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There's "Something" About "It": Presence in the Political Apologia

The short speech President Bill Clinton made to the nation on 17 August 1998, following his video-linked testimony before the grand jury, was the first in a series of apologies, delivered to various political groups, that spanned a period of nearly 30 days. In a final apology (referred to as the "second apology" here), delivered before the annual White House prayer breakfast on 11 September, Clinton finally got it right. This "it" I am referring to is more than a mastering of the complicated set of parameters that define the genre of political apology and the rhetoric necessary to deliver the apology in an effective way. "It" is something else entirely.

Time columnist Lance Morrow experienced "it" while watching Clinton's prayer breakfast speech on television, but missed "it" in his commentary. He writes:

Clinton performed miserably in his first public ceremonies of repentance, but last Friday, at the White House prayer breakfast, delivered at last a persuasive peccavi, mea culpa. It was fascinating to watch the President's speech with a window at the bottom of the television screen showing the Dow Jones average moving like an electrocardiogram. The Dow was losing territory when Clinton started speaking, and rose steadily into the plus column as he went on. (n.pag.)

The president speaks, and something happens. Morrow finds the persuasive power of the prayer breakfast address in the president's delivery, which he would call performance and characterize as persuasive. Other commentators second this judgment, noting that in the first apology Clinton appeared haggard and sounded angry (perhaps not surprising after several grueling hours of

testimony), but at the prayer breakfast, Clinton "bit his lower lip repeatedly during his remarks...in his trademark gesture of powerful emotion. He spoke quietly and haltingly...in stark contrast to the defiant, even angry tone of his brief talk to the nation on Aug. 17" (Bennett n.pag.). These comments, centering on delivery as they do, are the products of our television age in which Clinton's actual statements must be reduced to sound bites (even in print) and the observations of commentators and columnists define content and effectiveness of public address/texts.

Generally, there are two ways to judge the effectiveness of any rhetoric. From a stylistic point of view, for example, we may judge a work of rhetoric by how well, and to what use, the rhetor employs the five canons, including: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. While such analysis is certainly important and often interesting, it also often misses the point of any rhetoric: to work, i.e. to change hearts and minds or to spur people to action, or, just the opposite, to keep hearts and minds from changing or promote inaction. I would claim that any rhetoric that does not work, no matter how finely crafted, is failed rhetoric. And failed rhetoric for a president becomes failed leadership.

I want to ignore this equation of rhetoric and presidential leadership here because it has already been well argued by scholars from the fields of political science and communications that the essence of presidential power is rhetorical leadership. Instead, another interesting question arises for me: If rhetoric can be finely crafted in a stylistic sense and not work, then what is it that makes the rhetoric work? I realize I am scooting away from Kenneth Burke's contention in Counter-statement that arguments are not functionally different from stylistic patterns (157), which I take to mean that stylistic patterns create arguments and vice versa. Instead, I want to scoot up to

Gordon Harvey and his idea of "presence" in writing, which he claims is "necessary not only to truth, but to persuasion" (651). Now Harvey is writing about the genre of the personal essay, not the genre of political apologia. Presence for him is the "concept we invoke when we feel life in writing, when we feel an individual invested in a subject and freely directing the essay" (650). I contend that his concept of presence is one answer--an answer among many--to what this "it" is that makes rhetoric work--in this case presence is what makes Clinton's speech at the prayer breakfast succeed where his first apologia failed. I will argue that this concept of presence shows itself in the second apologia because Clinton's composition process, different from the composition process of the first apologia (indeed different from most modern presidential address), allowed his presence to show through. This speech blurs the boundaries between political apologia and personal essay, and it suited the rhetorical situation.

Clinton flatly denied any wrong-doing following accusations, which surfaced in early 1998, of his having "sexual contact" with a young intern in the White House. These accusations were made in the course of a civil lawsuit against the president for an alleged act of sexual harassment committed while he was governor of Arkansas. Clinton is accused of lying in a deposition and before a grand jury about his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky--a relationship he subsequently admitted having. Being caught in a series of lies about a tawdry personal affair demanded a public response that took the shape of an apologia--the two most important having been delivered on 17 August and 11 September respectively.

As defined by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, effective apologies are "single, unified responses to a series of charges that shift the focus from the attacker(s) to the defender and present the character of the

accused in ways that are appealing to the audience" (129). This is a workable definition, although the adjectives "single" and "unified" present problems, especially when analyzing a series of apologies in which the postures and approaches--and even the process of composing--may change as happened in Clinton's case.

In an update of Lawrence W. Rosenfield's definition of the genre of apologia, Sherry Butler identified several constants in the organization of the form, including: 1) Ethical appeals precede logical appeals; 2) Offensive remarks follow defensive remarks; 3) Most evidence appears in the middle third of the apologia; and 4) The argument of the apologia resembles previously used arguments (283-285). From Campbell and Jamieson, add a fifth constant: The apologia ends with appeals for the audience to proceed with more important business than the object of the controversy (132). These constants mark the organizational pattern of political apologia--its arrangement--a pattern that follows common and political sense. First, establish your ethos. Next, present your evidence. End with statements that ask the people to transcend the moment, to look beyond this minor altercation to the larger problems of the republic. Clinton's apologies follow this well-worn path.

Campbell and Jamieson argue that presidents have two choices in their modes of response: forensic or the personal apology (an epideictic form). A forensic response, as defined by Aristotle, "either attacks or defends somebody...The political orator is concerned with the future: it is about things to be done hereafter that he advises for or against." An epideictic response "either praises or censures somebody...The ceremonial orator is...concerned with the present, since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time" (1358b 32). Further, notice that the division Campbell and Jamieson suggest is not clearly delineated. Apologia, instead, blurs the lines

between forensic and epideictic address as defined by Aristotle. Despite the Greek philosopher's penchant for creating neat categories for pigeon-holing the subjects and objects of his inquiry, no such clear boundary exists between forensic and epideictic forms in the apologia. Like many rhetoric scholars, I prefer to classify apologia as epideictic. But classification is hardly the point. Effectiveness is. Campbell and Jamieson err by creating a false dichotomy that limits our understanding of what is an effective apologia. As Ware and Linkugel demonstrate, the genre of apologia, an epideictic form, relies on certain forensic features for its effectiveness. Their construct of the genre is comprehensive and useful.

Ware and Linkugel argue that the genre of apologia consists of four postures of verbal self-defense and four modes of resolution. The postures are: 1) Absolution, which seeks acquittal and relies on the modes of denial and differentiation; 2) Vindication, which seeks to preserve character relative to others and relies on the modes of denial and transcendence; 3) Explanation, which seeks to make motives clear and relies on the modes of bolstering and differentiation; and 4) Justification, which seeks understanding and approval and relies on the modes of transcendence and bolstering. The four modes of resolution are: 1) Denial, which attempts to change the meaning of the thing in question; 2) Bolstering, which attempts to identify the accused with something positive; 3) Differentiation, which attempts to separate something from its larger context; and 4) Transcendence, attempts to join something to a larger context. Denial and bolstering are reformatory modes that attempt to alter the perception of the object or subject of discussion. Differentiation and transcendence are transformative modes that attempt to completely change the form and context of the object or subject of discussion (273-283). Each posture relies on a reformatory and a

transformative mode of resolution. In other words, it is important to effective apologia to reform the concepts of some subjects and objects of inquiry and to transform the contexts of others. At least one of each type of mode is necessary to present a unified posture.

These postures, and the modes that support them, operate within a three-part structure of political legitimacy as described by Jackson Harrell (in association with Ware and Linkugel). These include structural, ideological, and personal legitimacy. Structural legitimacy derives from the office held. A president, for example, commands a great deal of political legitimacy merely by holding that office. Ideological legitimacy derives from the perceptions by the people that the politician's values and principles are similar to their own. Personal legitimacy derives from ethos--the quality of the politician's character. While these political considerations are beyond the scope of this essay, what is important here is Harrell's contention that it takes a convincing rhetorical persona to form the foundation of these three structures of political legitimacy (241). This persona, I think, is something like Harvey's concept of presence in the personal essay.

First, I want to quickly analyze these two apologies in terms of rhetorical style and adherence to the genre. I think the force of my contention about the composition process--presence--and the blurring of genre boundaries is strengthened by the fact that, in terms of style and genre, these two apologies are very similar. I will follow this analysis with a more detailed study of how the composition process of the second apologia creates this concept of presence and becomes the more effective apologia.

Clinton's first and second apologies fit well-established models of the genre. Both display verbal/textual characteristics--tropes, figures, and schemes--long identified with Clinton. And, indeed, many of these

characteristics have been long identified with presidential address in general because of the rhetorical nature of the office. Presidents create themselves and establish their power through rhetoric, so tropes of power and schemes reinforcement are characteristic of presidential speech, especially: anaphora, antithesis, epistrophe, and parallelism. For example, the first apologia relies on the reinforcing power of parallelism, anaphora, and epistrophe. In the middle of the speech, shortly after shifting the focus from himself to the Starr investigation, Clinton says: "The independent counsel investigation moved on to my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation. This has gone on too long, cost too much, and hurt too many innocent people" (n.pag.) In these two sentences it is easy to see a typical use of parallelism and epistrophe (similar to anaphora except the repetition happens toward the end of the clause). The 17 August speech is built on these types of constructions. So is the 11 September speech, only not to the same extent. A more contrite posture, stylistically, would dictate less repetitive and power-enforcing constructions. When Clinton does use such language in the final apologia, he uses it to reinforce social values that he claims to share with his audiences, such as when he says: "I am profoundly grateful for the support of so many Americans who somehow through it all seem to still know that I care about them a great deal, that I care about their problems and their dreams" (n.pag.). By the stylistic criteria of the genre, these two apologies are similar, but the former is more strident than the latter.

According to Ware and Linkugel's defining characteristics of the genre, the apologies employ familiar postures and modes of resolution: the first employs the explanation posture (attempting to gain understanding) and the final employs the justification posture (attempting to gain understanding and

acceptance). Both employ the bolstering mode of resolution as the reformative mode. The first employs differentiation as the transformative mode, and the final employs transcendence as the transformative mode. So, in the first apologia, Clinton is explaining himself and hoping to remove his actions from a larger context by portraying them as the reasonable actions of an ordinary man. In the second apologia, Clinton is justifying himself and hoping to link his actions to a larger, positive context. Let us consider how this works.

In the first apologia, Clinton engages in a subtle form of bolstering. Because he had just finished testifying about lewd sexual encounters with a woman half his age, he could not bolster himself (identify himself with something positive) in a brash way. Instead, he creates an image of himself as one of the people who would not want to, nor should have to, submit to questioning about personal affairs. As Clinton says: "I answered their questions truthfully, including questions about my private life--questions no American citizen would ever want to answer." In the final phrase, he equates himself with the people and suggests he has suffered a kind of persecution the average American should not have to suffer. He continues this line of bolstering throughout the speech. For example, he invokes family when he says: "I can only tell you I was motivated by many factors: first, by a desire to protect myself from the embarrassment of my own conduct. I was also very concerned about protecting my family." He attempts to separate his actions from their context by attacking the investigation against him, throwing the scent off the political/social meaning of having sex with a young woman in the Oval Office. He tells the people:

The fact that these questions were being asked in a politically inspired lawsuit which has since been dismissed was a consideration, too. In addition, I had real and serious concerns

about an independent counsel investigation that began with private business dealings 20 years ago--dealings, I might add, about which an independent federal agency found no evidence of any wrongdoing by me or my wife over two years ago. The independent counsel investigation moved on to my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation. This has gone on too long, cost too much, and hurt too many innocent people. (n.pag.)

By invoking "innocent people" is Clinton suggesting his own status as victim? Perhaps it is an attempt at innocence by association. Clinton follows this section with an ending typical of the genre: a call for stopping "the pursuit of personal destruction and the prying into private lives" and moving on to "repair the fabric of our national discourse" (n.pag.). Clinton moves the issue of his infidelity and alleged perjury away from the context of proper and legal behavior for a president to a fight against a possibly wrong-headed investigation.

An answer to the important question--did it work?--appears to be a qualified "yes." A New York Times and CBS News poll taken after the speech showed a continued desire by the public to move on to other political business. According to a report in the New York Times shortly after the first apologia, "[s]ixty-three percent of the respondents said the Lewinsky matter should be dropped...now that the president has testified to the grand jury and addressed the nation" (Verhovek n.pag.). I say a qualified "yes" because Clinton's polls held steady rather than moved up, although pundits generally were unconvinced. For example, consider Lance Morrow's evaluation that Clinton "performed miserably" in the first speech (Morrow n.pag.).

In terms of the genre of apologia, Clinton made one change in the final speech. Instead of using differentiation as his transformative mode of resolution, he chose transcendence. He begins bolstering himself by identifying with the clergy gathered for the annual White House prayer breakfast. He welcomes them, saying that this is an occasion "which Hillary and the Vice President and I look forward to so much every year" invoking his own religious orientation. Like the first apologia, he continues to identify himself with the common American when he thanks "ordinary citizens" for writing to him with "wise counsel" in regard to the further handling of his job (n.pag).

By the structure of the genre, it is in the choice of transcendence that this apologia differs from the first. Clinton sets himself in a religious context. He says he must "have God's help to be the person that I want to be." He concludes his speech, saying:

I ask once again to be able to love my neighbor--all my neighbors --as my self, to be an instrument of God's peace; to let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart and, in the end, the work of my hands, be pleasing. This is what I wanted to say to you today. (n.pag.)

With these words, he moves himself beyond a man in trouble to man, almost Christ-like, whose troubles may actually be used for good in the service of God and country.

Combining the purpose of the apologia as identified by Campbell and Jamieson with the organizational pattern as identified by Butler and the posture of argument as identified by Ware and Linkugel, a genre of apologia emerges--a genre that clearly includes the two Clinton speeches. Both, then, are apologies. While both speeches fit the genre, the two are quite different

in a way that the genre cannot explain. It is simply not satisfying to claim that merely switching from differentiation as the transformative mode of resolution to transcendence explains the difference that many commentators detected in the two speeches.

Typical of the commentary following the first apologia was this analysis offered by Caryn James of The New York Times:

Bill Clinton looked exhausted and sounded as defiant as a regretful man could in his four-minute speech last night. It was not the familiar, soulful Bill Clinton who turned up, not the one who knows how to look a camera in the eye, but a far more reluctant-sounding person. But every poll in the last week had told the president that he had to make this speech, and he appeared as reluctant as if the American people had subpoenaed him. (n.pag.)

While James makes some attempt to analyze what Clinton actually says, her commentary centers on the speech act and comparing that act to Nixon's "Checkers" speech from 1952--the first televised political apologia in the United States. What James is looking for is the "familiar" and "soulful" Bill Clinton. But if she expects these traits to reveal themselves in the text, she never explains. Instead, she expected this "familiar" and "soulful" Clinton to show himself in the way he looks "a camera in the eye." For James, Clinton's appearance of reluctance speaks loudest. James clearly wants to experience "it" while watching Clinton's speech on television, but she is missing "it"--and identifying "it" with what Clinton does or how he appears rather than what he says and how he says it.

A "soulful" Clinton apparently did show up at the White House prayer breakfast. According to Time reporter Chris Taylor, the "stony mask he wore

during the August 17 speech to the nation was gone; in its place, glistening eyes and a cracking voice" (n.pag), again reinforcing delivery as the focal point of the president's rhetoric. But Gustav Neibhur of The New York Times ignores the president's performance and concentrates on his specific use of religious language for an audience of religious leaders. He claims Clinton demonstrated his remarkable fluency with religious language. He frankly admitted to having 'sinned' in his relationship with the former White House intern Monica S. Lewinsky, spoke of the need for repentance and renounced pride and anger, two of the Seven Deadly Sins. But the most resonant moment for clergy members may have come when Clinton said the process of forgiveness demands 'what my Bible calls a broken spirit.' (n.pag.)

Indeed the language issues resonated for the assembled clergy. The Reverend Fred Davie says Clinton "could not be more contrite." Rabbi Edward Cohn gushes "I love this man" (Taylor n.pag.). Rabbi Paul J. Meinhoff compares Clinton's apology to the kind of statements required for Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement: "a candid admission of wrongdoing, an apology to those wronged, a plea for forgiveness and a pledge to avoid such behavior in the future" (Bennett n.pag.). Says Time Managing Editor Walter Isaacson without elaboration: "It's one of the most remarkable speeches ever given by a president" (Taylor n.pag.). Did Clinton do as television news commentator Ted Koppel cynically suggests and engage in a "new strategy" of remorse couched in religious language (Kakutani n.pag.)? I would say yes, but I would hesitate to apply the cynical spin. As a rhetoric scholar, I am far more concerned with whether the strategy worked than if it is simply a dodge to avoid the political consequences of his actions (and if a dodge works, so be it). I suggest that this use of religious language--the presence of the "soulful"

Bill--does work, and did work, for Clinton in that he has gained some amount of political currency for the effort. Despite 30 newspapers calling for his resignation in the week before his second apologia (Barringer n.pag.), Clinton's job approval rating stood at 62 percent on 16 September 1998 a week after the second apologia, "which is impressive by any reckoning" (Berke n.pag.).

Clinton's specific use of religious language is not surprising considering the rhetorical situation: a speech before religious leaders. It is not surprising that commentators and audience members picked up on Clinton's religious language. But, as I have suggested, this language also plays a crucial role in Clinton's move from differentiation to transcendence for his transformative mode of resolution. From the standpoint of the genre and the rhetorical situation (his immediate audience), what other language and mode of resolution would have been as effective? The short answer is: None.

Changing his vocabulary, or biting his lip, may be outward manifestations of a rhetorical posture, but they do not explain "it." Clearly, the visual and lexiconal aspects of rhetoric and the rhetorical situation are important to the meaning of any speech act. That Morrow or James are looking for "it" in how Clinton appears or sounds is certainly not shallow commentary in the age of television. But I would argue that part of what drives the visual and aural qualities of speech are the features of the text. That Bill Clinton did not appear "familiar" or "soulful" in the first apologia has much to do with the text he is reading. As I will show later in this essay, Clinton is not the only presence in that first apologia. It also bears the mark of Hillary Clinton. In a sense, she and the other advisors are fighting for their own presence in that speech. Presence, a single personal presence, is the "it" these commentators are looking for--the second apologia has it, the first does

not. This presence manifests in the text because Clinton's composition process for the second apologia more closely resembles the composition process of the personal essay: one author working alone to capture and share personal observations or experience. I want to consider the personal essay as genre, and then show how the second apologia fits. Finally, I will discuss the composition process that I contend makes this presence possible.

Figures I and II outline some of the differences, although not monolithic, between what Wendell V. Harris calls the personal essay and the programmatic essay. I have taken the liberty of representing his ideas, and some of my own, in graphic form and fitting them within a structure based on Burke's pentad. The charts show that the personal and programmatic essays are nearly opposites in all categories. But perhaps this is best illustrated by example. Harris points to E.B. White's "Once More to the Lake" and Alice Walker's "I Am Blue" as examples of personal essays versus the programmatic which would include what he calls "articles" (936). Examples of these would be stories in newspapers and magazines, editorials and columns, and much academic writing.

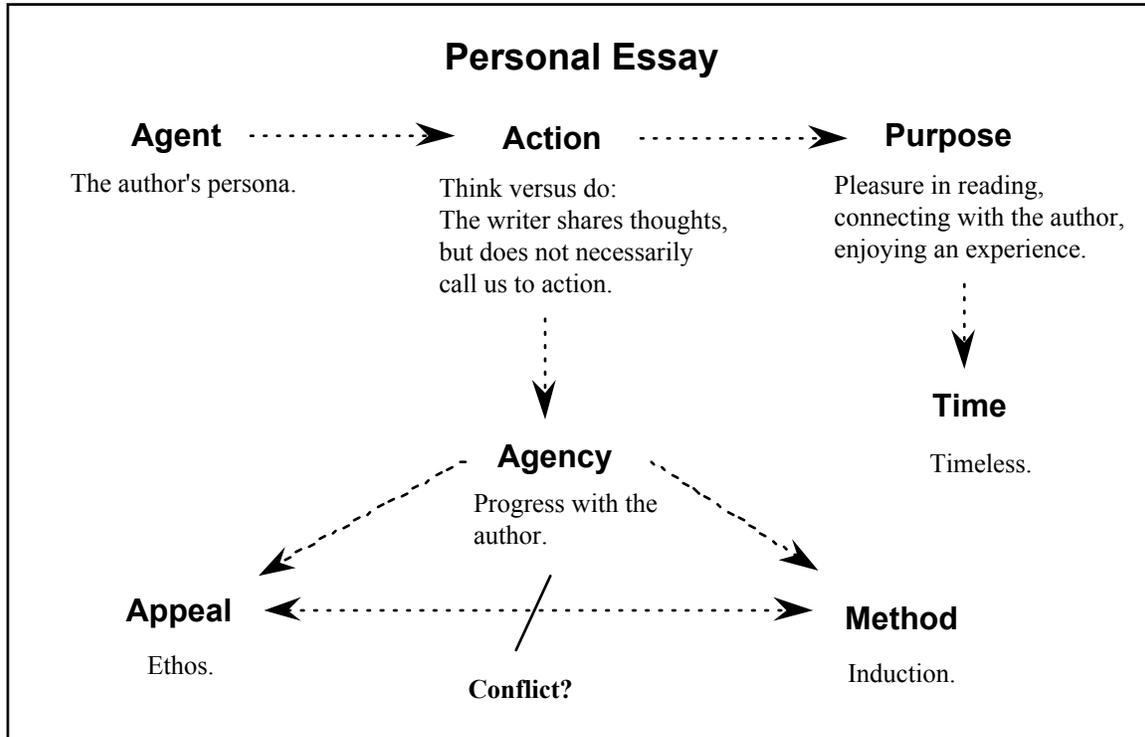


Fig I. Personal Essay.

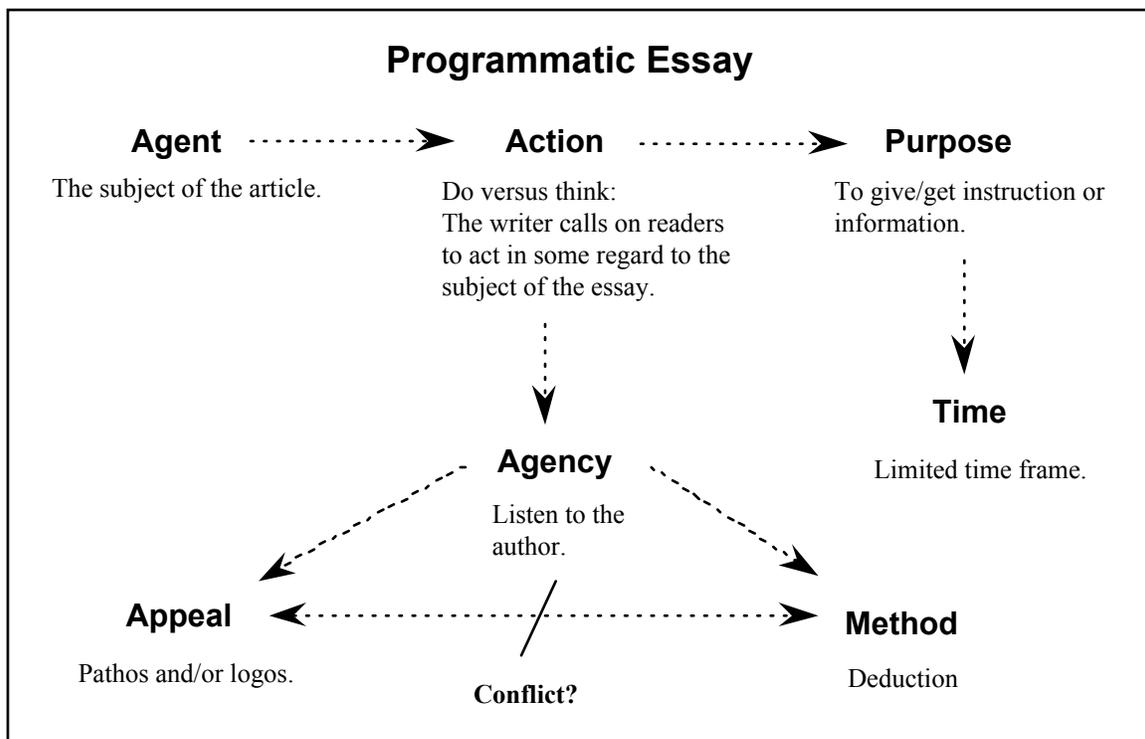


Fig. II. Programmatic Essay.

As Harris writes, personal essays

implicitly appeal to the reader's own experience and common sense not so much for validation as for an active response comparing the author's experiences and insights with the reader's own. But their most important quality is that they strongly suggest an authorial personality or character, or, more accurately, an undeniable persona. (936)

And it is the creation of an effective rhetorical persona that Harrell, Ware, and Linkugel argue is important to the effectiveness of any presidential apologia (241). So a defining characteristic of the personal essay fits one of the crucial components of political apologia.

Harris used Gordon Harvey's idea of presence as a cornerstone of his paradigm of the personal versus the programmatic essay. The term presence is useful, Harvey says, because we "can use it to mean a certain feeling in the reader, subjective but discussible, caused by something in the writing" (650). I think this "something" is the basis for "it" and has six manifestations, including: 1) Detectable motive--a reason for the writer to be writing, a "why an essay needs writing"; 2) Development by twists and turns--a "willingness to pursue" the topic in multiple directions; 3) Control of detail--a "careful choosing" of events and descriptions; 4) Intimacy by awareness--an assumption of shared knowledge; 5) Broadening experience--an implication of the larger issues; and 6) Judgments and reasons--a sense of caring about making more than simplistic statements of approval or disapproval (650-653). To varying degrees, all six of these somethings are present in the second apologia in a way they are not present in the first apologia. This difference will become clear, I hope, as I discuss the differences in the composition process toward

the end of this essay. For now, let us examine how these somethings fit the two speeches.

Campbell and Jamieson make it clear why Clinton would deliver these apologias. The Office of the Independent Counsel made formal accusations, and the House of Representatives were considering passing one or more Articles of Impeachment. Obviously, there were several other possible motives, even sub-motives, working here. But clearly, I think, Clinton's overriding motives were to answer his accusers, reform his actions, and transform his persona as fits the genre of apologia.

This something also includes the development of voice and of argument in a fashion unlike the programmatic essay. Presence, Harvey contends, is a

broader concept than 'voice,' which denotes those qualities of a formal prose style that keep it in touch with conversation, but which wouldn't necessarily be manifest in an essay's structural unfolding. The presence that is manifest in unfolding is what Montaigne refers to in saying, repeatedly, that in his *essais* he let his mind go freely its own way, since his aim is to reveal himself. (650)

While the two apologias share the first something--motive--they begin to diverge at this second something.

Clinton's remarks in the first apologia seem tightly controlled and void of any sense of exploration or wonder about where his remarks might lead himself or his audience. This control manifests itself in his heavy use of the tropes and schemes of power as I outlined earlier. Clinton shows no willingness to let his mind, or his audience, wander freely around the topic when, after denouncing the investigation against him, he declares: "This has gone on too long, cost too much, and hurt too many innocent people. Now this matter is

between me, the two people I love most--my wife and our daughter--and our God" (n.pag.). True to the organizational pattern of the genre, Clinton supports this statement with the assertion that the investigation found no wrongdoing on his part in the Whitewater affair so it moved on (wrongly as he would have us accept) to "my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation" (n.pag). Again, true to the genre, Clinton concludes by asking the American people and their elected representatives to get on with more important affairs, saying:

Now it is time--in fact, it is past time--to move on. We have important work to do--real opportunities to seize, real problems to solve, real security matters to face. And so, tonight, I ask you to turn away from the spectacle of the past seven months, to repair the fabric of our national discourse and to return our attention to all the challenges and all the promise of the next American century. (n.pag.)

This speech is programmatic in the sense that we the audience are clearly meant to listen to the speaker. These are instructions. We must do rather than think. Clinton is charging us to "move on" away from a "spectacle" in much the same way as the cliché of the police officer moving onlookers away from the scene of an accident with the old deception of: "Nothing to see here."

But in the second apologia, Clinton explores his topic more fully by asking questions of his own discourse and inviting his audience to follow him as he wanders along on his "journey" to find the "rock bottom truth of where I am." His twists and turns begin with his admission that he was

up rather late last night thinking about and praying about what I ought to say today. And rather unusual for me, I actually tried to write it down. So if you will forgive me, I will do my best to

say what it is I want to say to you--and I may have to take my glasses out to read my own writing. (n.pag.)

This journey across his hand-written pages takes his audience through several twists and turns quite unlike the strict, linear argument of the first apologia. Clinton says "genuine repentance" comes from a desire to "repair the breaches of my own making" and by courting a "broken spirit" that renounces the "pride and the anger which cloud judgment, lead people to excuse and compare and to blame and complain." Then, unlike the first apologia, Clinton encourages himself and his audience to wander freely over the subject by asking "what does all this mean for me and for us?" rather than telling us what it means. In the next lines he tempers his desire for a "vigorous defense" with a pledge that this defense should not "obscure the fact that I have done wrong." From here he wanders through two anecdotes about how various citizens have helped him wrestle with his repentance by offering "wise counsel." And it is here, calling attention to what others have done for him (rather than to him), that Clinton offers one of his few tropes of power, saying: "I am profoundly grateful for the support of so many Americans who somehow through it all seem to still know that I care about them a great deal, that I care about their problems and their dreams" (n.pag.). Just by using anecdotes, Clinton opens the door for his audience to wander in their own directions. While he clearly wants the audience to interpret his stories his way, an anecdote also leaves the audience free to critically question the moral of the story because the moral is suggested, not prescribed.

These two anecdotes--about a little boy in Florida who wants to be president and about a friend who gives him a liturgy book on repentance--also operate to manifest the third something of presence Harvey identified as "detail," the careful choosing of events. Clinton uses these anecdotes as part

of his transcendence mode of resolution; he is placing himself in a larger context with his use of detail. The anecdote about the little boy in Florida illustrates how Clinton would have his transgressions transcend from the ill-considered lusts of a middle-aged man to a lesson in "integrity" for America's youth. He claims:

The children of this country can learn in a profound way that integrity is important and selfishness is wrong, but God can change us and make us strong at the broken places. I want to embody those lessons for the children of this country--for that little boy in Florida who came up to me and said that he wanted to grow up and be President and to be just like me. (n.pag.)

The first apologia offers no anecdotes, no details of any kind that might be associated with narrative although it certainly follows a timeline; it moves from point A to point B. But it would have its audience move as a train moves: constrained by the tracks of its argument and compelled to go along a fixed route to a known conclusion--a call for his audience to turn away from "spectacle" in the first apologia as opposed to Clinton's wish for himself to become "an instrument of God's peace" in the second apologia.

Any time a president speaks there is always a manifestation of the awareness of the intimacy in shared knowledge, the fourth something of presence. Presidents embody our national ideals--all the shared knowledge and traits that define us as a nation. This is an imperfect embodiment to be sure as the current case so readily attests. This awareness manifests itself in the mythic terms presidents use to invoke national experience. When Clinton calls on the people in the first apologia to "seize" "real opportunities," to "solve" "real problems," and to "face" "real security matters," no matter what our individual politics we understand what he is talking about; we know to

what issues these words refer even if we do not agree on the courses of action. When Clinton asks us "to repair the fabric of our national discourse and to return our attention to all the challenges and all the promise of the next American century," we know what he means. The big difference in this something between the two speeches is that Clinton transcends the national to reach the spiritual. He uses far less nationalistic language in favor of religious language, yet we still know what he is talking about when he asks us (quoting the liturgy book given to him by the friend in the preceding anecdote) to turn "from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith" (n.pag.).

Clinton's religious language also plays into the fifth something of presence in that his language broadens, even universalizes, his experience from the concerns of one man to the concerns of the faithful. This fifth something of presence allows readers/listeners to go beyond the mere experience of a text and to go into its theory--a journey from the surface of things to the "why" of things. The text of the second apologia does not just "mean" that a man is apologizing for his behavior, it also "means" that mankind is sinful and the act of repentance of one is a reflection of the experience of all; the act of forgiveness by one is a reflection of grace for all. Clinton, almost Christ-like, asks for divine help to recover a "clean heart," to find the wisdom to "walk by faith and not sight" and for guidance to be "an instrument of God's peace." Such broadening hardly exists in the first apologia guided as it is by the programmatic paradigm. In this speech we are told, even commanded, what to think. In the latter we are cajoled, certainly, but Clinton's reliance on religious themes and language broaden his experience to something like another Fall of Man.

Finally, we find the sixth something of presence in Clinton's second apologia in his grounding of his argument in religious philosophy. He is not simply arguing right and wrong as he sees it, rather he is arguing right and wrong as prescribed by the long tradition of Judeo-Christian thought with all of its nuances, complexities, and contradictions. In this apologia Clinton juggles the judgments of his wrong-doing, his repentance, and his hope for forgiveness. He admits his first apologia was "not contrite enough" and that, contrary to the verbal gymnastics of his testimony before the grand jury, there is no "fancy way to say that I have sinned." He admits "the sorrow [he feels] is genuine." He hopes to manifest the "broken spirit" of the truly repentant. Two passages are particularly telling in regard to the sixth something. In each, he asserts himself in a way similar to the first apologia, but then he undercuts the assertion, complicates it, by calling attention to his former behavior. He says in his own defense of the charges before the House of Representatives: "...I will instruct my lawyers to mount a vigorous defense, using all available appropriate arguments. But legal language must not obscure the fact that I have done wrong" (n.pag.). In the following paragraph, he pledges to "intensify" his "efforts to lead our country and the world toward peace and freedom...in the hope that with a broken spirit...I can be used for greater good, for we have many blessings and many challenges and so much work to do" (n.pag.).

When Clinton makes such assertions in the first apologia they carry the weight of prescription. He asserts that he has "real and serious concerns" about the Starr investigation and damns its move from the Whitewater affair into his personal life with an enthymeme that leaves no doubt about his judgment of the matter:

I had real and serious concerns about an independent counsel investigation that began with private business dealings 20 years ago--dealings, I might add, about which an independent federal agency found no evidence of any wrongdoing by me or my wife over two years ago. The independent counsel investigation moved on to my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation. (n.pag.)

In this first apologia, Clinton is a man under attack. His judgments are black-and-white, right-and-wrong. He admits no room for alternate opinions and will consider none. What statements of contrition he makes are separate from statements such as the one quoted above. In the second apologia, he tempers each of his judgments with contrite remarks.

All six of Harvey's somethings manifest themselves in Clinton's speech at the White House prayer breakfast. Is this the work of some clever speechwriter or policy aide cynically seeking what Koppel called a "new strategy" of remorse? I would argue personal essays cannot be manufactured by committee, and this speech manifests the presence, the "it," that makes the personal essay a unique and powerful form of written expression. I am not privileging the idea of a lone author unaffected by outside agents or the social/political contexts of history. Such a thing does not exist. I am not privileging the author god. Instead, I am suggesting that presence in the essay, indeed Clinton's presence in his second apologia, can only manifest itself by a single, complicated, conflicted person writing alone in an attempt to connect, to communicate, with an audience.

Much has been written on the typical composition process of presidential address. Since the beginning, presidents have relied on friends, aides, and finally, professional speechwriters to help them craft public address. In the

modern era, the White House employs a staff of writers to generate public addresses with the help of senior advisors and with the final approval of the chief executive. Clinton's first apologia was composed in a standard way. Todd S. Purdum, reporting for The New York Times, explains that the draft began in Clinton's "own backward-slanting handwriting" and was "annealed with the iron-willed anger of his wife." Senior aides reported that Clinton "was determined to vent his frustration at what he sees as Kenneth Starr's unjustified investigation, an approach strongly seconded by the first lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, but by virtually none of the White House staff." Purdum reports that when policy advisors read the first draft they "exploded" and called it "full of mean words" and a "diatribe." A subsequent draft prepared by advisor Paul Begala "struck a softer, elegiac tone of regret." Thirty minutes before the address, debate continued about which draft to use. As Purdum reports:

On one side, Mrs. Clinton, adviser Sidney Blumenthal and lawyers Kantor and David Kendall wanted to make their point against Starr, a man they consider a zealot hell-bent on bringing Clinton down. Kendall didn't like any words of apology. On the other side, political advisers such as Robert Squier, Ann Lewis, Rahm Emanuel and Begala were urging Clinton to highlight the apology. (n.pag.)

The Begala draft was used to soften the Clintons' draft, but many of the attacks on the Starr investigation were left intact because "David Kendall and Mrs. Clinton pressed for a steelier tone." And so at 10:00 p.m. EST on 17 August 1998, Bill Clinton delivered his first apologia. Several others followed over the next thirty days, delivered to various political groups.

Most Americans know the story/myth of the composition of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, written on the back of an old envelope as he rode the

train to the dedication of the battlefield in the summer of 1863. Whether or not he was consciously tapping into the power of that American narrative only Bill Clinton can say, but, Lincoln-like, Clinton wrote his second apologia by hand, by himself, and refused to show it to his advisors or to the First Lady before delivering it.

Clinton refers to his composition process in the second paragraph of the speech after a short welcome to the assembled clergy. He says:

I may not be quite as easy with my words today as I have been in years past, and I was up rather late last night thinking about and praying about what I ought to say today. And rather unusual for me, I actually tried to write it down. So if you will forgive me, I will do my best to say what it is I want to say to you -- and I may have to take my glasses out to read my own writing.

Mike McCurry, the president's press secretary, confirmed this at a press conference later that day, saying Clinton "worked on [his speech] until early this morning--I don't know how late. But he wrote it out himself on three pages of White House note paper." In answer to a question about who may have seen his remarks prior to the prayer breakfast, McCurry says: "He did not discuss with anyone on the staff before he made [his speech]" (n.pag.).

There are textual clues that Clinton composed this speech by hand, late at night, and without the help of his advisors. While the speech is powerful in its use of religious language and imagery, it lacks the polished tone, the smooth syntax, of a well-worked presidential address in which speechwriters craft sound bites and bits of rhetoric meant for the ages. In the narrative of the little boy who wants to be president there is a good example of meaning breaking-down because of a vague pronoun reference in an obvious stab at

making a profound statement. I quoted part of the selection above, but here is the entire paragraph:

The children of this country can learn in a profound way that integrity is important and selfishness is wrong, but God can change us and make us strong at the broken places. I want to embody those lessons for the children of this country--for that little boy in Florida who came up to me and said that he wanted to grow up and be President and to be just like me. I want the parents of all the children in America to be able to say that to their children.

Say what to their children? What is this "that" Clinton refers to? Are parents supposed to tell their children that the president embodies integrity? Are they supposed to tell their children they themselves embody integrity or they, the parents, do? Are they supposed to tell their children to be like Bill Clinton? The point is simply this: no competent speechwriter would have left that last sentence unedited. But a man writing on three sheets of note paper alone in the middle of the night did.

Such slips as this give the second apologia a human touch, much like the minor variations in a hand-ground grill of a Rolls Royce give that luxury car a crafted, human feel. Machines grind grills perfectly. Men grind grills beautifully. And there is a very big difference. Unlike his first apologia, Clinton's second apologia does not show the characteristics of machine perfection achieved by the painstaking editing and content revision of a staff of speechwriters and policy aides. Instead, it shows the minor imperfections of a lone man making a stab at profundity. This is the "it" of personal writing that connects with the audience and makes the rhetoric work.

Effective political rhetoric happens when the personal intrudes on the programmatic. I think this holds especially true for the apologia. A strict programmatic approach, and composition by committee, leads to the kind of rhetoric of Clinton's first apologia: strident, power-enforcing, linear, and rigid. This is a politician telling us how it is. But when the personal intrudes on the programmatic, when the writer writes alone, "it" works.

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