, Rousseau constructed the image of a writer refusing to enjoy the advantages of his own literary success and resolved, as he himself put it, "to renounce forever any goal of fame or fortune." This image contradicted in every respect the ideal of the *philosophe*. Rousseau here represents himself as living off his earnings as a copyist of music and refusing all pensions and gifts. While Voltaire presented the autonomy of the writer as the product of an alliance with social elites, Rousseau described the same concept as implying first and foremost a moral, political, and stylistic break with the rules of worldliness. Nonetheless, a closer look at Rousseau's attitude toward polite society shows him to be more ambivalent and seemingly unable to extricate himself from a fascination with the very aristocracy whose protection he refused.

The most obvious sign of this ambiguous relationship is that Rousseau never truly stopped socializing with the nobility. He remained linked to Madame de Luxembourg and to the Prince de Conti, two prominent aristocrats who offered to protect him when his arrest was ordered in 1762 and again in 1766 upon his return from England. His relations also extended to the Marquis de Girardin, at whose home he spent the last months of his life. Furthermore, several episodes of his life and certain passages of his autobiographical writings reveal a genuine desire for recognition by aristocratic elites.<sup>30</sup> In particular, there is the enthusiasm he showed for the least display of friendship by the Maréchal de Luxembourg. This need for recognition explains why Rousseau decided to read his *Confessions* to several important aristocrats at the home of the Comtesse d'Egmont, thereby still seeking the approval of the very Parisian elite circles that he was castigating in the work itself. Indeed, in the text of the *Confessions*, several scenes illustrate this need for recognition—at several moments Rousseau describes overcoming his unease in salon conversation and winning the admiration of his hosts by reading his texts.

This is the case, notably, in a passage devoted to the moment when Rousseau had just arrived in Paris for the first time.<sup>31</sup> Madame de Besenval proposed that he stay for dinner, meaning dinner with the servants, and Rousseau, of course, was angered. Then, thanks to the intervention of her

daughter, Mme de Besenval eventually invited him to have dinner with her and her guests. After this first humiliation, Rousseau performed less than brilliantly in conversation, but he finally managed to turn the situation to his advantage by pulling from his pocket and reading a poem of his own. The company reacted enthusiastically, with tears of admiration. Not only had Rousseau proved that he deserved a place at Madame de Besenval's table but he had also forced the other guests to lose their self-control and allow themselves to be overcome by emotion. In the same way, when he recounted the reading he gave of *The New Eloise* to Madame de Luxembourg, he described the effect of his reading, which allowed him to avoid his embarrassment at public speaking and generate absolute empathy on the part of his audience.<sup>32</sup>

In these different episodes, Rousseau did not seek recognition for his talents in elite sociability—his politeness and his conversation—but, on the contrary, for his prowess as an author of written texts. Far from conforming to the norms of elite sociability, he affirmed his own subjectivity and forced his listeners to put aside, if only provisionally, their masks of indifference. Moreover, his accounts of his reading bear no resemblance to salon readings as described by other sources from the eighteenth century, which displayed set-pieces of elite comportment dominated by the play of egos where the writer deferred to the superior competence of aristocratic socialites in matters of taste and style. In the scenes in the *Confessions*, Rousseau's readings open a breach in the superficial relations of salon sociability by creating a fictive space of sentimental communion in which the author subjugates his listeners, according to the stereotypes of sentimental novels.<sup>33</sup> All these episodes taken together reveal Rousseau's desire to obtain the recognition of the aristocratic elite, but to do so against the rules of elite sociability. Here, aristocrats are represented as an ideal audience, capable of a truly empathetic reading that generates a profound identification with, and brings out an enthusiastic affection for, the author.

Rousseau's conception of reading is well known. According to him, reading could give a reader immediate and authentic access to an author's sensibility. It was the means of transmission of a double process of admiration and identification, in which the author was both recognized as a talented writer and loved as a person of sentiment. It was the efficacy of reading that allowed authors to have moral effects on readers and guide them toward virtue. This is a well-known aspect of Rousseau's thought, one repeated many times in his writings and correspondence, and one that has struck a chord with many readers. As Robert Darnton has shown, Rousseauism can largely be defined as a shared belief in the feeling of connection that leads readers to confuse authors and their books—indeed, to confuse authors and their public personae. Jean Ranson, the La Rochelle merchant whose letters

have been studied by Darnton, never met Rousseau but called him “friend Jean-Jacques” and often asked his correspondent at the Typographical Society of Neuchâtel for news “of this famous man (*homme célèbre*) whose fate has always moved me.”<sup>34</sup>

Yet, the successes narrated in the *Confessions* were fragile and fleeting, because the social logic rapidly re-established itself and rendered illusory the type of recognition that Rousseau sought. The last paragraph marked the final failure of this hope. Rousseau here evoked the reading he had just given at the home of Madame d’Egmont and added, “I completed my reading and everybody was silent. Mme d’Egmont was the only one who appeared moved; she visibly trembled but she very quickly recovered and kept silent, as did the whole company.” Where Rousseau had expected his misfortunes and his goodness to be recognized with a warm and effusive response, he obtained only an icy silence that marked the failure of his attempt. This reception was a telling disappointment that discouraged him from continuing with the *Confessions*. He would never write the third part; instead, he began another text of a very different nature: *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*.

### **The Deceived Public**

This failure represented a key moment in Rousseau’s development. It did not simply reveal the illusory and contradictory character of his relations with high society; it also touched more broadly on his relationship with his public. Apparently, the *Dialogues* continued to endorse this ideal of empathetic reading, which allowed a well-disposed reader to gain direct access to the genuine intentions of an author, and even to his moral disposition. The reading done by “the Frenchman” that convinces him of “Jean-Jacques’s” innocence is precisely a reading of this type, and very different from a critical reading attentive to the possible contradictions of the text and the details of the argument: “In order to judge the true goal of these books, I didn’t apply myself to picking apart a few scattered and separate sentences here and there, but rather consulting myself both during these readings and as I finished them, I examined as you desired the dispositions of soul into which they placed and left me, judging as you do that it was the best means to penetrate through to that of the Author when he wrote them and the effect he proposed to produce.”<sup>35</sup> A reading of this sort quickly persuaded him that the author’s doctrine, “as healthy as it is simple,” would bring about nothing less than “the happiness of the human race.” The logical consequence of this reading is that “the Frenchman” does not even need to meet “Jean-Jacques.” Reading his works, assuming that he really wrote them, is enough to persuade “the Frenchman” of Jean-Jacques’s innocence and to fill him with “the most sincere esteem.”

Yet, this ideal of empathetic reading is no longer presented in the *Dialogues* as a model, but as an exception. One of the most terrifying aspects of the universe described in the text is that the very possibility of authentic reading seems to have been entirely abolished. The system of control and manipulation of opinion has become so powerful that there is no longer any place left for a well-intentioned reading of the work. On the one hand, “Jean-Jacques’s” reputation has been so marred by “the *Messieurs*” that readers are now dissuaded from even opening his books. And if they do open them, it is with such prejudice that a sincere reading and a true understanding seem impossible. On the other hand, the work itself has been entirely falsified by “Jean-Jacques’s” enemies, who have published scandalous texts as well as amended or distorted versions of his works under his name. This amounts to more than simple censorship. It is a true campaign of “perversion” of the work, which is particularly dramatic for “Jean-Jacques” since he can now not even count on posterity to treat him fairly: posterity will have only the falsified versions of his books to judge him by. “Do you know how much they can be disfigured. . . ? All these collections—expanded by insulting criticisms, venomous libels, and done for the unique purpose of disfiguring the Author’s productions, altering his maxims and changing their spirit little by little—have been falsified with great artistry to that end” (958). This obsession with the perversion of his works, incidentally, led Rousseau, during the years he was writing the *Dialogues*, to draw up a manuscript proclamation in which he disavowed all future publications bearing his name.<sup>36</sup>

Worse, to understand the unlikely unanimity of the hatred surrounding him, Rousseau went so far as to introduce the hypothesis that bad-faith readers pretended to take literally certain paradoxical statements so as to accuse him of self-contradiction. At this point, every possible aspect of the process of reading has been perverted: not only do readers no longer have access to “Jean-Jacques’s” true texts, but even if they did, they would be so badly disposed toward him that they would read him only to catch out his errors.

This hypothesis had disastrous consequences in Rousseau’s universe. In previous writings, the conspiracy against him had been presented as a purely external phenomenon concocted by his enemies (the *philosophes*, the powerful, the members of high society), against whom he could appeal to his readers—and to the proper effects of reading—so as to break the encirclement and ask for justice. This was actually the very purpose of the *Confessions*. But in casting suspicion on the readers themselves, Rousseau deprived himself of all hope. It is not only his enemies who are seeking to harm him; even anonymous readers are not fair. Certainly, the example of “the Frenchman” suggested that the conspiracy could still be defeated. But this was not

the case, as the text clearly stated that this was an ideal example that could not be generalized. Indeed, as we have seen, even after “the Frenchman” is convinced of the innocence of “Jean-Jacques,” contrary to what one might expect, the two protagonists then decide to take no further action and to keep “Jean-Jacques’s” innocence a secret. They will not try to denounce the conspiracy, since it would be pointless to do so: “Everything that happens to him is too far removed from the usual order of things ever to be believed, and his very protests will only attract to him reproaches of impudence and lying that his enemies deserve.”<sup>37</sup> The text therefore deepens the critique of opinion, which is not only manipulated but also eager to be so, therefore becoming the plaything of its manipulators. To the denunciation of the ways opinion is fabricated is added this disillusioned statement by “the Frenchman”: “The public is deceived. I see it. I know it. But it likes being deceived and would not want to be disabused.”<sup>38</sup>

In sum, the text does not correspond, despite surface appearances, to the Voltairean model of the exoneration of an innocent man, in which the *philosophe* denounces the iniquity of formal justice to the tribunal of opinion (as in the famous cases of Jean Calas and the chevalier de La Barre).<sup>39</sup> Here, there is no possible outside, either through the mediation of an impartial denunciation or autobiographical justification. “Rousseau,” of course, is only the flip side of “Jean-Jacques.” As for “the Frenchman,” he seems much less like a model than a fiction, that of the ideal reader, who finally can also be no one but Rousseau himself. And public opinion is not an impartial tribunal, but the instrument of persecution itself: “How will the person who feels worthy of honor and esteem, yet whom the public freely disfigures and defames, adopt a tone that does himself justice.”<sup>40</sup> In short, the trio of “Jean-Jacques,” “Rousseau,” and “the Frenchman” in reality is quickly reduced, as Michel Foucault noted, to a single sovereign solitude, which will lead straight into the first-person monologue of Rousseau’s *Reveries*.<sup>41</sup>

The appendix to the text, in which Rousseau told of his unsuccessful attempts to give his manuscript to trusted writers, or to unknowns, and in which he tells the story of the closed grate in front of the altar of Notre Dame, confirms this description of failure, and closes the text of the *Dialogues* on an extremely pessimistic note. We have come far from the happy scenes of the *Confessions* in which Rousseau managed to provoke his illustrious hosts and obtain their recognition. He now feels he can only expect this recognition from a very uncertain posterity. The appendix reaffirms his distrust of the traditional roles of the writer, but also, more generally, in the possible roles of readers as well.<sup>42</sup> The book ends with a significant episode. Convinced that everyone around him is “sent by his persecutors,” Rousseau decides to hand out leaflets to anonymous passers-by entitled “To All Frenchmen Who Still Love Justice and Truth.” Again, the result is a failure.

The passers-by refuse to accept or read the leaflet. Not only is Rousseau surrounded by enemies, but the public is now refusing to read him.

### The Burden of Celebrity

An essential question raised by the dynamics of this text is that of celebrity. Rousseau's critique of the public, which goes well beyond a simple denunciation of the conspiracy, refers back to the mechanisms of notoriety that made him a well-known author. The paradox by which Rousseau complains of being the victim of ubiquitous calumny while being one of the most famous authors of his time reveals the inherent contradictions in the new status enjoyed by famous, well-known, and recognized authors.<sup>43</sup>

In one of the few works that deals with the mechanisms of fame at the end of the eighteenth century, Paul Metzner makes the pertinent observation that new social conditions emerged in this period that allowed a gifted individual—whether the talent lay in chess, music, or some other activity—to publicize themselves and their talent, and thus to construct a reputation as a virtuoso.<sup>44</sup> Despite repeated insistence on his desire for autonomy and solitude, Rousseau experienced more celebrity than any writer before him. Since the 1760s, any news or rumor about him was assiduously reported in the newspapers.<sup>45</sup> During his stay in Paris in 1765, gawkers constantly pushed forward to get a glimpse of him during his walks in the Tuileries Gardens. The next year, his quarrel with David Hume, which had begun as a private matter, became public because newspapers seized hold of it and anonymous authors took up their pens to defend Rousseau—to the great surprise of Hume, who had not realized how far Rousseau's celebrity extended beyond the world of letters and the salons of high society.<sup>46</sup> "Rousseau's name is famous (*célèbre*) throughout Europe," wrote Jean-Baptiste de la Harpe, and Louis-Sébastien Mercier affirms that "the three men of my day who have gotten the most attention from chattering Parisians are the King of Prussia, Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau."<sup>47</sup> During his stay in Paris in 1770, crowds gathered to see him play chess in the Café de la Régence. The story of the glazier Ménétra, who recognized Rousseau and played chess with him, is well known.<sup>48</sup> The Duke de Croÿ confirmed the general infatuation with Rousseau: "I had long wished to see the famous Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom I had never seen and who, for three years, had come to take his retirement in Paris. If it became known that Jean-Jacques was going to a café, we went running to see him; he stopped going and we thought it very difficult to approach him."<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, Rousseau's enemies did not miss the chance to denounce his exhibitionism and false modesty. Despite its polemical aspects, this accusation quite rightly pinpointed the contradiction that Rousseau could not escape as long as he based his celebrity on a

refusal of all worldly forms of recognition and wished to be both celebrated and solitary.

Rousseau understood accurately the contradictions of celebrity, which meant that a renowned writer no longer belonged to himself nor functioned as the master of his own destiny. He wrote in the *Confessions*: “I realized, then, that it was not always as easy as one might think to be poor and independent. I wanted to earn a living in my chosen field. The public apparently disapproved.”<sup>50</sup> Time and again, in his various writings, Rousseau revealed his fear of becoming a fictional character or a curiosity. He was certainly the first person to recognize the new paradox faced by famous writers whom admirers visited yet never read, a spectacle to gaze at, not befriend. Here he complained of the visits paid to him at Môtiers: “They were officers and other people who had absolutely no taste in literature. In fact the majority of them had never read my work. And yet this did not prevent them, based on what they told me, from trekking thirty, forty, even sixty leagues to come and admire an ‘illustrious man, a celebrity, quite celebrated, a great gentleman, and so forth.’”<sup>51</sup> By this point, Rousseau’s notoriety was no longer directly based on his actual work. No longer were there readers who wanted to see the author, but instead curious minds looking to glimpse a famous figure whose name had become recognized. The fear of having become an object of curiosity became even more prominent in his later writings. In the *Dialogues*, Jean-Jacques appears over and over again as a public spectacle, observed in silence, treated as an object of mockery by passers-by on the street. “Picture the unfortunate J. J. on the street or on walks surrounded by people who, less out of curiosity than in derision, since most of them have already seen him a hundred times, turn around and stop to stare at him with a gaze that surely has nothing to do with French urbanity. You will always find that the most insulting, the most mocking, the most assiduous are young people who, with an ironically polite expression, amuse themselves by giving him all the insulting, hateful signs they can inflict on him without compromising themselves” (890). French urbanity, treated here with sarcasm, has become, in the form of mockery, a means of signifying to Jean-Jacques that he is no longer a person with whom one speaks, but rather a figure of ridicule. The same theme appears in an even more brutal form when Jean-Jacques feels surrounded by silent and intimidating looks: “If he enters a public place, he is viewed and treated like someone with the plague: everyone surrounds him and stares, but keeping a distance and not talking to him, only to present a barrier to him.”<sup>52</sup>

Of course, this text should be taken not as an accurate description of Parisian attitudes toward Rousseau, but rather as the image he formulated of the consequences of celebrity, which became a type of stigma in constantly exposing him to the gaze of others and thereby preventing normal relations

with them. Rousseau was obsessively afraid that a split might exist between his personal identity (the image he had of himself) and his social identity (the character known to others as “Jean-Jacques”). As early as 1764, he could write of himself in a rough draft of the *Confessions* that “amongst my contemporaries, there are few men whose name is more well known in Europe, yet whose individual self is more ignored. . . . Everyone depicts me according to their own imagination, without worrying if the actual man would burst such fantasies. There was a Rousseau of public life, and quite another one living in retirement who looks nothing like him.”<sup>53</sup> While using Rousseau as the paradigm of the new culture of self-promotion and self-production, Metzner fails to recognize that the emphasis on the self (“ballooning the self”) had an obvious drawback, in that one could easily lose control of one’s own image. Well before our era of mass-media stars, Rousseau discovered the burden and solitude of celebrity. “If my face and my traits were as perfectly unknown to men as my character and my nature, I would have no problem living amongst them.”<sup>54</sup> As Leo Braudy puts it, Rousseau is a striking early example of a modern phenomenon: the “shy star,” who desires to be “spiritually public” and “physically private.”<sup>55</sup>

Yet for a long time Rousseau had maintained a rather contradictory relationship with literary fame. In the *Confessions* he reported that upon his arrival in Paris, he sought recognition through a variety of means, including a brief stint as a chess player.<sup>56</sup> He also sought success through a system of musical notation he had created: “I so badly wanted to revolutionize this art, and thus achieve a level of celebrity which, in the fine arts, can earn you a small fortune in Paris.”<sup>57</sup> After his “reform,” when he decided to renounce his worldly life and spend his time copying music, he still hoped that celebrity, even without the element of glory, would allow him to maintain his autonomy, for example, in attracting clients to his music copying business—but also by shielding him from the attacks of his enemies. Early on, he sensed the dangers of celebrity, which could pervert even the simplest of human interactions and which prohibited authentic relationships: “As soon as I had a name, I no longer had any friends,” he wrote.<sup>58</sup> In the *Dialogues*, celebrity has become a burden, which brings him only “outrage, insults, misery, and defamation.” Even though his literary celebrity might have seemed an asset in his struggle against worldly forms of reputation, Rousseau now presented it as a trap, a terrible machine that has multiplied the false images of his person, and from which he can never detach himself. The idea preoccupied him so much that his critique of worldliness soon receded into the background: it appears at several points, but the dominating theme is a far more pessimistic description, at once lucid and delusional, of the effects of “deadly celebrity.”<sup>59</sup>

Celebrity, as Rousseau describes it, is a mechanism of alienation.<sup>60</sup> It results in the dispossession of the two elements that constitute an individual’s

identity: the face and the name. The face, first of all, is treated as an object of falsification in the *Dialogues*. He dedicates several pages to denouncing the circulation of purposefully distorted portraits of him, which he attributes to the malevolence of his enemies. Thus the conspiracy consists of a veritable effort at deformation, in which the public image of Jean-Jacques becomes completely unrecognizable.<sup>61</sup> The hypothesis he puts forth of intentional distortion indicates quite clearly Rousseau's anxieties about the uncontrollable circulation of his image. A distorted countenance—how better to convey the fact that Rousseau could no longer recognize the public figure that Jean-Jacques had become? The issue of the name is even more interesting because it relates to that which designates the identity of an author: his signature. Rousseau's name—or rather his first name: Jean-Jacques—had become the instrument of his transformation into a public character. It became the plaything of a vindictive public. Beginning in the preface he affirms: "I took the liberty of resuming my family name, which the public judged it appropriate to take from me, and following its example, I refer to myself as a third party, using my Christian name to which the public chose to reduce me."<sup>62</sup> Even his first name—the most intimate and purest of possessions—has become the name of a character, "Jean-Jacques," a public fiction and an instrument of alienation.

This obsession with his name is important, since Rousseau certainly played up his name more than any of his contemporaries focused on theirs. It became the symbol of the ubiquitous textual presence of the author, even, ironically, when Rousseau pretends not to be the author of his own work.<sup>63</sup> Whereas other authors in the Enlightenment played skillfully with pseudonyms and anonymous texts, never hesitating, like Voltaire, to use fake names or to attribute their own work to somebody else, Rousseau always attached considerable importance to mentioning his name, which figures in all of his works, beginning with the second edition of "The Discourse on the Arts and Sciences" (1751) by "M. Rousseau, genevois."<sup>64</sup> With the *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre*, the emphasis on his name became a regular part of his editorial politics: he refers to himself as simply "J.-J. Rousseau, citizen of Geneva," yet lists his interlocutor's numerous academic titles: "to M. d'Alembert, of the French Academy, of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Paris, of that of Prussia, of the Royal Society of London."<sup>65</sup> From this point forward, his first name, abridged in the form of his initials—the same technique he uses in the *Dialogues* to designate Jean-Jacques—becomes ubiquitous, ostensibly in opposition to the title of "Monsieur," which Rousseau always used in a negative light. The persistent determination to name himself, which was explicitly opposed to the practices of other men of letters in this period, was for Rousseau a proud claim of authorship. He expressed this pride most clearly in a letter to his publisher, Marc-Michel Rey,

concerning the publication of the *Letter to d'Alembert*: "Not only can you name me, but my name will appear and will make up part of the title. The only thing I ask is that you keep this secret until the moment of publication. There are, as you will see in the manuscript, important reasons for this, for the work and its author alike."<sup>66</sup>

In the case of the *Social Contract* and *Emile*, though, the refusal to play the game of anonymity—the refusal to even put up a facade of phony authorship—particularly irritated the authorities and increased their hostility toward these works.<sup>67</sup> Voltaire, on the one hand, never understood why Rousseau refused to play the game; he reproached him for his lack of prudence and for putting the entire philosophical movement in jeopardy. For Rousseau, on the other hand, the signing of his texts was a fundamental element in what he saw as the political responsibility of a writer.<sup>68</sup> He explained his position in a *Letter to M. de Beaumont*, the archbishop of Paris and elaborated on the matter in his *Letters from the Mountain*. He refined his reasoning in this latter text: not only is it the duty of an author who writes about the common good to sign his texts—that is, to affirm his political responsibility—but an individual author also acts as the guarantor of the credibility of what he writes. Indeed, Rousseau offered a forceful critique of the widespread practice in the literary world of anonymous publishing.<sup>69</sup> A proper relationship between an author and his text was a central theme in his writings. For Rousseau, the persuasive force of a text was a function of the author's ability to harmonize his own principles with those discussed in the work. The value of a text is intimately tied to the personhood of the author and the confidence he inspires. Rousseau summarized this idea in the form of a maxim: "If Socrates had died in his bed, he would be thought of today as nothing more than a skilled sophist."<sup>70</sup> But if one's name, whether it be Socrates or Rousseau, is what links the biography of the author to the moral, philosophical, or political value of his work, then it becomes evident that the author is unavoidably trapped by his own notoriety. Rousseau's contradictory relationship with celebrity cuts even deeper by revealing his own desire for recognition and notoriety. Recognition, in fact, is a ubiquitous and dynamic theme in Rousseau's writings, particularly in the *Confessions*, where Rousseau's taking the floor is always the start of a claim to recognition, whether intellectual, emotional, or social, as in the well-known dinner scene in Turin.<sup>71</sup> His name actually turned out to be an important object in his pursuit for recognition. It was out of a desire to equal Jean-Baptiste Rousseau—"a celebrated man with whom I share a name"—that the young Rousseau wrote his first poetical works.<sup>72</sup> Later, in autobiographical fragments, he would write "some authors continued to call the poet Rousseau 'the great Rousseau' during my lifetime. When I die, the poet Rousseau will remain a great poet. But he will no longer be the great Rousseau."<sup>73</sup>

If ever there was an author who shunned the idea of hiding behind his work, it was Rousseau. The important element here is not the narcissism of the author, but the paradox of Rousseau's never having stopped making his person, his life, and his name important arguments in favor of his work, even when those works were advocating the simple life, the refusal of honors, and the merits of solitude. This can be interpreted, from a psychological perspective, as a tireless struggle for recognition, or from a more philosophical perspective, as the contradiction between self-love (*amour-propre*) and the love of the self (*amour de soi*).<sup>74</sup> But this struggle can also be seen, from a historical perspective, as a particularly intense form of anxiety about the contradictions of literary celebrity.

This interpretation allows us to reevaluate one of the most pervasive commonplaces about men of letters during the Enlightenment, which sees Rousseau's age, in the famous words of Paul Bénichou, as that of the "consecration of the writer."<sup>75</sup> The phrase designated at once the new and increasingly prestigious social status enjoyed by writers, and the recognition that they played an important spiritual role in their society. It also indicated the degree to which writers began to be seen as "great men," at once admired in life, worshipped in death, and the object of a civic cult.<sup>76</sup> Who embodied this new figure of the great man better than Rousseau, eloquent writer and prophet of democracy, whose body was transferred to the Panthéon in the Year III?<sup>77</sup> A close reading of Rousseau's most paranoid texts, however, forces us to consider the dark side of this "consecration." What is striking here is that the quintessential literary "great man"—the object of ritual visits and pilgrimages—was also the first person to experience the contradictions of this greatness. Moreover, he strongly anticipated the criticism of public opinion, which he saw as a mass of credulous and manipulable individuals ready to believe the most unlikely things, especially if they involved a famous person: "As soon as it is a question of J. J., there is no need to put either good sense of plausibility in the things that are uttered about him, the more absurd and ridiculous they are, the more eager people are not to doubt them. If d'Alembert or Diderot took it upon themselves today to affirm that he has two heads, everyone who saw him pass in the street tomorrow would see his two heads very distinctly, and everyone would be very surprised that they hadn't perceived this monstrosity sooner."<sup>78</sup> We must take seriously, I believe, this apparently satirical and burlesque statement, because of what it indicates about public opinion. It is very far removed from the "enlightened and critical public sphere" sketched out by Jürgen Habermas. This eighteenth-century public sphere, as defined by Habermas, refers both to the development of social spaces for rational discussions and to the positive notion of public opinion as an authority that one can oppose to the secrets of state or to political injustice. In Rousseau's *Dialogues*, by contrast, the public sphere is

the place where the circulation of falsified texts and absurd rumors meet the obscure desire to believe anything about celebrities. It offers us a glimpse of the dark side of the Enlightenment imaginary.

It is possible to see this critical vision of the public as the revival of old discourses against popular credulity, but Rousseau's text is, actually, very different from the usual denunciation of superstition. In some ways it sounds more like an anticipation of the radical critics of "the society of the spectacle" (Guy Debord). And it is striking that Rousseau's views of the public may seem to anticipate the analysis of twentieth-century mass culture by the thinkers of the Frankfurt school, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, but also Habermas.<sup>79</sup> Actually, Rousseau was not the only one in the eighteenth century to make such an attack against the mechanisms of celebrity, and we can find similar statements in Diderot or Mercier.<sup>80</sup> But only Rousseau gave to this critique a paranoid, rather than moralistic, form: denunciation, rather than aphorism. And it is not by chance that twentieth-century theorists have often used the notion of paranoia, in a metaphorical way, to characterize the political consequences and cultural outcomes of modern societies governed by mass-media and constant surveillance.

### **The Paradoxes of Paranoid Writings**

We now need to turn to the fundamental paradox of paranoid writing itself. What was the point of denouncing conspiracies or the injustice of public opinion if both the former and the latter were such inexorable and powerful mechanisms? Even more important, why make these denunciations in writing? The essential point is that Rousseau, in order to denounce the misfortunes of literary celebrity, and to insist that he be judged as a man and not as a writer, paradoxically made use of a literary text. Herein lie the ambiguities of the text—a text that was much more carefully composed than it would appear, to which Rousseau dedicated several years of work, and in which the disjointed and repetitive aspects conceal an extremely rigorous argumentative structure, replete with eloquent passages, in which Rousseau exploited all the literary resources available to a writer of his gifts.

This ambiguity is ultimately the purpose of the text. From the outset, "Rousseau" asserts to his interlocutor that "I'll explain what I mean but it will be either the most useless or most superfluous of efforts, since everything I will say to you can be understood only by those to whom there is no need to say it."<sup>81</sup> As we have seen, the third dialogue seems to close with a decision not to fight back against his conspirators, while leaving open the possibility of his rehabilitation, although this would require help from providence and

posterity. As for the appendix, it stages the failure of any diffusion of the text, and of any benefit to the cause of “Jean-Jacques”—yet Rousseau nonetheless made several copies of the manuscript and gave a copy to Paul-Claude Moul-tou two months before his death. His expectation of recognition from the effects of writing was all the more striking, as this recognition would now be deferred until after his death.

Rousseau never stopped claiming that all of his misfortunes dated from the first day he began to write. This claim is found in all of his autobiographical works and became a leitmotif in his last years. Everyone who visited him in the 1770s reported the same thing: Rousseau insists that he is no longer writing, refuses to speak about his books, and refuses to read the books that have been given to him.<sup>82</sup> At the very moment that the idea of ritual visits to great writers was being invented, Rousseau categorically refused to play the game, and ostentatiously rejected his status as writer.<sup>83</sup> But this of course put Rousseau in a kind of performative contradiction, since he never stopped writing in this period, producing, most notably, the *Dialogues* and the *Reveries*. Thus Rousseau denounced the curse of writing and denied his own literary celebrity through the very act of writing itself.

The time has come to reformulate the question of Rousseau’s paranoia. Is paranoia an object of history? And if so, what does Rousseau teach us about it? There is a quite popular way of approaching the issue of paranoia in the social sciences and literary theory, which is to interpret paranoia as a broad intellectual category that designates a certain outward attitude characterized by suspicion and a tendency toward overinterpretation. Some literary critics have proposed intellectual histories that place paranoia at the very center of modern Western culture,<sup>84</sup> or more precisely treat it as an interpretive category, which allows for a better understanding (for instance) of English literary modernism and its obsession with professional identities.<sup>85</sup> In the same way, it has become common to see paranoia as a prominent feature of American culture, as displayed in political style, popular culture, movies, or novels.<sup>86</sup>

The reading offered here is quite different. It postulates that one can only grasp paranoia through an act of denunciation made by a particular person.<sup>87</sup> In this sense, it privileges a relatively limited definition of paranoia, which cannot be entirely separated from delusions of persecution, and which one can glimpse through a certain category of written expression: paranoid writing. Paranoid writing is particularly interesting for the historian, as the boundary between normality and abnormality is so tenuous here, and the question of insanity is always left open. Unlike the incoherent ramblings of a schizophrenic, the work of a paranoid person is actually quite meaningful. The question of whether or not the denunciation is well founded depends always on the judgment, in context, made by

contemporaries and by the historian. After all, as everyone knows, even paranoids have enemies.<sup>88</sup>

If the diagnosis of paranoia is a quite impossible one that always rests upon the endless inquiry about actual persecutions and the collective decision of the people concerned, then the most important factor is the mechanism of recognition and the sensibility to others' opinions. Since celebrity is a new form of fame that involves an anonymous reading public's desire to identify with the famous person and to know everything about him, paranoia and celebrity are strongly entwined. From this perspective, moreover, paranoia is given not as a broad cultural pattern that would require a hermeneutic interpretation, but as a discourse, an act of speech, that cannot be dissociated from a personal experience and from its reception.

The purpose of this article is, then, to propose a social and cultural account of this experience that aims not at explaining Rousseau's paranoia as a form of madness but at figuring out what it reveals in the social context of a successful writer in eighteenth-century Paris. It is, first, possible to stress the ambiguities of social criticism and the contradictions of a writer who seeks social recognition for his writing while simultaneously denouncing social and political order. Rousseau constantly needed to reassert his own authenticity and, therefore, his marginality. The reading that I have given preference to—which is not contradictory—emphasizes the effects of celebrity as a form of public recognition, which was tied to the new status of literature and writers in the late eighteenth century. The attention of the public was shifting from books toward the person of the author. As Mercier wrote, “their books, their plays, their lifestyle, even their petty rivalries, give rise to endless conversations, which are probably the most agreeable of all, since everyone comes back to these subjects over and over again; the life of a beautiful woman is less scrutinized than that of a famous man.”<sup>89</sup> The writers of the Baroque age and the Enlightenment sought two forms of recognition for their talent. They wanted glory, which was above all a literary topos, cast in heroic terms or in reference to political grandeur (that of the prince or the great soldier whom the glorious writer could come to equal).<sup>90</sup> More prosaically, they wanted to build a reputation in the circles of both high society and the Republic of Letters. That is, they wanted to be seen as successful by both social elites and their peers. In these two worlds, notoriety was built up through personal interactions (mingling at salons, circulating letters, and so on) or through a tightly regulated rumor mill. In many ways, high society, like learned societies and networks of correspondence, began as means of controlling reputations.<sup>91</sup>

It is not insignificant that literature in the seventeenth century was obsessed with the issue of recognition through interaction, and the problem of self-love (*amour-propre*). Rousseau was in part the inheritor of this moralist

tradition. Yet he lived in a very different world characterized by the wide circulation of printed texts. It is true that recognition was still mediated by urbane circles and literary institutions in the eighteenth century, yet it was also now possible to achieve it through the printed word.<sup>92</sup> This was true to such an extent that, for Rousseau, the desire for recognition manifested itself in an entirely novel way. On the one hand, he remained wedded to traditional avenues of reputation-making—academic prize competitions and the polite society of Parisian salons—even in his attacks on both the academies and the salons. On the other hand, he praised the socially undifferentiated public of anonymous readers but was ceaselessly confronted by the divide between his personal and social identity. Rousseau’s paranoia is thus perhaps the most visible aspect of his modernity, with his unhappy awareness of the status of the writer, who can escape only once he has voluntarily enslaved himself to the search for success and to the public gaze.

Roland Barthes once said that Voltaire was the last happy writer in history, a writer for whom the struggle for reason always had the feeling of a party. Barthes opposed Voltaire to Rousseau, for whom the contradictions of literary status felt more like a booby trap. “From that point forward,” wrote Barthes, “always thirsting after, and injured by, a duty that he could neither completely honor nor completely elude, intellectuals began to be defined by their guilty consciences: Voltaire was a happy writer, but he was certainly the last one.”<sup>93</sup> Barthes’s discussion of the writer’s intellectual responsibility remains largely pertinent. Whereas Voltaire easily negotiated the codes of worldly recognition, Rousseau discovered the contradictions that emerged when a writer sought to emancipate himself from the dominant forms of recognition. The stakes were at once social and political: how does one communicate social or political criticism if public opinion has been entirely manipulated and even welcomes the manipulation? How does one harmonize the public image with the self-image? How can a writer, if he is publishing his work, claim not to care about the way others see his work and himself?

These questions are obviously tied to the transformation of forms of communication and public opinion, but they offer an image very different from the great Whiggish account in which the progress of the enlightened public sphere corresponds to the apogee of rational criticism. Public opinion as it appears in the *Dialogues*, in fact, is less a weapon against established authority than it is a new and much more perverse form of censorship, which allows a certain degree of freedom for a writer, yet erects around him a desert of silence and surveillance. In the end, the central question is indeed that of celebrity, as Rousseau first experienced it. But this celebrity, far from offering authors new possibilities of action, resulted in a form of alienation. It produced a fictional character and then dispossessed the actual individual of his own identity. One can easily see that Rousseau had an excessive, even

pathological, dependence on the way others viewed him. But could it be that what would be called his “paranoia” was nothing else than an acute awareness of the paradoxes of literary success in the age of publicity and celebrity?

—Translated by David A. Bell and Jeremy Caradonna

## Notes

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1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques. Dialogues*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959), 1:980. All the English quotations of the *Dialogues* are from *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, ed. and trans. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, vol. 1 of *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (Hanover, NH, 1990). Unless otherwise noted, all other translations are my own.
2. Paul Sérieux and Joseph Capgras, *Les folies raisonnantes. Le délire d'interprétation* (Paris, 1909), and above all Georges Génil-Perrin, *Les paranoïaques* (Paris, 1926). See Claude Wacjman, *Fous de Rousseau: le cas Rousseau dans l'histoire de la psychopathologie* (Paris, 1992) and *Les jugements de la critique sur la folie de J.-J. Rousseau: représentations et interprétations, 1760–1990* (Oxford, 1996).
3. Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris, 1967); Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, 1979). See also the response by Jean Starobinski, “Quia non intelligor illis,” in *Annales de la société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Geneva, 1999), 445–517, esp. 473, and above all *La transparence et l'obstacle* (Paris, 1971).
4. The medical and psychoanalytic definitions of paranoia usually focus on three elements: feelings of persecution, megalomania, and hypochondria. I will insist on the first element, even though megalomania is obviously tied to the question of celebrity, and hypochondria is noticeable in Rousseau's case.
5. Natalie Heinrich, *L'épreuve de la grandeur: prix littéraires et reconnaissance* (Paris, 1999).
6. The present-day mechanisms of celebrity, on the contrary, have provoked a lot of analysis, especially in media studies. See Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, 1994); Su Holmes and S. Redmond, eds., *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (New York, 2006). A large part of the discourse about celebrity has been critical since the seminal work by Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York, 1971), who stressed the difference between heroes of the past, distinguished by their achievements, and celebrities “well-known for their well-knownness,” who are only images, and even trademarks. For a broad and ambitious history of fame, see Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York, 1997), which accurately stresses the mutations of fame in the eighteenth century but does not distinguish between fame and celebrity.
7. Newspapers are very important to the mechanisms of celebrity because they allow people to develop a relation of intimacy with celebrities they don't know directly. On “intimacy at a distance” in modern fan/celebrity relationship, see James B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Cambridge, 1995), 219–34.

8. On the romantic posterity of this figure: Judith Lyon-Caen, *La lecture et la vie. Les usages du roman au temps de Balzac* (Paris, 2005), 89–142.
9. The English edition of the first *Dialogue* was produced by Brooke Boothby, to whom Rousseau had given a copy of his manuscript edition. The 1782 edition was produced by Paul Moulton, on the basis of the manuscript Rousseau had given to him two months before his death. It makes up volume 11 of the *Collection complète des Oeuvres de J.-J. Rousseau, citoyen de Genève* (Geneva, 1782). In a striking sign of just how much the text had been discredited, it was not translated into English until 1990 (*Collected Writings of Rousseau*), vol. 1.
10. Jean-Baptiste de La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, cited by Raymond Trousson, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau jugé par ses contemporains* (Paris, 2000), 13.
11. *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal et Meister* (Paris, 1880), 12:409; *Mémoires Secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la République des lettres* (London, 1781), 15:319.
12. See James F. Jones, *Dialogues: An Interpretative Essay* (Geneva, 1991), 35.
13. Pierre Trahard, *Les maîtres de la sensibilité française au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1932), 3:215.
14. Michel Foucault, introduction to *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques. Dialogues* (Paris, 1962), vii–xxiv. See also Anne F. Garetta, “Les Dialogues de Rousseau: paradoxes d’une reception critique,” in L. Clark and G. LaFrance, eds., *Rousseau et la critique* (Ottawa, 1995), 5–98.
15. *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 941.
16. Jean-Marie Goulemot, “Stratégies et positions dans les Dialogues de Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques,” *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte: Cahiers d’Histoire des Littératures Romanes* 3, no. 1–2 (1979): 113–21.
17. Foucault, introduction to *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*.
18. *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 665.
19. See above all Jürgen Habermas, *L’espace public: archéologie de la publicité comme dimension constitutive de la société bourgeoise* (Paris, 1978); Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990); Mona Ozouf, “L’opinion publique,” in Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, vol. 1 of *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* (Oxford, 1987), 419–34; Roger Chartier, *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1991).
20. “In only thirty years, a great and important revolution has taken place in our minds. Public opinion has in Europe today a compelling strength that nobody can resist”; Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (Amsterdam, 1782–88), 4:258.
21. *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 781. See also “Among the peculiarities that distinguish our century from all others is the methodical and consistent spirit that has guided public opinions for twenty years” (965).
22. See Yves Citton, “Fabrique de l’opinion et folie de la dissidence dans le complot selon Rousseau,” in *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques. Etudes sur les Dialogues*, ed. Philip Knee and Gérald Allard (Ottawa, 1998), 101–14. See also Gérald Allard, “La pensée politique des *Dialogues*: le juste, l’injuste et le juge,” *Etudes Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 7 (1995): 117–42.
23. Letter to Mme d’Épinay, 16 March 1757, in *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, ed. R. A. Leigh (Oxford, 1965–98), 4:183.
24. Benoît Mély, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, un intellectuel en rupture* (Paris, 1985). Jérôme Meizoz, *Le gueux philosophe (Jean-Jacques Rousseau)* (Lausanne, 2003). Antoine

- Lilti, *Le Monde des salons, Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005), 196–204.
25. Letter to the countess of Boufflers, 7 October 1760, in *Correspondance complète*, 7:251.
  26. Lilti, *Le Monde des salons*, 342–55. Dena Goodman, “The Hume-Rousseau Affair: From Private Querelle to Public Process,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1991–92): 171–201.
  27. Letter from A. R. J. Turgot to David Hume, 23 July 1766, in *Correspondance complète*, 30:149.
  28. *Justification de Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans la contestation qui lui est survenue avec M. Hume* (London, 1766), 2.
  29. Antoine Lilti, “Sociabilité et mondanité: les hommes de lettres dans les salons parisiens,” *French Historical Studies* 28, no. 3 (2005): 415–45.
  30. Barbara Carnevali, *Romanticismo e riconoscimento, Figure della coscienza in Rousseau* (Bologna, 2004).
  31. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:289–90. See the very insightful analysis in Carnevali, *Romanticismo*, 173–219.
  32. Rousseau, *Confessions*, 522–23. Rousseau also mentioned the case of Princesse de Talmont, who started to read *The New Héloïse* before going to the ball at the opera, and kept reading all night (546–47). Once more the pleasures of the text are stronger than those of society.
  33. Roger Chartier, *Inscrire et effacer, Culture écrite et littérature (XIe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 2005), 155–75.
  34. Robert Darnton, “Le courrier des lecteurs de Rousseau,” in *Le Grand massacre des chats, Attitudes et croyances dans l’ancienne France* (Paris, 1985), 201–39. First published in the United States as “Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity,” in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984). See also Dominick LaCapra, “Chartier, Darnton, and the Great Symbol Massacre,” *Journal of Modern History* (1988): 95–112, who rightly stresses the ambiguities of Rousseau’s authorial position. Among the countless studies of Rousseau’s conception of reading, see James Swenson, *On Jean-Jacques Rousseau Considered as One of the First Authors of the Revolution* (Stanford, 2000), Yannick Seité, *Du livre au lire, La Nouvelle Héloïse, roman des Lumières* (Paris, 2002), and John C. O’Neal, “Rousseau’s Narrative Strategies for Readers of His Autobiographical Works,” in *Text, Interpretation, Theory*, ed. J. M. Heath and M. Payne (Lewisburg, PA, 1985).
  35. *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 930.
  36. On this episode, see the analysis by Geoffrey Bennington, *Dudding. Des noms de Rousseau* (Paris, 1991), 109.
  37. *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 962.
  38. *Ibid.*, 940.
  39. See esp. Elisabeth Claverie, “La naissance d’une forme politique: l’affaire du chevalier de La Barre,” *Critique et affaires de blasphème à l’époque des Lumières*, ed. P. Roussin (Paris, 1998), 185–260.
  40. *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 665.
  41. Foucault, introduction to *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*.
  42. After the failure at Notre Dame, Rousseau gave a copy of the manuscript to Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, but he, to Rousseau’s great despair, spoke of it to

- him “as if it were a work of literature”; he then gave a copy to Brooke Boothby, in a gesture that he immediately regretted.
43. Leo Braudy has accurately seen that Rousseau was a turning point in the history of fame, because of the contradictions he faced. Braudy compares him with more confident celebrities of the Enlightenment, such as Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Johnson, and with the first modern fan: James Boswell. Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*.
  44. Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso* (Berkeley, 1998).
  45. Sean C. Goodlett, “The Origins of Celebrity: The Eighteenth-Century Anglo-French Press Reception of Jean-Jacques Rousseau” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 2000), and, more broadly on the role of the eighteenth-century press in the renown of writers: Frank Donaghue, *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers* (Stanford, 1996).
  46. Lilti, *Le monde des salons*.
  47. Rousseau, *Correspondance*, 7:82; Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, ed. J. C. Bonnet (Paris, 1998), 1:45.
  48. Jacques-Louis Ménétra, *Histoire de ma vie*, ed. D. Roche (Paris, 1982).
  49. Mémoires de Croÿ (3:12–15), cited by Jacques Berchtold, “Rousseau, joueur d’échecs au café (1770–1771),” in Jacques Berchtold and Michel Porret, eds., *Rousseau visité, Rousseau visiteur: les dernières années (1770–1778)* (Geneva, 1999), 95–145. On this stay, see also Elizabeth A. Foster, *Le dernier séjour de J.-J. Rousseau à Paris, 1770–1778* (Paris, 1921).
  50. Rousseau, *juge de Jean-Jacques*, 367.
  51. Rousseau, *Confessions*, 611.
  52. Rousseau, *juge de Jean-Jacques*, 713.
  53. Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:1151.
  54. J.-J. Rousseau, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:1057. Another episode in the *Rêveries* discusses the pernicious effects of celebrity: after being knocked over by a dog, Rousseau later learned that vicious rumors had begun circulating about the incident and that the *Courrier d’Avignon* had even announced his death! (2nd walk.)
  55. Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 735.
  56. Rousseau, *Confessions*, 288.
  57. *Ibid.*, 286.      58. *Ibid.*, 362.
  59. “He believes, for example, that all the disasters of his destiny since his fatal fame are the fruits of a long-standing plot formed in great secrecy by a few people” (*Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 781). As Erving Goffman noticed, when one’s social identity is known to a great number of people whom the individual does not know, and which no longer resembles one’s personal identity, celebrity can become a veritable stigma. See Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1963).
  60. Alienation is an essential notion in Rousseau’s social thought. See Bronislaw Baczko, *Rousseau, Solitude et communauté* (Paris-La Haye, 1974).
  61. Rousseau, *juge de Jean-Jacques*, 777–79. This question is well analyzed by Ourida Mostefaï, “Les infortunes de la célébrité: diffamation et défiguration dans Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques,” in I. Brouard-Arendt, ed., *Lectures de Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques* (Rennes, 2003), 129–39.
  62. *Ibid.*, 663.

63. See, for example, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, where Rousseau, who pretends to be nothing other than the editor of some letters, writes “I will name myself: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* in all the letters”; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, ed. R. Pomeau (Paris, 1960), 753.
64. The first edition, published by Fixot in January of 1751, simply indicates that work is by “a citizen of Geneva.” All the editions, since the one by Barillot, this same year, bear Rousseau’s name.
65. See the analysis of Ourida Mostefai, *Le citoyen de Genève et la République des Lettres, étude de la controverse autour de la lettre à d’Alembert de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (New York, 2003).
66. Letter to Marc-Michel Rey of 15 April 1758, *Correspondance*, 5:70–71.
67. The reprimand from the Archbishop of Paris explicitly reproaches Rousseau on this matter.
68. Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau as Author: Consecrating One’s Life to the Truth* (Chicago, 2003), chap. 1.
69. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les lettres de la montagne*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:791–92.
70. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur la vertu du héros*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 2:1274.
71. Jean Starobinski, “Le progrès de l’interprète,” in *La relation critique*, new edition (Paris, 2001), 109–202. See also Carnevali, *Romanticismo*.
72. Rousseau, *Confessions*, 157.
73. Rousseau, *Mon portrait*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:1129.
74. Carnevali, *Romanticismo*.
75. Paul Bénichou, *Le Sacre de l’écrivain (1750–1830). Essai sur l’avènement d’un pouvoir spirituel laïque dans la France moderne* (Paris, 1973).
76. Jean-Claude Bonnet, *Naissance du panthéon, Essai sur le culte des grands hommes* (Paris, 1998). Bonnet correctly points out Rousseau’s hostility to celebrity, but never discusses the contradictions therein, and bases his argument on the general thesis of the cult of great writers in the eighteenth century.
77. Bronislaw Baczko, *Job, mon ami. Promesses du bonheur et fatalité du mal* (Paris, 1997), 199–256. On the publishing posterity of Rousseau, see Raymond Birn, *Forging Rousseau: Print, Commerce, and Cultural Manipulation* (Oxford, 2001).
78. Rousseau, *juge de Jean-Jacques*, 961.
79. Julia Simon, *Mass Enlightenment: Critical Studies in Rousseau and Diderot* (Albany, 1995), 70–94.
80. Yves Citton, “Retour sur la misérable querelle Rousseau-Diderot: position, conséquence, spectacle et sphere publique,” *Recherches sur Diderot et l’Encyclopédie* 36 (April 2004): 57–96.
81. Rousseau, *Judge of Jean-Jacques*, 688.
82. He declared to Dusaulx, for example, that “I’m only fortunate, Sir, that I began writing at a late age and put the pen down shortly thereafter”; Jean-Joseph Dusaulx, *De mes rapports avec J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris, 1798), 32–33.
83. On this point see Yannick Seité, “La visite au non-écrivain ou quand Rousseau ruse avec le verbe (1770–1778),” in Berchtold and Porret, *Rousseau visité*, 209–36.
84. John Farrell, *Paranoia and Modernity: Cervantes to Rousseau* (Ithaca, 2006).
85. David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (New York, 2001).
86. There is, now, an important bibliography on this topic. See Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style of American Politics and Other Essays* (New York, 1965); Fredric

- Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington, 1992); Leo Bersani, "Pynchon, Paranoia, and Literature," *Representations* 25 (Winter 1989): 99–118; Samuel Chase Coale, *Paradigms of Paranoia: The Culture of Conspiracy in Contemporary American Fiction* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2005).
87. Luc Boltanski, "La dénonciation," *Actes de la recherche en Sciences sociales* 51 (1984), and *L'amour et la justice comme compétences, Trois essais de sociologie de l'action* (Paris, 1990).
  88. This is the subject of many debates—as numerous as they are pointless—between Rousseau's many biographers, who evaluate whether people were actually plotting against Rousseau.
  89. Mercier, *De la littérature et des littérateurs*.
  90. Orest Ranum, *Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France* (Chapel Hill, 1980).
  91. Christian Jouhaud, *Les Pouvoirs de la littérature. Histoire d'un paradoxe* (Paris, 2000). Nicolas Schapira, *Valentin Conrart, histoire sociale d'un homme de lettres* (Paris, 2004). Lilti, *Le Monde des salons*, chap. 8.
  92. P. A. C. de Beaumarchais experienced, from a very different literary standpoint, the paradoxes that came with success. Cf. Gregory Brown, *A Field of Honor: Writers, Court Culture, and Public Theatre in French Literary Life from Racine to the Revolution*, [www.gutenberg-e.org](http://www.gutenberg-e.org), 2002.
  93. Roland Barthes, "Le dernier des écrivains heureux," in *Essais critiques*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 2002), 2:1235–40.