

APPROPRIATING LIFE-HISTORY THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING:
ANDRÉ GORZ'S THE TRAITOR, A DIALECTICAL INQUIRY INTO THE SELF

by

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Appropriating Life-History through Autobiographical Writing:

André Gorz's The Traitor, a Dialectical Inquiry into the Self

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ABSTRACT

The autobiographical preoccupation in contemporary Western bourgeois culture attests to mass society's threat to the individual, but can also constitute a challenge to this repression of selfhood. In a society that increasingly homogenizes, instrumentalizes, and thus eradicates selves, the autobiographical act provides, unless it isolates and fetishizes the subjective factor (narcissism) or the linguistic, textual moment (structuralism and post-structuralism), an arena for a concrete social critique, in which the negated self can appropriate (life-)history and thereby make a first step toward coming to consciousness of itself as a potential subject. This work within the subject-object dialectic, firmly grounding the autobiographical author in the living continuum of history, is a work of remembrance: contravening reification and ahistoricity, it is subversive of all that which imposes anonymity and alienation and which thus prevents self-identity.

The contemporary literary production in which this problem of non-identity is dramatized most unequivocally on both a theoretical and a life-historical level is André Gorz's autobiographical essay The Traitor. Triggered by his profoundly disturbing experience of his own non-existence as a concrete human being, Gorz's autobiographical attempt to constitute himself evinces two dialectical movements. Revealing its author's broken subjectivity as a manifestation of objective reality, The Traitor unmaskes how the principle of exchange--the

rule of the universal (money) over the particulars (commodities)--underlies the central issues of Gorz's becoming, that is, his complex of non-identification, his desire to be Other, and his glorification of the mind and of will power at the expense of the body and of emotions. This dialectic is developed both in the form of the essay--subjective, life-historical and objective, theoretical knowledge bouncing off against each other--and in the oscillation between first and third person singular narratives. Towards the end of his autobiographical act of self-help--which, in strictly psychoanalytical terms, cannot be called therapeutic--Gorz is able confidently and unambiguously to say "I": self-critically negating his negation, he lays the foundations for leading a more self-identical life.

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I. Appropriating (Life-)History through Autobiographical Writing: Alienation, Narcissism, and the Individual in Contemporary Mass Culture

Introduction

"There is an entire mode of culture which is distinctly autobiographical; autobiography is a manner of presenting, understanding, and experiencing oneself. It enters into and shapes discourse, behavior, self perception, and political activity."
(Rockwell Gray)

"The 'flight into inwardness' and the insistence on a private sphere may well serve as bulwarks against a society which administers all dimensions of human existence. Inwardness and subjectivity may well become the inner and outer space for the subversion of experience...." (Herbert Marcuse)

Herbert Marcuse's programmatic proposition as to the role of the individual in contemporary mass society¹ not only trenchantly outlines the potential for subjectivity to develop, in the face of its current obliteration, a multi-dimensional critique of a one-dimensional world, but it also addresses, on a more general level, the present ubiquitous autobiographical

¹ Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 38. The motto by Rockwell Gray is from his essay "Autobiography Now," Kenyon Review, 4, 1 (1982), 33.

impulse of Western culture, a culture in which, as Rockwell Gray contends, "autobiography appears all around us".² By allusively calling his study "Autobiography Now," Gray establishes a link between the current surge of first person testimonies and the mass fascination with and propagation of an apocalyptic vision in "an age of diminishing expectations," to quote the subtitle of a recent best-seller.³ The preoccupation with the self can be looked at as a reaction to a more and more widely diffused feeling that the days of the individual person are numbered:

² Gray, 31. The current omnipresence of autobiographical expressions in Western middle-class culture is accompanied by a rapidly growing academic interest in forms of self-literature. Apart from Gray's essay, the studies most pertinent to an understanding of the scope and raison d'être of the contemporary autobiographical boom are: Michael Rutschky, Erfahrungshunger: Ein Essay über die siebziger Jahre (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1980); Hans Rudolf Picard, Autobiographie im zeitgenössischen Frankreich: Existentielle Reflexion und literarische Gestaltung (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1978); Sylvia Schwab, Autobiographik und Lebenserfahrung: Versuch einer Typologie deutschsprachiger autobiographischer Schriften zwischen 1965 und 1975 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1981); Philippe Lejeune, Je est un autre: L'autobiographie, de la littérature aux médias (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980); Edmond Marc, "Le récit de vie ou la culture vivante," Le français dans le monde, No. 181 (Nov-Dec 1983), 72-83; "Récits de vie," two special issues of Revue des Sciences Humaines, Nos. 191 and 192 (July-Sept/Oct-Dec 1983); Juliette Raabe, "Le marché du vécu," in Individualisme et autobiographie en occident, eds. Claudette Delhez-Sarlet and Maurizio Catani (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1983), pp. 235-48; Francis Russell Hart, "History Talking to Itself: Public Personality in Recent Memoir," New Literary History, 11, 1 (Autumn 1979), 193-210. For further references, see also notes 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 25, 29, 30, 39, and 41.

³ Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: Warner Books, 1979). Contemporary apocalyptic literature is also examined in Michael Rutschky, "Katastrophen-Literatur--die neueste Tendenz?," Neue Rundschau, 88, 4 (1977), 619-628.

people increasingly experience themselves to be powerless before anonymous, impenetrable, and virtually omnipotent bureaucratized corporations, institutions, and agencies and, at the same time, are rendered more and more superfluous by the rapidly advancing automation and robotization of the sphere of work. This dehumanization of the modern world is aptly epitomized by the fact that "TIME's Man of the Year for 1982, the greatest influence for good or evil, is not a man at all. It is a machine: the computer."⁴ A computer, however, does not have a mind of its own and will therefore not be able to write its autobiography; thus, in order to secure their residual individuality, their otherness, from being systematized, uniformized, and subsumed under the ruling computerization and standardization of their environment and their life experiences, the "outcasts of the rationality of our daily business"⁵ can resort to expressing themselves autobiographically. In this sense, producing and making public autobiographical accounts⁶

⁴ Otto Friedrich, "The Computer Moves In," Time, 3 January 1983, 10.

⁵ Hans Jürgen Syberberg, Die freudlose Gesellschaft: Notizen aus dem letzten Jahr (München: Hanser, 1981), author's text on backcover (my translation).

⁶ The definitional dilemma of current research into autobiographical writing is succinctly summarized by Avrom Fleishman who, having surveyed the existing body of criticism, comes to the conclusion that "there are no agreed upon norms for a genre of autobiography" (Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983], p. 35). Rather than adding to this literature yet another prescriptive and thus confining description of what a "real" or "true" autobiography is, I will keep the frame of reference broad and flexible by using the terms "autobiographical writing" and "autobiographical

can always also be an act of resistance and self-defense against mass culture, a strategy of survival, a reaching out to others, and, by implication, a suggestion of a different world than that which is: if autobiography has indeed become the modus vivandi and operandi in Western culture, then this phenomenon both attests to the threat to the individual provoked by the terms post-industrial society imposes upon the self and can also constitute a powerful challenge to this repression of selfhood.

This all-pervasive and compulsive preoccupation with the legitimization of the self is also recognized by Richard Sennett as the predominant trait of the modern Western world. In his investigation into "the social psychology of capitalism," he calls attention to the inflated and exploited obsession with narcissistic self-absorption in North-American culture, a culture in which intimacy is treated as "a market exchange of self-revelations".⁷ Thus, by applying the vocabulary of economics to the field of human discourse, Sennett conjoins the constitutive element of modern societies, the exchange principle, with the prevailing hunger and taste for

self-disclosure: autobiography is both an economic and a psychic

⁶(cont'd) literature," the constitutive element of which is the--at least intended--identity of author and narrator or protagonist. The objective of this essay, therefore, is not to delineate the difference between various specific forms of autobiographical literature (e.g. diary, letter, essay, memoir, or novel), but instead to elucidate the dangers and the possibilities of the general surge of interest in self-writing prevailing in our culture.

⁷ Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 10.

commodity. The production, distribution, and consumption of self-expression, however, dominates not only the current moment but is, as Michael Theunissen maintains, endemic to what has become known as the culture of modernism: "Fundamentally and all in all modernism is the ideology of self-realization."⁸

Similarly, the literary historian William C. Spengemann suggests that "the modernist movement away from representational discourse toward self-enacting, self-reflexive verbal structures and the critical theories that have been devised to explain this movement conspire to make the very idea of literary modernism seem synonymous with that of autobiography."⁹ The massive contemporary absorption in the self and its history indicates, though, that "the autobiographical virus"¹⁰ has spread far beyond the strictly literary realm and now pervades what Sennett

⁸ Michael Theunissen, Selbstverwirklichung und Allgemeinheit: Zur Kritik des gegenwärtigen Bewusstseins (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1982), pp. 1-2 (my translation).

⁹ William C. Spengemann, The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre (New Haven/London: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), p. xiii. In an afterword to his study, Spengemann similarly writes: "To call any modernist work 'autobiographical' is merely to utter a tautology" (p. 168). It seems necessary here to point out that both Theunissen and Spengemann refer to the culture of modernism as that culture which, between 1800 and 1850, gave rise, mainly in Western Europe, to a new state of awareness which equated artistic creations with self-creations. This culture of modernism informed the literary productions of, for example, a Proust, a Kafka, a T. S. Eliot, or a W. C. Williams.

¹⁰ Morris Dickstein, "The Autobiography Bug," Harper's, June 1980, 81.

calls "an intimate vision of society"¹¹ where everything outside the individual is referred to the self or, rather, where the world as Other does not exist any more and is merely an extension or even only a mirror of the self. As a result of this narcissistic monopolization of the world, the boundaries between public and private life have, if not collapsed, then at least been blurred to such an extent that subjectivity, rather than being a means to explore the objective outside world, has become an end in itself due to the lack of what might be called a dialectical counterpart. In this one-dimensional marketplace narcissistic egos self-indulgently and (self-)voyeuristically produce and consume their life histories while at the same time losing sight of their traditional occasion, that is, the world and its history. Where there used to be confrontation with the world, there is now self-referential superimposition: the public domain has increasingly been subsumed under the rule of the private.

This "fall of public man" and the synchronous dissemination of the "autobiography bug," however, have not been restricted to North-America. The phenomenon is equally noticeable in Occidental Europe and particularly in the Federal Republic of Germany where, after a brief spell in the mid-1960's of an intense concern with authentic source material resulting in an upsurge of "straightforward" reportage and documentary literature, this preoccupation with "objective" writing was

¹¹ Sennett, p. 5. See also pp. 6-12 and pp. 337-340.

disowned again and the subjective approach, variously termed "Tendenzwende" (change in tendency), "New Sensibility," "New Interiority," or "New Subjectivity" was rediscovered.¹² After a pronounced politicization and the proclamation of the death of bourgeois literature,¹³ a process of reorientation took place during which the "I" was urged to step out of the words again¹⁴ and previously highly suspect and shunned concepts such as "self" and "interiority" became once more presentable and tolerable and were, in fact, reconverted into indispensable epistemological categories. This development was, of course, gloatingly hailed by the conservative intelligentsia and

¹² See, e. g., Hans-Gerhard Winter, "Von der Dokumentarliteratur zur 'Neuen Subjektivität': Anmerkungen zur westdeutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre," Seminar, 7, 2 (May 1981), 95-113; Michael Schneider, "Von der alten Radikalität zur neuen Sensibilität: Tendenziöses zur sogenannten Tendenzwende," in Den Kopf verkehrt aufgesetzt oder Die melancholische Linke (Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981), pp. 142-165; Peter Beicken, "'Neue Subjektivität': Zur Prosa der siebziger Jahre," in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, eds. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), pp. 164-81; Bernd Neumann, "Die Wiedergeburt des Erzählens aus dem Geist der Autobiographie?," Basis: Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur, 9 (1979), 91-121; Evelyne Keitel, "Verständigungstexte--Form, Funktion, Wirkung," German Quarterly, 56, 3 (May 1983), 431-455; Leslie Adelson, "Subjectivity Reconsidered: Botho Strauss and Contemporary West German Prose," New German Critique, No 30 (Fall 1983), 3-59; Reinhard Baumgart, "Dem Leben hinterhergeschrieben," Die Zeit, 12 October 1984, 20 (overseas edition); Theo Buck, "Die Rückkehr des Individuums in der Literatur des letzten Jahrzehnts," in Literatur und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Neue Tendenzen der Gegenwartsliteratur (Bonn-Bad Godesberg: DAAD, 1979), pp. 41-63.

¹³ See, e. g., Kursbuch, No. 15 (Nov 1968).

¹⁴ Hans Christoph Buch, Das Hervortreten des Ichs aus den Wörtern: Aufsätze zur Literatur (München/Wien: Hanser, 1978).

exploited by the culture industry and, at the same time, sternly condemned by the rigid orthodox Left.¹⁵ Professional controversies by culture critics aside, however, it must be realized that this absolution of the subject and the emergence of a new sensibility have, in Western culture in general, entered into almost every expression of daily life and have thus not been confined to the printed page, although they have been most saliently and lastingly documented in autobiographical writings. The urgent autobiographical need and anxiety have been prompted by a desire to articulate "social gemeinschaften of experience"¹⁶ and new forms and purposes in life which are opposed to the growing anonymity, meaningless, and powerlessness as well as to the increasing ideologization and scientification of experience: "The more technocrats force people in all fields into pseudo objectifications, the more emphatically ideologies are polarizing themselves, the more subjective literature will be."¹⁷ It is, therefore, not surprising that autobiographical writing--the paradigm of

¹⁵ For a conservative response, see, e. g., Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Anmerkungen zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre," in Entgegnungen: Zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre (Stuttgart: DVA, 1981), pp. 17-35. For a discussion of Left responses, see, e. g., Michael Schneider, "Die Linke und die Neue Sensibilität," in Die lange Wut zum langen Marsch: Aufsätze zur sozialistischen Politik und Literatur (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1975), pp. 304-329.

¹⁶ Peter Sloterdijk, Literatur und Organisation von Lebenserfahrung: Autobiographien der Zwanziger Jahre (München: Hanser, 1978), p. 7 (my translation).

¹⁷ Peter Härtling, quoted in Anon., "Endlich ich sagen," Spiegel, 19 March 1973, 161 (my translation).

bourgeois literature since it constitutes the "subjective center of the esthetic organization of life-historical knowledge"¹⁸ --has become the major form of what Peter Sloterdijk calls a "literature debating our forms of living".¹⁹

Working through real human conflicts and experiences, this literature provides a forum for a concrete social critique in and of an "emotionally crippled culture where there exist no forms of public lament, where people must banish their pain into cancer, madness, addiction".²⁰ In this sense, the sharp increase in the production and consumption of socially critical autobiographical writings in the last ten to fifteen years attests to the urgent need--particularly on the part of those social groups and individuals "whose thoughts and experience," as Rockwell Gray puts it, have had "little or no entry into the precincts of literary and historical scholarship"²¹ and of the public formation and exchange of opinion in general--to rethink and redefine one's position in relation to the world and to understand the objective obstacles that have so far prevented one from establishing oneself as a subject. The Suhrkamp

¹⁸ Sloterdijk, pp. 5-6 (my translation).

¹⁹ Sloterdijk, p. 7 (my translation of "Literatur der Lebensformdebatte").

²⁰ Karin Struck, Kindheits Ende: Journal einer Krise (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), p. 548 (my translation).

²¹ Rockwell Gray, "Autobiography in Theory," Salmagundi, Nos. 52-53 (Spring-Summer 1981), 177. See also Robert F. Sayre, "The Proper Study--Autobiographies in American Studies," American Quarterly, 29, 3 (1977), 257.

Publishers (Frankfurt/M) have, for example, started a whole series of what has been coined "Verständigungstexte" (a term that stresses the dialogical intent of this kind of literature)²² by men, women, parents, teachers and students, psychiatric patients, prisoners, and drug addicts. Similarly in the United States a multitude of first person accounts has come out of the Black and the women's movements.²³ This self-assessment, this organization of one's life experiences, is motivated by a deep

²² So far, eleven volumes of these "communicative texts" have been published by the Suhrkamp Press (Frankfurt): Frauen, die pfeifen, eds. Ruth Geiger et al (1979); Männersachen, ed. Hans-Ulrich Müller-Schwefe (1979); Innen-Welt, ed. Kurt Kreiler (1979); In irrer Gesellschaft, eds. Kurt Kreiler et al (1980); "Plötzlich brach der Schulrat in Tränen aus", ed. Ulrich Zimmermann et al (1980); Der Ernst des Lebens, eds. Ruth Geiger et al (1981); Komm, schwarzer Panther, lach noch mal, eds. Rudolf Müller-Schwefe et al (1981); Nachwehen, ed. Michael Klaus (1982); Liebesgeschichten, eds. Christel Göbelsmann et al (1982); Ansprüche, ed. Eva-Maria Alves (1983); Andere Verhältnisse, ed. Jens Michelsen (1984). For a concise statement on the communicative purpose of these texts, see Peter Sloterdijk, quoted in Männersachen (p. 212). However, the term "Verständigungstext" can be applied not only to these volumes but also to a host of other texts, such as Peter Schneider's Lenz, Verena Stefan's Häutungen, Bernward Vesper's Die Reise, and Fritz Zorn's Mars. For an extremely helpful discussion of this literature, see Evelyn Keitel's essay in German Quarterly.

²³ See, for example: Alex Haley, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Random House, 1965); Eldridge Cleaver, Soul on Ice (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); Julius Lester, Search for the New Land: History as Subjective Experience (New York: Dial Press, 1969); George Jackson, Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970); Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (New York: Random House, 1970); Ingrid Bengis, Combat in the Erogenous Zone (New York: Knopf, 1972); Jill Johnston, Lesbian Nation (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); Kate Millett, Flying (New York: Knopf, 1974) and Sita (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); Maryse Holder, Give Sorrow Words (New York: Grove Press, 1979); Michelle Cliff, Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise (Watertown: Persephone Press, 1980).

dissatisfaction with the official, administered way of life. Therefore the socially critical self-reflexive autobiographical act constitutes both a rejection of the names the world has given one and an affirmation of the right to find one's own name and to speak it; it is thus especially suited to the needs of people who suffer from public discrimination. Rescuing the "forgotten peoples of the world from historical oblivion"²⁴ and making them more visible, this literature serves as a vehicle for its authors to come to an understanding of their historical and political situation in a predominantly oppressive, hostile, and hence intolerable world. Just as the Black slaves in the United States had, first of all, to "seize the word"²⁵ in order to be able to define their selfhood and ultimately to create a distinctly Black public self, today women and oppressed people in general must "seize the word," find a language that adequately expresses their experiences, and establish their own channels of communication; in short, it appears they must raise their voices in public and assume responsibility for their lives in order to negate and struggle against their socially imposed anonymity and depersonalization. Thus selfhood, the concept and

²⁴ Rockwell Gray, "Autobiography in Theory," 177.

²⁵ Houston A. Baker, "The Problem of Being: Some Reflections on Black Autobiography," Obsidian, 1, 1 (1975), 21. Black autobiographies have traditionally been documents of and about self-help (see, e. g., John W. Blassingame, "Black Autobiographies as History and Literature," The Black Scholar, 5, 4 [Dec 1973-Jan 1974], 2-9, and Stephen Butterfield, Black Autobiography in America [Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1974]).

experience (or non-experience) of identity--characterized by a sense of autonomy and continuity--is at issue.

Alienation, Narcissism, and Autobiographical Expressions

Two hundred years after the rise of the bourgeois individual, the central eighteenth-century doctrines of human rationality and progress are met not only with distrust and wariness, but with reprobation. The modern experience of mass culture and mass annihilation unmasks the enlightenment concept of self-determination as an ideological chimera and throws the lie in the face of anthropocentrism. The human being is not the ultimate gauge of all things any more: "I like to think I occupy the center, but nothing is less certain,"²⁶ Beckett's unnamable muses on behalf of the modern anonymous, decentered, and disenlightened residues of individuality. The dehumanization of the contemporary world is conspicuously and signally exemplified by the recent development of neutron bombs aimed at effacing humanity while leaving the world of things unscarred.²⁷ The declaration of human rights has been converted into a declaration of the rights of things. This undisguised manifestation of species alienation, however, is but the ultimate and most glaring expression of a far more comprehensive

²⁶ Samuel Beckett, "The Unnamable," Three Novels (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 295.

²⁷ See, for instance, San Francisco Examiner, 10 July 1977, 1.

estrangement, an estrangement that bears upon all aspects of life.²⁸ Alienated from their work, from themselves, and from the world, human beings have lost their traditional sense of identity: the modern experience is that of non-identity.

It is exactly this loss or, rather, thwarting of a sense of identity as well as the correlative state of non-identity that is being dramatized and rejected in contemporary, socially critical self-reflexive autobiographical writing. Yet the predominant feeling and critique of a lack of coherence and meaning in life is not only the subject matter of this literature but also its underlying motivation²⁹ : an acute awareness and experience of alienation impels one to write autobiographically and to explore one's life-history in the express hope of uncovering the history and thus the causes of one's estrangement and of overcoming them by working them through. In this sense, catching up with one's past means at the same time registering a protest against an administered life and

²⁸ In his early manuscripts of 1844, Marx propounds a fourfold concept of alienation under capitalism according to which workers are alienated from their means of production, their product, themselves, and ultimately also from their species-being. While specifically referring to workers, these four categories of alienation also describe, on a more abstract and comprehensive level, the general mental state and spiritual condition of bourgeois capitalist society.

²⁹ For a relatively early articulation of the motivation behind the modern autobiographical impulse, see Alan Pryce-Jones' essay "The Personal Story" (in The Craft of Letters in England, ed. John Lehmann [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957], pp. 26-43). Pryce-Jones argues that writers, having lost faith in their art and thus themselves, have only one thing left to do, namely "to write about that loss--in other words to write autobiographically" (p. 35).

an aborted identity: "Where the growing or even only 'inherited' self-confidence of the individual comes into conflict with a more and more intensifying experience of powerlessness, dependence, and self-estrangement ... autobiography can become a document of denied autonomy, of never-experienced freedom, of prevented socialization."³⁰

In their struggle against alienation, however, the authors of such negative Bildungsromane³¹ run the risk of falling into the trap of the "intimate society". To come of age and thus to surmount the estrangement from the self and ultimately also from the world, and to build up a strong identity can be attempted narcissistically by redirecting one's libido away from the alienating outer world to the alienated and already weakened self. Wanting to counteract nothingness, wanting to recenter the self and to become the measure of all things again, the estranged individual can easily overshoot the mark, as it were, and turn into a narcissist by becoming exclusively and pathologically preoccupied with "'what this person, that event means to me'."³² Where there was once no meaningful connection between the self and the world, there is now nothing but a congruity in meaning of the two terms (or, at the very least, a profound and absorbing anxiety about their correspondence);

³⁰ Ralph-Rainer Wuthenow, Das erinnerte Ich: Europäische Autobiographie und Selbstdarstellung im 18. Jahrhundert (München: C.H. Beck, 1974), p. 214 (my translation).

³¹ Bernd Neumann, 101.

³² Richard Sennett, p. 8.

where there was once estrangement, separation, and non-identity, there is now intimacy, integration, and identity. In this closed circuit of narcissism where the world and the self have become one, the individual therefore suffers a similar loss of contact with external reality as in the world of alienation. As Arnold Hauser explains, the two are, in fact, products of the same social environment, namely the capitalistic exchange society: "Looked at historically, narcissism is an expression of the same spiritual crisis, the same sense of helplessness and abandonment, of being thrown back on oneself, as is alienation"

33.

Since "alienation precedes narcissism and determines it unilaterally,"³⁴ the prevailing narcissistic proclivity in today's culture in general and in its autobiographical expressions in particular must be seen against the backdrop of contemporary experiences of meaningless, powerlessness, and estrangement. The narcissistic impulse thus arises out of a concrete historical context; narcissism is a historical phenomenon with specific historical features and must not be ontologized. To neglect the etiology of narcissism means to fall under the sway of its very forces which are those of alienation:

³³ Arnold Hauser, Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 116.

³⁴ Hauser, p. 116.

the culture of narcissism is the culture of alienation.³⁵ Narcissism, therefore, is a surface defense mechanism of a severely crippled ego, which does not challenge, let alone alter, the underlying social forces that engendered it but instead reproduces them. The privatization of the public realm, the assignment of personal attributes to everything outside the individual, in other words, the undialectical repossession of history in merely subjective terms, does not produce "strong self-love" but rather "injury to the self"³⁶ and impoverishes the alienated subject even further. The survival strategy in narcissism does not deflate alienation; instead it inflates it because "the identity of everything with everything else is paid for in that nothing may at the same time be identical with itself."³⁷

This "appropriation" of objective reality by subjectivity, however, does not only perpetuate and, in fact, increase one's self-estrangement, but it also makes permanent one's estrangement from the world. Just as the depersonalization of the world mobilizes the privatization and fetishization of the self, the reverse holds true as well. The narcissistic envelopment of outer reality, intended to put meaning and life

³⁵ For a detailed discussion, see Chapter 7 and particularly Chapter 8 of Hauser's treatise.

³⁶ Richard Sennett, p. 324.

³⁷ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 12.

back into an alienating and inanimate universe, smothers the possibility for the individual to become activated and vitalized by the social world. The private non-identical self now being its own sole point of reference, the public realm is deprived of its otherness, divested of its identity, and thereby liquidated: "In a mockery of all the hopes of philosophy, subject and object have attained ultimate reconciliation."³⁸

This undialectical immanence of consciousness, this glorification of unmediated subjectivity, is the new panacea. In an age in which the traditional outer supports of morality and science have disintegrated (Nietzsche's Umwertung aller Werte, the mass annihilation of two world wars, and Einstein's theory of relativity as well as the more recent ecological findings in the wake of the realization of the growth limitations of Western capitalism and the increasing threat of global nuclear extinction have to be considered), a vast number of people seems to feel that their selves are the last comparatively stable and dependable sanctuaries where they can seek refuge from the surrounding hostile and constantly changing fields of force. Here again we see the contemporary omnipresence of autobiographical expressions.³⁹ The kindling of the narcissistic hope of the importance of the self therefore relates directly to

³⁸ Theodor Adorno, "Society," trans. F.R. Jameson, Salmagundi, Nos. 10-11 (Fall 1969-Winter 1970), 152.

³⁹ See, e. g., Szavai János, "La place et le rôle de l'autobiographie dans la littérature," Acta Litteraria, 18 (1976), 398 and 405-6.

the profound despair over its experienced insignificance; it is, in the words of Rockwell Gray, "a tacit admission of powerlessness, for one turns everything into personal history only when one fears that some larger collective history has no place for one."⁴⁰ The more the individual becomes instrumentalized and reduced to an anonymous function of the totality of mass society, the more its narcissistic urge to create a distinctive personal image of itself gains the upper hand.

Representing a temporary way of coping with (as opposed to working toward solving) the painful problems of modern depersonalization, but ultimately not interfering with the status quo and thus affirming and stabilizing it since a one-dimensional world cannot be contradicted in a one-dimensional fashion, the massive narcissistic need for self-validation and self-enlightenment diverts the attention away from social issues to psychological ones. This need for self-definition is cleverly marketed by those interested in anything but a critical understanding of the self's position in an inimical exchange society. For today's awareness industry,⁴¹ the autobiographically prepossessed, asocial, weak, and estranged self has literally become "precious capital that ought

⁴⁰ Rockwell Gray, "Autobiography Now," 32.

⁴¹ See, e. g., Edwin Schur, The Awareness Trap: Self-Absorption Instead of Social Change (New York: Quadrangle, 1976); Peter Marin, "The New Narcissism," Harper's, October 1975, 45-56; Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, passim.

not disappear".⁴² The ideology of unmediated subjectivity, according to which life can only change as a result of inner change, obfuscates the dialectical link between the possibility of self-realization and the necessity to overcome the world of alienation. Here social discontent, a critique of civilization, which is the root of narcissistic preoccupations with, and anxieties about the self and its biography, is converted into personal inadequacy and a critique of the monadic individual. The self being divested of its social character, the concern with the objective substance of alienation recedes while at the same time that with subjective methods for neutralizing and coping with its effects comes to the fore. In his scathing exposure of the contemporary "awareness trap," Edwin Schur decries these idealist and culturally affirmative techniques of interiorization and the extreme "moral relativism" of one-dimensional self-absorption which erode social and historical consciousness and knowledge: ignoring life's "sociocultural content and its variations" amounts to slighting "almost all that is truly distinctive of humans."⁴³

⁴² Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," trans. James Olney, in Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), p. 29.

⁴³ Edwin Schur, p. 88.

Alienation, Structuralism, and Autobiographical Expressions

Whereas this general dehumanization and the relativization and overall suppression of history are the unintended results of the narcissistic cult of the self, they are, however, expressly embraced by a school of culture critics who, diametrically opposed to the narcissistic elevation of the individual, make the disappearance of the subject and thus ultimately the impossibility of autobiography their program: the structuralist camp and its heirs. Although what has come to be referred to as structuralism has no absolute ideological homogeneity, it is still possible to determine some basic affinities of consciousness which inform its various projects. Hence structuralist cultural criticism is chiefly concerned with the abolition of dialectics in favor of positivist thought, the abolition of the individual in favor of systems and structures, and the abolition of the continuity of historical time in favor of the succession of moments in history. It becomes obvious that this frontal attack on the historical subject and on historicity represents a candid and provocative challenge not only to humanism in general but also, more specifically, to its paradigmatic expression--socially critical self-reflexive autobiographical writing.

This assault on humanistic autobiography has been launched most conspicuously and aggressively by critics like Michael Sprinker who, in fashionable apocalyptic style, boldly announces

"the end of autobiography,"⁴⁴ or by Alain Finkielkraut who indulges in the reverie of "purifying discourse of all forms of addressing the other" and brazenly posits that "no utterance holds the power to imprison signification" and that "the impossible project, vivre pour soi dans l'écriture, determines the primary autobiographical activity".⁴⁵ In Finkielkraut's solipsistic--and alienated and narcissistic--literary-linguistic universe in which moral criticism is considered redundant and estrangement is reduced to a mere ideological construct rather than seen as a concrete experience in everyday life⁴⁶, there is no room for either historical meaning or dialectical thought. Just as the alienated and narcissistic character, by eliminating the otherness of external reality, withdraws from the worlds of morality and history and settles down into the--ideological--unmediated self, Finkielkraut strives to liquidate the historical/moral meaning as well as the communicative aspect of verbal human intercourse and to inhabit a world devoid of contradiction, negation, and dialectics: there is only one dimension and it is that of affirmative thought. Craving for an orderly, systemic world view free of conflicts, which can prescriptively supplant the incertitudes, quandries,

⁴⁴ Michael Sprinker, "Fictions of the Self: The End of Autobiography," in Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, pp. 321-342.

⁴⁵ Alain Finkielkraut, "Desire in Autobiography," trans. Christie Vance, Genre, 6, 2 (June 1973), 223.

⁴⁶ See Finkielkraut, 221 and 229.

and disorder of historical reality, and applying the supposedly value-free categories of science and technics to thought and all aspects of life in general, structuralists endeavor to establish a scientific hegemony of thought. This totality is as inclusive and totalitarian as that of the narcissist yet the roles are reversed: whereas the narcissist sees everything in terms of the "subjective" self, the structuralist sees everything in terms of "objective" systems. Roland Barthes expresses this structuralist dream of unification and immunity against any internal dialectical movement thus: "We see culture more and more as a general system of symbols, governed by the same operations. There is unity in this symbolic field: culture, in all its aspects, is a language. Therefore it is possible to anticipate the creation of a single, unified science of culture, which will depend on diverse disciplines, all devoted to analyzing, on different levels of description, culture as language."⁴⁷

Not only is culture in general a language, according to the structuralist frame of reference, though, but the human being, the producer of culture, is also considered a verbal construct and deciphered as a text. The insistent and exclusive recourse to linguistic modes of investigation saturates these analyses: the disappropriation of the subject's identity by language, the

⁴⁷ Roland Barthes, "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?," trans. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, in The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1972), p. 136.

notion that the individual is a "textual, non-subjective 'I',"⁴⁸ appears again and again in the writings of, for example, Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida as well as Sprinker, Finkielkraut, Jeffrey Mehlman, and Philippe Lejeune, one of the most prolific contemporary critics of autobiographical expressions. For Lejeune, problems concerning the subject and its identity are also reduced to linguistic questions. In his essay "Autobiography in the Third Person" he fails to understand that André Gorz, for example, in his autobiographical account The Traitor, switches back and forth between the first and third person because he is recreating and also, more importantly, undergoing at the time he is exploring himself in writing, a very real, anxiety-ridden identity crisis and suffers for the longest time--until the very end of his autobiographical essay when he is finally able to say "I"--from a split personality which he convincingly traces to his particular historical life experiences. Lejeune, on the other, hand trivializes Gorz's existential predicament and abstracts from his concrete lived reality by assuming that his oscillation between the first and third person is simply a narrative technique, a strategic manipulation of personal pronouns, a "game of figures" and "focalization".⁴⁹ Following the linguist

⁴⁸ Jean Thibaudeau, "Le roman comme autobiographie," Tel Quel, No. 34 (Summer 1968), 69 (my translation).

⁴⁹ Philippe Lejeune, "Autobiography in the Third Person," trans. Annette and Edward Tomarken, New Literary History, 9, 1 (Autumn 1977), 32 and 40. See also pp. 133-4 this thesis.

Emile Benveniste, Lejeune believes that "as one dissects the pronoun 'I' (or 'you'), one inevitably confronts the problem of identity"⁵⁰ ; it does not occur to him in the least that only the profound experience of an identity crisis and of self-estrangement could even give one the idea of splitting asunder one's own grammatical referent. Even if it were true that, as Benveniste expounds, each "I" obliterates the previous "I"⁵¹ , then this perpetual self-destruction, this continuous creation of divergent and fleeting identities, would be set in the background of modern social atomization and alienation, a background Lejeune only mentions in passing. If there is no stable and clearly identifying pronoun for the contemporary individual, as, for example, there isn't for Beckett's unnamable, then this is not primarily the case because of what Lejeune calls "the ineluctable duality of the grammatical person"⁵² but rather because of the underlying, historically produced experience of splits in personalty: the anxiety about how one's identity expresses itself is the anxiety about this identity. The formalist ontological reduction of living and breathing human beings to grammatical categories and functions, symptomatic not only of all of Lejeune's autobiographical

⁵⁰ Lejeune, 30.

⁵¹ Emile Benveniste, "The Nature of Pronouns," in Problems In General Linguistics, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: Univ. of Miami Press, 1971), p. 218.

⁵² Philippe Lejeune, 29.

criticism⁵³ , but also of the structuralist weltanschauung in general, thus totally disregards and, in fact, discards the human realities that authors like Gorz are attempting to confront and work through by means of autobiographical writing.

This restrictive language fetishism ultimately constitutes an attack on both the human subject and the philosophy centering around it. Anathematizing humanism, Foucault, for example, declares it to be the most burdensome heritage of the 19th century that deserves to be thrown overboard since the discoveries of people like Levi-Strauss and Lacan all tend to render useless "the very idea of man".⁵⁴ Accordingly, the total effacement of the individual is made into a program: anonymity is not an oppressive condition to be transcended any more, but rather a goal to be striven for. This repudiation of the human subject, which is glaringly epitomized in Barthes' war cry "Amputate the individual from literature."⁵⁵ , has, of course,

⁵³ In a recent article Lejeune has, however, self-critically confronted his previous grammaticist stance and characterized it as too formalist and too linguistic ("Le pacte autobiographique (bis)," Poétique, No. 56 [November 1983], 426).

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, "Entretien," La Quinzaine littéraire, No. 5 (15 May 1966), 15 (my translation). In a debate with Foucault, Sartre responded to this anti-humanism by arguing that "the key point is not what has been made out of man but what he makes out of what has been made of him. What has been made out of him are structures, the signifying whole [ensembles signifiants] which is studied by the humanities. What he makes is history itself, the real surpassing of these structures in a totalizing practice" ("Jean-Paul Sartre répond," L'Arc, No. 30 [October 1966], 95 [my translation]).

⁵⁵ Roland Barthes, Sur Racine (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963), p. 156 (my translation).

serious ramifications for writing in general and particularly for autobiographical literature since it eliminates the concept of the author, who dramatizes the self and the world in language. When the speaking/writing subject is of no importance any more, when subjective experience is transformed into measurable discursive structures⁵⁶, the individual is entirely instrumentalized and hence nullified: the subordination of human expression (in the broadest sense) to systematic operations, the rejection of humanism in the name of scientific and technical realism, only solidifies the contemporary rule of abstraction and alienation.

The structuralist minimization of the subject, therefore, turns out to have the same consequences, despite its opposite intentions, as the narcissistic aggrandizement of the individual. The undialectical disownment of either subjectivity or objectivity increases the everyday experiences of estrangement, asociality, and meaninglessness. Attempting to weed out the last tufts of the subjective factor from the already dehumanized junkyard of 20th century Western mass culture⁵⁷, the structuralist mind falls short of comprehending

⁵⁶ Tzvetan Todorov, for example, reduces the world of the Decameron into a purely grammatical one, the characters being nouns, their attributes adjectives, and their actions verbs (Grammaire du Décaméron [The Hague: Mouton, 1969]).

⁵⁷ Having dismissed what he calls "'an ideology of alienation'," Finkielkraut writes: "The end term of liberation is not the presence of the self to the self. On the contrary, to let oneself become invested by writing is not only to consent to the de-subjectivizing of the subject, but to establish from the beginning of the game (in order that the game may actually take place) that the mastery of the self is excluded" (229).

that what is needed in this age of an increasingly all-encompassing reification and administration of the subject is precisely not a further abstraction from and disenfranchisement of the human being, but rather a reversal of this tendency to tie subjectivity to objective structures. Adorno writes: "It is on this emancipation, not on the subject's insatiable repression, that objectivity depends today. The superiority of objectification in the subjects not only keeps them from becoming subjects; it equally prevents a cognition of objectivity. This is what became of what used to be called 'the subjective factor'. It is now subjectivity rather than objectivity that is indirect, and this sort of mediation is more in need of analysis than the traditional one."⁵⁸ However, instead of examining the contemporary conditions of subjectivity and emancipating, that is, de-alienating, the subject (at least on the theoretical plane), structuralism tries to get rid of it altogether and hypostatizes its estrangement and non-identity. Just as, according to Richard Sennett, "intimacy is an attempt to solve the public problem by denying that the public exists"⁵⁹, the scientific and objective approach of structuralism is an endeavor to solve the subjective problem by disaffirming the existence of subjectivity. What is true for autistic individuals is also true for culture critics like

⁵⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 171.

⁵⁹ Richard Sennett, p. 27.

Barthes, Lejeune, Finkielkraut, and Sprinker: they destroy their need for individuality in order to catch up with the threatening loss of its illusion.⁶⁰ Analogous to its espousal of formalist affirmative thought, the structuralist vision thus again mistakes the problem of today's world for its solution. The liquidation of the subject is declared a goal rather than a menace: the threat to the human being has turned into the threat by the human being.

The "exploded 'I'," therefore, is replaced by the anonymous "one," by the impersonal "there is".⁶¹ The abandonment of humanism and the negation of the subject imply, of course, the abdication of human will, responsibility, and praxis as well as ultimately the renunciation of history. In a world constituted and dominated by discourse, the individual in general and the writer in particular "is not so much a player than a piece in the game,"⁶² a plaything that is being spoken and thought according to the rules and laws of grammar and logic. By disallowing responsible human praxis, though, by tending to settle down in the anti-humanist wheelchair of non-subjectivity instead of attempting to walk upright in the Blochian manner, structuralists atrophy being at the expense of becoming and thus

⁶⁰ For this interpretation of autism, see Friedhelm Guttandin, "Wunsch und Rationalität: Skizzen," in Über die Wünsche: Ein Versuch zur Archäologie der Subjektivität, ed. Dietmar Kamper (München/Wien: Hanser, 1977), p. 146.

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, "Entretien," 15 (my translation).

⁶² Roger Laporte, approvingly quoted by Alain Finkielkraut, 229 (my translation).

abolish history and the continuity of time as well. Within the closed structuralist system of texts, the sense of time as a movement where the present is the result of the past and the germ of the future, is substituted by temporal atomism. In the words of Edward Said, "textuality has ... become the exact antithesis and displacement of what might be called history. Textuality is considered to take place, yes, but by the same token it does not take place anywhere or anytime in particular. It is produced, but by no one and at no time."⁶³ Hence it becomes again obvious that there is a striking similarity in attitude between the structuralist and the narcissist approach to reality--they both evince what Christopher Lasch calls a "waning of the sense of historical time".⁶⁴ Just as structuralists are preoccupied with analyzing the internal mechanisms of given historical epochs and do not pay any attention to the transitions between these systems, structures, or texts, narcissists are absorbed in looking into their selves at any given time and do not consider either their ancestors or their descendants (or even their previous selves) to be part of the same historical continuum. Putting history in brackets, both structuralism and narcissism, intended to be strategies for survival of estranged beleaguered subjects and ending up being practices of suicide, therefore one-dimensionally reinforce the

⁶³ Edward Said, The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁴ Christopher Lasch, p. 28.

historically produced experience of discontinuity and alienation from history.

Memory and Autobiographical Expressions

It is evident that the structuralist--and narcissist--liquidation of history, of the historical Wherefrom and Whereto, makes unnecessary and even impossible any autobiographical recherche du temps perdu. The fetishism of the status quo, endorsed also by such apocalyptic critics of autobiographical writing as Michael Sprinker who approvingly discusses the modern fragmentation of time and the self in connection with "Kierkegaard's championing of the instantaneous, the momentary, the disruptive against the Hegelian concept of mediation,"⁶⁵ radically devalues and ultimately eliminates the retentive faculties of the mind. "'History is bunk'," said Henry Ford⁶⁶, and this dictum bespeaks not only the utter uselessness that an industrial society assigns to memory and the contempt in which it is held but also, on a more general level, the constantly increasing ahistoricity and amnesia that characterize the mental state and spiritual condition of the modern Western world. In a significant essay on this shrinking of the

⁶⁵ Michael Sprinker, p. 329.

⁶⁶ Quoted by Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," in Erziehung zur Mündigkeit: Vorträge und Gespräche mit Hellmut Becker 1959-1969 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 13.

consciousness of historical continuity, Ernest Schachtel distinguishes between "autobiographical" and "useful" memory. The former consists of the ability voluntarily to recover one's past experiences, whereas the latter is comprised of the aptitude to recollect far more utilitarian, practical, survival-oriented skills like counting and recognizing objects, people, and words. Schachtel comes to the conclusion that in our culture the unfolding of autobiographical memory--one of the latest developments in childhood--which alone can provide the individual with a sense of the continuity of the self, is inhibited rather than nurtured: "Biologically and culturally, autobiographical memory ... finds little encouragement. In a culture oriented toward efficient performance of profitable activities, a society in which everybody has to fit like a cog in a machine and where powerful pressure is exerted to make people equal, in the sense of uniform, autobiographical memory is discouraged in its development and predestined to atrophy. ... It would stand in the way of the process of equalization and uniformity since its very function is to preserve individual experience rather than repeat cultural and conventional schemata of experience."⁶⁷

The non-formation and elimination of autobiographical memory, that is, the inducement of historical oblivion, thus

⁶⁷ Ernest G. Schachtel, Metamorphosis: On the Development of Affect, Perception, Attention, and Memory (New York: Basic Books, 1959). p. 304. For the crucial distinction between "autobiographical" and "useful" memory, see particularly pp. 286-304.

profit the culture and powers that be. In a letter to Walter Benjamin, Adorno writes that "... every reification is a forgetting"⁶⁸ ; the reverse holds equally true: to forget means to de-contextualize and to turn into a thing the living historical actuality in which that which is forgotten existed or occurred. It means to derealize both the continuity of time in general and the history of oneself and the world in particular, and ultimately to capitulate before the ruling fragmentation of the social reality and, in fact, to contribute to it. Forgetting the substance and circumstances of happiness, joy, peace, and satisfaction precludes the possibility of mobilizing those memories in order to oppose a perhaps less blissful status quo, of envisioning them as an alternative and goal to be striven for, and thus of (re)creating conditions more conducive to their attainment; repressing one's present and past unhappiness, loneliness, and suffering in an attempt to cope with that reality, on the other hand, even increases the meaninglessness and estrangement it was supposed to make one forget because it prevents a critical and potentially fruitful confrontation with and resistance to their presence and raison d'être.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Quoted by Martin Jay, "Anamnestic Totalization: Reflections on Marcuse's Theory of Remembrance," Theory and Society, 11, 1 (January 1982), 5. See also Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, p. 230.

⁶⁹ Herbert Marcuse writes: "This ability to forget--itself the result of a long and terrible education by experience--is an indispensable requirement of mental and physical hygiene without which civilized life would be unbearable; but it is also the mental faculty which sustains submissiveness and renunciation. To forget is also to forgive what should not be forgiven if justice and freedom are to prevail. Such forgiveness reproduces

To not develop the autobiographical memory, therefore, means to aggravate our defenselessness and vulnerability, as Rockwell Gray unequivocally recognizes: "The person who is not conversant with his own history, or who has no memory-language with which to evoke it, is the victim of every manner of therapeutic fad or authoritarian political movement. Against the pressure to give himself away, as it were, to transfer to a person, a movement, or an ideology the actually ineluctable onus of his radical solitude, he may seek an anchor in the project of autobiography,

69 (cont'd) the conditions which reproduce injustice and enslavement: to forget past suffering is to forgive the forces that caused it--without defeating these forces. The wounds that heal in time are also the wounds that contain the poison. Against this surrender to time, the restoration of remembrance to its rights, as a vehicle of liberation, is one of the noblest tasks of thought. ... Without release of the repressed content of memory, without release of its liberating power, non-repressive sublimation is unimaginable" (Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud [New York: Vintage, 1962], pp. 212-3). Frank Hearn similarly emphasizes: "When remembrance is replaced by forgetfulness, when imagination is suppressed and play is trivialized, the past becomes invalid, emptied of meaning. In these circumstances, trans-systemic criteria of assessment and action disappear, and people either consent to the legitimating standards supplied by society as it is ... or, because there are no alternatives, resign themselves to the present..." (Frank Hearn, "Remembrance and Critique: The Uses of the Past for Discrediting the Present and Anticipating the Future," Politics and Society, 5, 2 (1975), 223). Rockwell Gray also is convinced that individually and collectively, "there is no surer way to destroy the capacity to dream than to diminish memory, destroy monuments, and censor historians" (Rockwell Gray, "Autobiography Now," 46). And Christa Wolf, in her autobiographical effort to work through her individual and Germany's collective unmastered past, declares that never "have human beings been supposed to forget so much, in order to be able to continue functioning, as those with whom we live" (Christa Wolf, A Model Childhood, trans. Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980], p. 387. Since this version is faulty, the preceding is my translation of Kindheitsmuster [Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979], p. 358.).

which forces him to define for himself who he truly is."⁷⁰

Consequently, the formation and recall of autobiographical memory can have a destabilizing impact on affirmative mass culture by strengthening individual consciousness. Firmly grounding the human being in the living continuum of history, remembrance contravenes reification, alienation, and fragmentation and thus proves to be a subversive, emancipatory power. To engage oneself in an autobiographical act opens up the possibility of "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" one's past, to quote the title of an essay by Freud on the liberating use to which memory can be put in psychoanalysis.⁷¹ Freud's maxim is echoed by Hans Jürgen Syberberg in his autobiographical essay on the history of Hitler--A Film from Germany. He writes that the motivation for him to work on this film was to "grasp, understand, retell, and overcome us and our history".⁷² This overcoming of (as opposed to the mere coping with) the unmastered past, this distanced, reflective, reappraisal entails that the autobiographical author openly and critically works through and confronts subjective and objective history. Making the subject more immune to internal and external

⁷⁰ Rockwell Gray, "Autobiography Now," 50.

⁷¹ Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," trans. James Strachey, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), Vol. 12, pp. 147-156.

⁷² Hans Jürgen Syberberg, "Introduction," Hitler--A Film from Germany, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982), p. 9. See also his Die freudlose Gesellschaft, passim.

repression, this autobiographical work of remembering⁷³ serves, in the words of Herbert Marcuse, as a bulwark against the one-dimensional world which is: it weakens the power of both psychological and political/social forces to govern and control our existence, and at the same time strengthens our ability to take charge of our own life.

The Possibilities of Dialectical Autobiographical Writing

Autobiographical writing, therefore, provides an arena in which the not yet emancipated subject can dialectically trace, reconstruct, and reappraise its historical development and thus attempt to understand what prevents its realization.⁷⁴ By so doing, it makes a first step toward coming to consciousness of itself as a potential subject. Performed with the express intention of deepening our understanding of our negated and crippled selves, this critical autobiographical act is an act of self-help. If the predominant contemporary life experience is that of our individuality being done away with or, rather,

⁷³ See, e. g., Paula Heimann, "Bemerkungen zum Arbeitsbegriff in der Psychoanalyse," Psyche, 21, 5 (1966), 323-60; Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit"; also Alexander und Margarete Mitscherlich, The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior, trans. Beverly R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975), passim.

⁷⁴ See, e. g., Stephan Otto, "Zum Desiderat einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft und zur Theorie der Autobiographie." Studia Humanitatis: Ernesto Grassi zum 70. Geburtstag. Eds. Eginhard Hora and Eckhard Kessler. München: Fink, 1973, p. 228 and p. 232.

nipped in the bud, as it were--and there is every reason to believe that this is precisely the predicament with which the modern Western bourgeois world finds itself confronted--then the autobiographical project⁷⁵ gives us the opportunity to draw up a subjective balance sheet of objective history and to revolt against a society in which human beings are reified as objects in the exchange principle and in which subjectivity is buried under the objectivity of factual constraints: "The prevailing trend in epistemological reflection was to reduce objectivity more and more to the subject. This very tendency needs to be reversed."⁷⁶

Autobiographical writing can thus be the epistemological dock in which objectivity is stood by subjects laying charges against a world that does not allow their subjectivity to surface. In order that the indictment amounts to more than a diatribe of subjectivist trivialities and inconsequentialities, however, the autobiographical prosecutor must be careful not to isolate and fetishize the subjective moment and therefore to fall into the solipsistic trap of narcissism, but rather to bring their subjectivity to objectivity by anchoring it in the movement of objective history and by expressing their

⁷⁵ In his study The Active Society: A Theory of Societal and Political Processes (New York: Free Press, 1968), Amitai Etzioni discusses how personal, collective, and societal projects--the dialectical autobiographical project could be seen to be a personal one and thus "only" the first step on the road to social change--can reduce inauthenticity and alienation (pp. 647-55).

⁷⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, p. 176.

interaction in these testimonies. Such an effort to work within the subject-object dialectics is, in the words of Russell Jacoby, "an objective theory of subjectivity," that is, given the alienation and depersonalization characteristic of the world that this kind of writing comes out of, "a theory of a subject-less subject--or a not yet liberated subjectivity."⁷⁷ This autobiographical, essentially concrete rather than abstract, theory of the negated self constitutes a refusal of all that which prevents selfhood; it bears witness against a society which "functions at the expense of suppressed life," exposes "the blocked and mutilated capacities of the human being," and thus "shows the price of the ruling praxis and, at the same time, the potential for possible change."⁷⁸ This potential lies, first of all, in the act of both becoming conscious of and negating our negation: "What is the human being? That which, although it does not yet know what it is, can know what it, as estranged from itself, certainly is not and which, therefore, does not want to remain that false or, at least, should not."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia: A Critique of Contemporary Psychology from Adler to Laing (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 80.

⁷⁸ Dieter Wellershoff, "Zu privat: Über eine Kategorie der Verdrängung," Literatur und Veränderung: Versuche zu einer Metakritik der Literatur (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), p. 34 (my translation).

⁷⁹ Ernst Bloch, Philosophische Aufsätze zur Objektiven Phantasie (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969), p. 18 (my translation).

The potentially subversive knowledge of this estrangement, falsification, and negation of the self can be produced in the self-reflexive, dialectical autobiographical act.

II. Appropriating (Life-)History through Autobiographical Writing: André Gorz's Dialectical Self-Investigation The Traitor

Introduction

Already in his early Notizen während der Abschaffung des Denkens, a collection of culture criticism consisting of aphorisms, notes, and short essays, Ernst Herhaus, author of the autobiographical trilogy Kapitulation, Der zerbrochene Schlaf, and Gebete in die Gottesferne, maintains that "human beings can only identify with human beings, not with the abstract definitions of anonymous fantasy in which the authors are only performance automatons of their own naive arrogance. All theory that does not also hand down, in its thoughts, the contemporary and personal conditions of its authors, is rhetorical over-subtlety and brainteasing in the form of deceitful finality."¹ Herhaus' categoric declaration, intended as a critique of the, in his view, authoritarian and fetishistic abstractness of the Frankfurt school of critical theory, has ramifications that reach well beyond the interests of the social sciences: it also establishes a criterion against which any literature's claim to validity and authenticity in today's age

¹ Ernst Herhaus, Notizen während der Abschaffung des Denkens (Frankfurt: März, 1970), p.106 (my translation).

of thought machines must be measured. A product of human beings for human beings, a critical literature must admit and provide insights into its own human roots and must therefore also become--to rephrase one of Herhaus' demands for critical theory--a literature of the victims of literature. Herhaus thus calls on Valerie Solanas, the author of the theoretical and abstract SCUM Manifesto, to write her autobiography because at this present age of the abolition of the individual, one must begin to "talk truly and publicly" about oneself: "In any other form, theory does not make any sense any more."² Equating social theory with autobiography, two modes of investigation that traditional epistemology considers to be entirely antithetical (social theory being the objective, verifiable, and conceptual analysis of a given reality as opposed to autobiography, the subjective and arbitrary vision of the world), Herhaus recognizes the need for theoreticians to defetishize impersonal, systematic, and idealized thought, and to talk about the questionable conditions under which theory itself is being produced if, in the prevailing world of abstraction and indifference toward suffering, this theory is intended to be noticed or even actualized. He realizes the objective importance of and necessity for subjective expressions: to write

² Herhaus, pp. 120-1. Herhaus' criticism obviously applies to this study as well; however, time limitations made it impossible for me to write a life-historical essay on the question of contemporary autobiography. For a glimpse at the gap between theory and practice in my own life, see my autobiographical "Notes during the Sublimation of Libido," Paunch, Nos. 57-8 (January 1984), 31-52.

autobiographically means to revolt against the computerization of contemporary reality and thereby to document human qualities and to save them from historical oblivion; thought machines cannot compete with autobiographers "because all machines are without guilt. Yet what it used to be like in a world of guilt, that's what future human beings will have to find out one day in order that perhaps infinitely distant and infinitesimally true reservations against that which will be, remain experienceable"³.

Karin Struck, author of Klassenliebe and Kindheits Ende--to name but her first and latest autobiographical work--similarly deplores in her highly personal writings the abstract, impersonal, and non-experienceable nature of contemporary critical theory: "What Habermas writes, I am telling Jutta, is all a cheat, the emperor's new clothes, that's supposed to scare us off, I am telling Jutta, Jutta, hopeful, I've had the same feeling, but perhaps we just don't understand these difficult conceptualizations because we don't move in his circles, perhaps he says most of it in his circles, while he's at receptions, when he's on the phone, and the circles know what he means by his conceptualizations, a stupid explanation, I am telling Jutta, but why are these difficult conceptualizations not graspable for us, Jutta, what kinds of books are these, Jutta?"⁴

³ Herhaus, p. 121.

⁴ Karin Struck, Klassenliebe (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 144 (my translation).

Echoing K's helplessness before the anonymous yet powerful circles in Kafka's Castle, Struck whose autobiographical account Klassenliebe was one of the first articulations of what came to be known in the Federal Republic of Germany as "New Subjectivity," draws attention to the disconcerting inaccessibility of critical theoreticians who deter rather than attract people by their exceedingly impersonal and conceptualized knowledge, thus reducing them to silent spectators. This attack on the repression prevalent in a highly abstract critique of society--a response to the theory-praxis debate that took place at the end of the 1960's--both exposes the reification of the critique of reification and calls for a less estranged and less alienating and a more subjective social criticism. Thus autobiographical writing is to assume an importance that transcends strictly literary concerns: the attempt to discover one's self and its relation to the world (taking off the cover with which one has been veiled by the culture industry), the public revelation of private reflections and intimate experiences, becomes a serious issue in social theory, and a valuable and significant document for a critical inventory of sociohistorical realities.

The Dilemma of Non-existence or, Living a False Life

The contemporary work in which this dilemma of being suffocated by a surplus of abstract theory is dramatized most unequivocally on both a theoretical and a life-historical level is André Gorz's intellectual monograph of himself The Traitor, an autobiographical account which Jean-Paul Sartre in a foreword characterizes as "a work in the process of creating its author"⁵. Previous to this literary, self-reflective quest for his identity which, by the way, has hardly received any critical acclaim or even mention in the almost twenty years since its first (and only) publication, the history of André Gorz was the history of his obstinate escape from and negation of himself; his autobiographical work is informed by the predicament of an intellectual discovering that his abstract life-work has denied him a concrete existence. Writing a monumental theoretical essay on Fondements pour une morale prevented him from practising these morals and from translating his abstract ethics of liberation into lived reality, and thus precluded the possibility of his being the author, in his own daily life, of the very questions and answers on which he so diligently and

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, in André Gorz, The Traitor, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 7 (the English edition [London: John Calder, 1960] has identical paging). Page references (which appear in the body of the thesis) are to these editions, although I have corrected Richard Howard's at times rather careless and faulty translation wherever necessary. The French version I am working with is André Gorz, Le traître (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978)[Collection Points 87].

exhaustively ruminated on paper: "Writing had become a passion; he had purged himself of all problems; he had resolved them in the abstract. And when, after nine years, he had felt he was near the end, the beginning of the end, he had realized that the essential thing was eluding him. The essential thing: himself. He felt empty and bone-dry" (38). The profound feeling of discontent with this drainage and emptiness, this existential vacuum, constitutes the raison d'être of Gorz's autobiographical endeavor: instead of continuing theoretically to look at and solve the problems of humanity in general and thus to condemn himself to exile from concrete life experiences, he embarks on an attempt to particularize his up until now universal existence, to (re)constitute himself, and thereby to oppose his negation as a human being and his reification that had resulted, at least partially, from his philosophical analyses. Directing his readers' attention toward this dispossession and thingification of his thought and being, Gorz, in a 1976 preface to Fondements, revealingly and fittingly terms his former effort "the thing" and explains that his rationale for trying to deobjectify his existence by writing The Traitor had been to invest himself in "the autobiographical essay which was the best way of disinvesting himself from the thing".⁶ The aim of Gorz's autobiographical commitment is, therefore, to tear down the wall of conceptualizations and moral absolutizations that he had

⁶ André Gorz, Fondements pour une morale (Paris: Éditions galilée, 1977), p. 18 (my translation).

raised around himself and that protected him from concrete reality, to step out of the one-dimensionality of his alienated life--that is, his non-life--and to establish himself as a particular historical human being, because "what use is it to have universal ideas in the abstract if these ideas prevent you from being a man, even if only in the eyes of a single person, and if in their name you refuse yourself to yourself and to even only one other person as well, refusing what it is that can make life liveable" (256)?

Hence The Traitor marks a turning point in Gorz's life-history: attempting to find his own voice, he discontinues enjoying the false security of residing in a castle in the air modelled on the style and world view of the thinkers he admires and idolizes (writing Fondements he appropriated Sartre's technique in Being and Nothingness and, as he now realizes, "wadded reality together and tied it up with Morel's [Sartre's] string" [38]⁷). In fact, as it turns out in his autobiographical work, he has a long history of committing treason against himself by slavishly copying great authors; already as a pupil "everything he wrote during the school year '40-'41 was imitation, an attempt to conjure up on paper the Thoughts and Feelings of French authors, to acquire the technique of this invocation. He did not write what he felt or thought, for he was convinced it was foolish and worthless; he

⁷ Because "They have poisoned the name of J.-P. S. for him," he calls Sartre Morel, to keep Sartre's reality for himself separate from his reality for the others (183).

wrote to learn the linguistic substance of other people's Truth, in the hope that at the end of his apprenticeship, by speaking as they did, he too would have true thoughts and feelings--theirs. Patiently, with his yellow word book and his blue notebook, he forged himself a soul according to the alien norms he believed absolute and eternal. He wrote to be 'Other, to get rid of himself' (175). For the Austrian Gorz, living in exile in Switzerland, to immerse himself totally in French after the capitulation of France before Nazi Germany and its dehumanized culture is a way of defeating and negating not only his self which he considers a nullity, but also the world which is and the powers that be in general: "To speak, to read, to think in French [becomes] for him a means of defying History. In opposition to being, he [perpetuates] the France which no longer [exists], and by the same token [creates], in opposition to reality, a liveable world where Man is possible" (174).

The human being thus is the Other in terms of both world history and Gorz's life-history. In order to become human Gorz must first of all disown his subjective being as well as the objective status quo and, at this juncture in time, his opposition against his self and that against the world converge. Hence his conscious self-renunciation and self-alienation, his determination to become radically Other than himself, is and has been, since his childhood, his main strategy of survival both in his struggle against an alienating world where the human being is not actualizable due to the "persecuting forces of

reification" (134), as well as against the norms and constraints imposed by the people around him, and also in his attempt to become part of what he feels he does not belong to--humanity. Raised by a Catholic mother and a Jewish father with entirely divergent and irreconcilable character traits and value systems --a situation which Gorz experiences as "false from every point of view" (109)--he is unable to develop any sense of belonging and identity; incapable of synthesizing the antithetical parental qualities and make-ups, and internalizing and reproducing the familial splits, he is pervaded by a feeling of incompleteness: compared to his peers and classmates "he [is] only half, half Jew, half Aryan, a half man--he [feels] like two halves that would never make a whole" (99). Accordingly he grows up with the deep-rooted "conviction that he could become a whole man only by becoming Other and that consequently man [is] Other and he himself a failure" (132). This inferiority complex, this heaping of reproaches on himself, can thus be attributed to his inability to satisfy the constant requirements and expectations by both his family and society as a whole for him to be somebody else than he is (e. g., 137-8). Saturated with these alienating demands and indoctrinations--significantly, the section in which he recounts the heteronomy of his life, the central, most extensive, and most thoroughly autobiographical chapter in The Traitor, is entitled "Them"--Gorz is fraught with feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and negativity towards himself, and is full of doubts about his identity to a point where his father's

severe moral condemnations and his subsequent unpitying rejection of his son make him suffer not only the feeling of living a false life, but even that of not existing at all (138-9). The concrete experience of social humiliation and repression therefore prompts his urge to commit treason against his family and humanity at large and to oppose this deprivation of being and provokes his tendency to negate what he is or, as he calls it, "his taste for Difference" and for "contradictory singularization" (135 and 134) by which he means "his attempt to abandon all collectivities which [apply] their constraint to him, beginning with the 'human race'" (135): estranged from both the world and himself, young Gorz is an identity-less outsider living in an inner exile.

When this inner exile is, due to political developments, complemented by an outer exile--in 1939 Gorz is sent to a Swiss boarding school--his sense of being a useless nullity even intensifies and his alienation becomes total: "That [is] when he [begins] feeling that life is unliveable; that man is a wound in which the world turns like a knife; and that between man and the world there [is] one term too many" (160). Never having considered himself a member of humanity and not having been raised to develop any kind of self-confidence, he of course embraces in this conflict the terms of the objective world and self-destructively renounces his subjectivity altogether; not wanting to be knifed by a hostile reality, he shields himself from any direct involvement in the concrete corporeal world by

engaging in intellectual exercises--characteristically, he loathes physical ones--where he religiously immerses himself in scientific discipline and asceticism (later on, he will be just as absorbed in making himself French). Due to the all-pervasive meaninglessness and emotional inaccessibility of lived reality, he strives to "see the world scientifically: to kill off its significations, to detach [himself] from the concrete, to stop living and feeling, to intellectualize [his] affective contact with it, to mechanize it in obedience to a Rule, to be no longer anything but this impersonal Reason" (164). This objectivist reduction is both a reaction to and a perpetuation of Gorz's despair and alienation. By cocooning himself in a layer of impersonal data and abstract theory, he eliminates subjective experience and praxis from the agenda of his life and thereby forfeits any possibility of extricating himself from his foremost predicament--not being able to determine who he is. Since he reduces the human being to a set of measurable and rationally ascertainable body mechanisms, he disclaims any sense of self-determination or autonomy of the individual: "Against the human realm he [takes] sides this time with the mineral realm; man [is] chemistry" (164-5).⁸ This urge to dispense with humanity's and, by implication, his own subjectivity (the former

⁸ At this time, he reads "Gide, Ruyer, Broglie, psychoanalysts, characterologists (to be done with the human: to put each man in a characterological and typological pigeonhole, to pin him down like a dead butterfly, since he could not knock him down, to rid himself of these persecuting stares by reducing them to biochemical reactions, to escape the human realm into the sidereal universe)" (198).

is ubiquitous and repressive, the latter is powerless and false) and to try to escape the human world by converting it into pure objectivity in the anonymity of which he can lose his false self, is only seriously being called into question when, realizing that the essential thing, that is, he himself, had been eluding him in all his abstracting and conceptualizing, he embarks on his autobiographical search in The Traitor. Until then he is delighted in obliterating himself by, for example, "filling out questionnaires that wrap him in their web of precise questions, permitting him, merely by obeying the printed requirements, to constitute an objective identity for himself that is perfectly adapted to an anonymous order, to flow into an impersonal world that is nevertheless prepared for him" (75).

As this self-compartmentalization, this reduction of his humanity to the level of statistical data exemplifies, Gorz's desire to objectify himself is also characterized by his propensity and willingness to settle into a pre-arranged order, an order which he feels he can only challenge theoretically but not practically. Alienated from himself and living in an uninhabitable world, he regards himself not as a subject but as an object of history; hence he does not engage himself in worldly affairs and assumes only the role of a passive, analytical, interrogative observer of the spectacle of an anonymous society for which he does not bear any responsibility and of which--symptom of his extreme self-estrangement--he considers himself a part. However, as Gorz reflects on the

world, the world is deflected from him: "He has always watched himself living; he has never taken things for what they [are]. The reason I have just discovered for this (or one of the reasons, for there are certainly others) is his need to contest: he [has] to contest his father by his mother, his Jewishness by his Catholicism, his Catholicism by his Jewishness. There [is] nothing simple or immediate for him, each moment always [refers] to its opposite, not one thing [is] what it [is] but [remains] divided from itself by the nothingness of an elsewhere which he [has] to shift to in face of whatever this thing is. He [lives] events by his interrogative mediation on the attitude he [is] to adopt toward them..." (115). Gorz's compulsion a priori to contest everything he encounters thus interferes with and determines the experience of the encounter itself--his mental operations get the better of him and abstract him and his experiences from their concrete context to a point where he almost exclusively resides in a universe of reflective mediations. A particularly striking illustration of the derealization of his world by cerebralism is his parasitical internalization and adoption of his intellectual hero's categories of thought which he uses to classify and to file away his own life experiences: "By the end of 1943 Morel [has] dethroned all the preceding divinities (Gide, Ruyer, Dostoevski, Valery), I [have] steeped myself in Being and Nothingness, at first without understanding much of it, fascinated by the novelty and complexity of its thought, then, by dint of

persevering in my reading of this great object, infecting myself with it, adopting its terminology, raising it to the dignity of an encyclopedia which, since it treated everything, must have an answer to everything, and at last moving about in a universe having Being and Nothingness for its frontiers: any lived experienced or observed reality [is] at once referred to such and such a page, where it [is] dealt with" (231-2). Like a ventriloquist's dummy, Gorz lets Sartre speak for him and take care of his life. Lived reality thus loses its subjectivity, concreteness, and historicity and becomes reified; what remains is a theoretical spectatorial intelligence in exile from the particularity of both its owner and the world.

Gorz's continual subsumption of the particular and the subjective under the laws of universality and objectivity therefore precludes any intentional, open, and dialectical interaction between himself and the world. His actual historical experience of not counting as an individual leads him to attempt to efface and negate himself, and to hibernate and find security in the realm of theories and conceptualizations where he can condemn "concrete man in the name of an unrealizable abstract, conscious moreover that he himself [falls] within the scope of his condemnations. Everything he [is] himself [is] hateful" (215). After years and years of this kind of total rejection and despicability of his contemporary reality in favor of a transhistorical, transhuman absolute, however, he feels "the earth giving way under his feet" (39): the gap between the

residues of his self and the world has become too wide, too deep, and thus too obvious to camouflage.

The Dialectics of Subjectivity and Objectivity, or Searching for an Authentic Life

This schism is both the predicament of the author of a subject-less social theory (Fondements) leading an almost entirely subject-less life, and also the driving force behind his autobiographical explorations tracing the itinerary of his inability to establish a concrete identity. Gorz's life-historical enterprise is thus a reaction to the existential void of his exile from concretely experienced reality; it results from the shocking realization that, because of the appropriation of his individuality in the name of universally accepted truths and values, life and his authentic self have been eluding him, and that by means of his theoretical life-work, he has abstracted himself out of existence just as "the world has fallen out of him" (146). This shock of experiencing his life as false and un-lived, and himself as an "abstract individual" (214) constitutes what Peter Sloterdijk, in his study of Weimar autobiographies, calls a "Stör-Erfahrung," a disturbing experience (etymologically, 'to disturb' means 'to throw into disorder'). According to Sloterdijk, such experiences are ones which "break through previous experiences, convictions, or self-evidences and which

contain a dissonance with respect to expectations". They are "occasions for experience which cannot be integrated" in individual lives, such as "double moral standards, non-resolvability of problems," or "the experiences of contradiction, conflict, disorder, deviation, lying, [or] ideology": as a result, "accepted images of reality are revised and robbed of their self-evident validity".⁹ Challenging and unsettling the social and individual order, that is, the equilibrium between certain historical constellations, these experiences can constitute a turning-point in one's life history if, rather than stealing away from them and repressing them, one "'stumbles' over them, lets oneself be affected by them, and develops an interest in solving the contradictions brought to light by these disturbances".¹⁰ Gorz himself recognizes the potentially liberating effect of both having and then working through such an experience when he writes that in an individual's life, there must be a crisis, "a rupture of continuity, a displacement in order, for the child--incapable of facing its arsenal of constituted habits and means of unveiling--to be provoked to revise his infantile choice, to revoke it in rebellion" (82, also 179). For Gorz, the rupture with the up until now self-evident continuity of his abstract existence marks the point at which a leap from his present,

⁹ Peter Sloterdijk, Literatur und Organisation von Lebenserfahrung, p. 113 (my translation).

¹⁰ Sloterdijk, p. 114 (my translation).

almost entirely alienated self to a self more identical with itself, becomes a question of survival--a survival that depends both on the world being (re)introduced into the self out of which it had fallen, and on the self entering the world again--and The Traitor constitutes this leap: "Hic Rhodus, hic salta" (37).

The crucial and vital questions for Gorz then become: How can he bring the world back into him and himself back into the world? How can he find his self which he has suppressed and denied for close to his whole life? Should he, given his sentiment for non-existence and his disbelief in concrete reality, endeavor to leave this state of nullity behind by using "a method affectively neutral, 'scientific, objective,' as Marx and Freud both put it" (50)? This would mean setting out from the abstract in order to raise himself "conscientiously to the absolute--that is, to establish everything philosophically as a moment of the spiritual adventure, and then, having done this, to recover, starting out from this speculative interest, the taste for the concrete" (42). Or should he pursue the alternative and strive to overcome the meaninglessness and alienation he suffers from by introducing a subjective element into the objective theory of his life? This would mean taking as a point of departure his own lived and experienced reality and exhuming his personal history, because if "he does not start by acknowledging how he feels, he will not discover the condition motivating his way of being; if he does not start by getting

interested in the affective coloring the world has for him, he will not discover the 'destiny' he is living. The objective, materialist explanation cannot come first: how can he become conscious of his factual condition, if not through the lived experience he necessarily has of it? How can he even conceive of the project of changing his condition if he doesn't first disengage himself from it by reflection, doesn't first acknowledge the absolute subjective misery which this condition occasions" (43)? It is the struggle between and through these alternatives that Gorz dramatizes as well as engages himself in in writing The Traitor--his autobiographical (re)construction is the document of a solitary and uprooted intellectual trying to arrive at a sense of reality for himself via the contradictory paths of objectivity and/or subjectivity.

On Objectivity

Given his life-historical penchant for systematic thought and a theoretical intelligence, given "his way of making himself abstract, absent" (65), Gorz of course is drawn, first of all, to try to recover reality by distancing himself from everything that smells of the subjective. As he has not learned how to establish affective ties with the world and its people, he denounces both the validity of a subjective investigation and the possibility of it bearing fruit, that is, reducing his alienation and helping him leave his exile from concrete life

experience, and stubbornly pursues the ideal of depersonalized, objective knowledge.

By attempting to approach himself objectively, though, Gorz responds to the objective devaluation and obsolescence of the individual in an age--which he participated in even if only as a spectator--that produced, among other things, the bureaucratically planned and administered extermination of masses of people at Nazi concentration camps as well as the material battles of the Second World War and the atomic bomb, by subjectively reproducing the socially and historically imposed insignificance and abdication of the self. What once constituted the central doctrine of human rationality and progress, that is, the concept of self-determination, has, in the post-enlightenment era, been exposed by the daily subjective mass experience of impotence, non-existence, coercion, and annihilation as the lie it had objectively always been. The individual with its traditional, albeit ideological, sense of autonomy and continuity does not exist any more. Gorz writes: "It was true that there was no room for anyone particular in his life. No one in particular to whom he wanted to devote his life, because he did not count as a particular individual and therefore could not be concerned whether someone should grow attached to him as a particular individual. If he could hope to count, it was only by ideas that transcended his particularity; and if he could get interested in anyone, it was only so long as his ideas were coming into play" (249). This solipsistic retreat

into the world of ideas, this total blocking out and repressing of lived reality, makes it of course impossible for Gorz to allow himself to feel emotional, passionate, or loving toward anyone. As a result of this "contempt for finitude, and therefore for concrete men" (217, also 196) , his involvement--if it can be called that--with other people in general and with women in particular is characterized by intense boredom, a universal indifference, and a radical disregard for their concrete needs--the most he can occasionally muster is a "great abstract affection" (241). Insisting on dwelling in a universe above the particular, Gorz the "World Citizen" (267) and cultivator of his mind proves to be in line with that 19th century propagator of total consciousness, Hegel, who claimed that the destiny of the human being is to lead a universal life by being pure spirit. Gorz's idealistic solipsism and abstract thought, being products of and responses to his life-historical experience of alienation and non-identity, thus exemplify how the more one is instrumentalized, the more one is comforted with a consciousness that presumes to be the original, first absolute.¹¹

¹¹ Compare Theodor W. Adorno, "Subject and Object," trans. E. B. Ashton, in The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Urizen, 1978): The "more the individual human being is really degraded to a function of the social totality as it becomes more systematized, the more the human being, as a principle, will be consolingly exalted by the mind with the attributes of creativity and of absolute domination" (p. 500) (since Ashton's version is faulty, the preceding is my translation of "Zu Subjekt und Objekt," in Stichworte: Kritische Modelle 2 [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969], p. 154). See also Adorno's "Culture Criticism and Society," trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, in Prisms (Cambridge: MIT Press,

Ironically and paradoxically for Gorz, his attempt to transcend the individual and to universalize and to objectify his existence by nurturing solely his mind does not validate his life in universal terms, but rather entrenches his alienation and separates him from the world even more: he must come to the painful realization that to be a "World Citizen" means to be "a man from nowhere (and not from everywhere)" (267).¹² This relegation of the individual to an existential no-man's land, this disenfranchisement and destruction of concrete reality by the universal, however, is the very principle by which the society that Gorz grows up, and later also writes his life-history in, functions. Adorno succinctly describes this primary principle and its far-reaching power over people in his essay on "Society": "The first, objective abstraction takes place, not so much in scientific thought, as in the universal development of the exchange system itself; which happens independently of the qualitative attitudes of producer and consumer, of the mode of production, even of need, which the social mechanism tends to satisfy as a kind of secondary by-product. Profit comes first. ... The form of the total system requires everyone to respect the law of exchange, if he does not wish to be destroyed, irrespective of whether profit is his

¹¹(cont'd) 1981): "The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own" (p. 34).

¹² Compare Adorno: "Man is the ideology of dehumanization" (The Jargon of Authenticity, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will [Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973], p. 59).

subjective motivation or not."¹³ In this exchange society the general (money) dominates over the particulars (commodities), and Gorz, author of learned dissertations on the fetishism of money, knows this: "... money [is] the annihilating transformation of the concrete into the abstract, of real products into currency, of the thing into its imaginary possibility, the triumph of the imaginary ... over the real, the denial of diversity, ... the annihilating transformation of concrete doing and being into a perfectly impersonal having that ... permits you to pass unnoticed and silences all questions as to your passage" (267-8).

What Gorz does not know for the longest time and only realizes toward the end of his autobiographical account of his "passage" is that his striving for objective knowledge and the supremacy of the universal, both previous to The Traitor and at the beginning of the process of his self-revelation, precisely reproduces the ruling alienating and reifying principle of the exchange society which he so desperately seeks to escape. Just as Gorz derives his feeling of his own worth from the abstractions he produces and hopes to count (sic) on the basis and strength of his universal thoughts, particulars in an exchange society only exist insofar as they can be accounted for and measured in the universalizing currency of money. Gorz's principle of life thus is the life-destroying principle of the exchange process: "Men have come to be--triumph of

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, "Society," 148-9.

integration--identified in their innermost behavior patterns with fate in modern society."¹⁴ Living almost exclusively in his mind and knowing only "what he must want on principle" (250), Gorz is caught up, without realizing it, in the universalizing and levelling principle of the domination of the abstract. By cramming the objective external universe into the confines of his brain, he loses touch with specific and lived reality--his connection with it becomes "disincarnated" (48)--and alienates himself both from the world and from himself: "... all work for him [is] changed into an escape, [becomes] a dogged struggle to attain a result that [is] entirely objective (muscles, impersonal knowledge, elemental wealth), whose objectivity [becomes] a source of separation, since he no longer [recognizes] himself in his work and [can] only project himself into it by virtue of a rational will tensed up against itself" (113-4). This rigid will, exiling him from the real and conquering the humanity in him, therefore reinforces his estrangement and makes him part and parcel of the very reified society that he thinks (sic) he can leave behind by abstractly elevating himself above it. In other words, just as people in general who are under the exchange principle, are homogenized by the rule of money, Gorz's subjectivity in particular is levelled by the dominating currency of his reifying conceptualizations.

¹⁴ Adorno, "Society," 152; see also the section on the "Dialectics of Content" in this thesis (pp. 87-105) for an explanation of Gorz's life-historical reasons for this abstraction.

The latter process can be seen to be reflecting the former: the objective, de-subjectivizing abstraction implicit in the exchange principle underlies and structures Gorz's subjective orientation toward objectifying, and thus dehumanizing systems of thought.

But whereas so far Gorz has purposefully and successfully attempted to reinforce the dominance of that which is objectified in himself as a subject, and has managed to eradicate his subjectivity as thoroughly as possible, he is now shocked and disturbed enough not only to question, but also to try to reverse his tendency to objectify and hence annihilate himself. Although he now realizes his need for more subjectivity, he is still so entangled in the web of abstractions he has been cocooning himself in, that he is luring himself into meeting this new and undoubtedly threatening challenge to his life-historical understanding of himself by arguing that "the subjective conversion must begin by an objective investigation" (49). Striving to expose the essence of reality behind its ideological appearances, Marxism thus offers itself as a suitable epistemological tool for Gorz to uncover the factual sources of his objective alienation. He refuses, though, to subscribe to the vulgar materialist explanation of the self as being exclusively conditioned by external pressures, a stance which, subsuming subjective life-history entirely under objective world-history, strikes him as reductionist and too rigidly deterministic: Gorz sees himself as both a victim and

also an accomplice of his real situation. In other words, he is not solely the alienated, passive product of the requirements of the world he finds himself living in, but also the collaborating producer of this estrangement for which he ultimately and fundamentally, however, holds the present social and economic order responsible. Despite the Marxist soul he discovers in himself, then, Gorz comes to realize that the Marxist analysis, always implying "a moral criticism applied from the point of view of an ethic of Doing (58), can never shed light on what he refers to as the "first conditioning" or the "initial given situation" in early childhood which precedes the subsequent active and subjective complicity (80 and 82) in one's life-historical alienation, that is, in "the entire objective spirit of society" (60). Marxism therefore fails to provide a method for completely understanding oneself: "... complexes inherited from childhood are neither explicable nor soluble by Marxist analysis as alienations like any others, because the original choice functions at a moment and at a period where there is still neither history nor conscious practice nor possibility of deliberate consciousness. And to take his case, Marxism would not at all help him understand his prepersonal choice of nullity and the way in which this choice was confirmed during the course of his subsequent history, on the occasion of the discovery of his mixed parentage and his exclusion" (58). Gorz's rejection of Marxism thus does not amount to a wholesale condemnation of the Marxist project of creating a non-alienated

world; rather, it has its roots in the understanding that at this stage in the history of his objective (self-)obliteration, the Marxist emphasis on objective knowledge does not provide an adequate springboard for him to delve into his archeological work of trying to dig his self out from under the heavy weight of objectivity that has been suppressing and oppressing it. In other words, for Gorz, the bourgeois "World Citizen," the project of a world revolution, the subject of which is to be the proletarian masses, a project that postulates as its goal the ideal of an order in which "the citizen's labor will resolve all the problems of the person and totally [accomplish] him" (57), can hardly be seen to be able to counterbalance his already rather bad list toward idealized objectivity which threatens to drown him in a subject-less sea of abstraction and universality.

Thus Gorz finds it, of course, tremendously difficult--if not at first impossible--radically to abandon his ongoing anonymous and objective analyses and to adopt a more personal and subjective point of view on and in life. The habit of living in a universe of theoretical knowledge has become so ingrained in him that "he has never been able to live events without reflective mediation" (115). The history of the intellectual Gorz has been the history of his affective experience always being filtered through, reduced, and also eliminated by his consciousness: "He began to analyze what he was feeling or was going to feel ('You're going to behave like an ass and start suffering now'), what L. must be feeling, and to compose, in his

head, a scene; to tell himself the present as if it had already occurred, to recreate it in his imagination, to recover himself as its author (imaginary too, of course) in order to escape the intolerable intensity of lived experience" (250). The need to theorize himself out of concrete existence having become second nature, he even at the end of his conscious effort to "remember, repeat, and work through" his history, has still not managed to break out of the stranglehold of the ideal of pure objectivity and to cast off his distrust of the subjective episteme: he is still tempted by what he calls "'religious Marxism'," which is "an attitude that consists--by an extreme self-distrust, by a horror of one's own masturbational subjectivity, by the knowledge one has of everything that is flabby, inconsistent and cozily solitary in yourself; by the will to have done once and for all with your own complexities in order to recover objectivity, the thread of the real and of history--in regarding men of flesh and blood as no more than so much putty..." (287-8).

The extent to which Gorz continues to be caught up in the ideal of objective knowledge becomes glaringly obvious when, toward the very end of his attempt to find himself, he comes to the conclusion that undoubtedly he "had proceeded too quickly to interpretation by objectivity" (284). It does not occur to him in the least that the opposite comes much closer to the truth: he began abandoning the objective project far too late and has, in fact, never quite given it up at all. On the other hand, Gorz

has lived in the analytical conceptual realm for so long that his life-history is bound, in some fundamental way, to reflect and share this predicament. Writing about his existence in the terms in which he used to live it, Gorz demonstrates that for him as an intellectual the theories expounded in The Traitor are autobiographical. In other words, if his concrete life has been swallowed up by an overabundance of abstract thought, if his life has been a non-life, then his autobiography must dramatize this hyper-reflectivity and be, on some level, a non-autobiography, that is, a life-history which does not consist simply and exclusively of a straightforward prosaic narrative of a sequence of specific life-experiences. Hence in The Traitor, social, philosophical, and psychological theory is interwoven with intimate reminiscences of personal, concretely experienced history to such an extent that Gorz is entirely justified in retrospectively calling his work an "autobiographical essay".¹⁵ Struggling to overcome his heavy resistances to subjective knowledge, and not to yield to the temptations of an impersonal epistemology with which "to conceive the world as pure object entirely exterior to him" (94), he thus gropes in his life-historical essay for a more personal and subjective approach to the world and his position in it, since he has now come to realize that "he has gone as far as he can on the theoretical level, and that if he is to advance

¹⁵ Gorz, Fondements pour une morale, p. 18 (my translation); see also the section on the "Dialectics of Form" in this thesis (pp. 80-7).

further, he must return again to experience, to himself" (62). As the avenue of absolute objectivity which he had so obsessively steamrolled down for almost his entire life, turns out to have led him quite literally to a dead end, Gorz is now ready to try to establish meaning for himself and thus to fill his "identity vacuum," as Erik Erikson calls this state of derealization¹⁶, by exploring the previously shunned path of subjectivity.

On Subjectivity

Not surprisingly, the abstract thinker Gorz sets out conceptually to approach the terra incognita of subjectivity. Feeling uncomfortable with an epistemological stance he has hitherto all but rejected, he must first of all overcome his own opposition to, and deep-seated prejudice against the subjective mode as a valid means of gaining knowledge, not just about himself but also, by extension, about the world. Hence the opening pages of The Traitor contain more of a programmatic explanation of Gorz's intentions and goals than an already worked-out and tested methodology. Needing a certain warming-up time to immerse himself into this for him thoroughly novel project, Gorz finds it impossible radically and immediately to

¹⁶ Erik Erikson, "'Identity Crisis' in Autobiographic Perspective," Life History and the Historical Moment (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 21.

abandon his almost lifelong practice of abstracting from concrete reality. He cannot help but continue, at least partially, to look at life from an analytical, objective point of view. This is why he calls his first chapter "We," "since by using the first person plural he has shown that the 'we,' the community of the living, resides for him only in the ascetic access of intellects to that abstract universality from which, establishing their theory, they lose themselves in the anonymity of the generic" (95).¹⁷ But even the fact that he does occupy himself with the problems of his own person and identity (or rather, at this point, non-person and non-identity)--no matter how abstract and theoretical his deliberations still are--constitutes not only a tremendous challenge to his way of being, but also a significant break with his previous impersonal work. This is an all-important first step towards regaining a meaning in life which so far he has--unknown to himself until recently--been denying himself. Gorz therefore realizes after only a few pages of this new kind of writing in which he does not disavow his own existence, and thus does not commit treason against himself, that The Traitor even in its embryonic form is already more important to him than Fondements pour une morale, a work to which he devoted nine entire years of his life. It is only in the second chapter, and in the subsequent sections of

¹⁷ Germaine Brée's allegation that this "we" section deals with Gorz's "family" is thus entirely unfounded (Narcissus Absconditus: The Problematic Art of Autobiography in Contemporary France [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], p. 12).

his autobiographical essay, however, that concrete accounts of his life-history dominate Gorz's clearly-stated attempt to reverse his fatal obsession with trying to lose himself and to eradicate his personal identity in his writing; he now intends to speak in the first person singular and--as he programmatically and somewhat idealistically puts it just before he launches into the most explicitly autobiographical and subjective section of The Traitor--"to recover his phantoms and to reassert himself, the subject at last of a situation developed on his account, a situation in which he will see the totality of his means in order to make himself a man and free--instead of being, as he is now, their sad dupe and complacent victim" (95).

Desiring to establish meaning, that is, an identity, for himself by (re)appropriating his own life-history, Gorz endeavors to write the purposefully and consciously subjective story of his objective dispossession and negation as a subject. Instead of relying exclusively on universal arguments--as he traditionally did--to create and communicate meaning, he now provides himself as well as the reader with a wealth of life-historical images which, rather than destroying reality by conceptualizing it, bring it to life through their particularity. In other words, Gorz manages vividly to illustrate the crucial stages of his development which so far he had--if at all--only grappled with from the safe and objectifying distance of social and psychological analyses.

Rather than making the central issues of his life--the most prominent and far-reaching of which are his complex of non-identification, his desire to be Other, and his glorification of the mind and of will power at the expense of the body and emotions--disappear in a haze of generalizations and abstractions, and thus theorizing himself out of existence, Gorz now recontextualizes them and lets them and thereby himself take shape in front of his and his readers' eyes by concretizing his objective non-identity and giving it a subjective, identifiable, and experienciable (nachvollziehbar) colouring. Tracing the history of his negation as a human being, exemplifying the existential predicament of not having an identity, and thus showing the price of living a false life, he for the first time abandons his usual uninvolved and alienated spectatorial stance and tackles himself, intending "to start from the personal choice--that is, to understand how one has arrived at one's condition, how one has chosen oneself starting from there, how one has let oneself be infected by it, half victim, half accomplice, how it has been possible that one has agreed to live it" (46).

In his attempt to liberate himself from his "subjective alienations"--his unfamiliarity with and insecurity about the terms of his new endeavor become obvious when he asks himself whether "subjective alienations" is "the right word" (57)--Gorz therefore reactivates his autobiographical memory not so much because he has conceptually come to the understanding that it

can be an effective agent against historical oblivion¹⁸ or that subjectivity, as Herbert Marcuse puts it, "today, in the totalitarian period, ... has become a political value as a counterforce against aggressive and exploitative socialization"¹⁹, but predominantly because the subjective investigation into his exile from concrete life experiences offers itself as the urgently and desperately needed only way out of an actual existential impasse. Externalizing and working through internalized social pressures, he now endeavors, since the world has fallen out of him (146) and he has fallen out of the world, to find a home for his socially homeless subjectivity by dealienating himself and inserting himself as a subject into lived and living reality, and by reinscribing himself, in the form of a multi-dimensional account of his one-dimensional world, into the social and historical realm of concrete experience. If it is, in fact, true, as Adorno maintains, that, according to "its present polemical value in the philosophy of history, unreduced subjectivity can function more objectively than objectivistic reductions"²⁰ ; then The Traitor constitutes Gorz's attempt to untie "the knot of objective contradictions"(176) that he is with the help of subjective knowledge rather than exclusively and unwaveringly pursuing objective analyses of his life situation which would only

¹⁸ See Ernest Schachtel, Metamorphosis, pp. 286-304.

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, p. 5.

²⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, "Subject and Object," p. 506.

reinforce and not resolve his primary dilemma, that is, his complex of non-identification.

Although The Traitor still participates in Gorz's original "terror of identification" because it is a written text and "the writer is an anonymous and invisible subject" (279), Gorz arrives nonetheless towards the end of his autobiographical work at a point where he is able, for the first time ever, to conceive of the potentiality that his life-story could become a tool for substantially changing the nature of the relationship between himself and others. The critical step he would have to make would be to assume responsibility for himself and his writing by using the first person singular: "... and I have acquired at least the possibility of doing this since at last the knowledge I have gained of myself meets my lived experience" (280). This constitutes a decisive turning point: from now on Gorz need not any more, in an act of intellectual arrogance, declare himself an absolute and artificially heave himself on the pedestal of abstract universality by imposing his own anonymity and non-identity on "the 'we,' the community of the living" (95). His personal experience of a complex of non-identification thus turns out not to be an abstractly generalizable and transferable natural state of affairs, but rather the outcome of concretely identifiable social and historical constellations.

However, travelling along the path of subjectivity and discovering it to be a useful avenue of approach to the problem

of his non-identity, Gorz nevertheless does not entirely abandon the path of objectivity which he had previously followed so obsessively and exclusively. In other words, he is not going from the one extreme to the other, replacing his depersonalized and alienating idolatry of objectivity with an equally estranging narcissistic cult of the self; in fact, he would have in all-likelihood found it impossible to do so, given his life-historically embedded doubts about the epistemological validity of subjectivity. In his autobiographical account he avoids fetishizing either the objective or the subjective moment, and manages not to indulge in unmediated objectivity or subjectivity, thus gaining a critical understanding of himself and the sociocultural context in which he has been living a false life. He is now able to do an epistemological volte-face in the closing pages of his life-historical investigation: he comes to the realization that "the intellectual, if he cannot keep from being one, is objectively on the side of the revolutionary forces, of historical negativity, and [and this is a radical transformation for the hitherto abstract thinker Gorz] he must be there subjectively. This is the intellectual's only chance of reality" (294). For the intellectual Gorz, the securing of subjective evidence for his existence, the process of which is recorded in The Traitor, constitutes his last-minute attempt to take that chance and thus to arrive at a sense of reality for himself.

On the Dialectics of Subjectivity and Objectivity

Prior to Gorz starting out on his autobiographical odyssey, his life-historically explicable desubjectivization of the world and his concomitant objectification of reality had ultimately resulted in a complete reification of his thought, a process that characterizes what Frederic Jameson calls a kind of "academic thinking which mistakes its own conceptual categories for solid parts and pieces of the real world itself".²¹ In other words, Gorz's meticulously constructed idealized systems of thought were but a petrified fantasy without any identified and identifiable source. Eliminating specific lived experience as an epistemological occasion, anonymous subject-less thinking backfires, turns against its object, and falsifies objectivity itself by reducing the scope of its universal relevance: "The ideal of the depersonalization of knowledge for the sake of objectivity retains of the latter nothing but its *caput mortuum*".²² Objective thought had been fostered so lopsidedly by the intellectual Gorz that there was no balance between objectivity and subjectivity any more; as a result, the body of objective knowledge had gained such an imposing weight that it became stuck and caused its subjective counterpart to become

²¹ Frederic Jameson, Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), p. 56.

²² Theodor W. Adorno, "Zu Subjekt und Objekt," p. 161 (my translation). E. B. Ashton's version is at "Subject and Object," p. 505.

disembodied and thrown up and off the seesaw of the dialectical process. This standstill, this lack of movement, challenge, and resistance constituted a dead end in terms of both real dialectic ("Realdialektik") and dialectic of concepts ("Begriffsdialektik")²³ : Gorz's theories were a lifeless exercise in soliloquy and had become politically irrelevant and noncommittal; his life had turned empty, insubstantial, and equally noncommittal and monological and thus unliveable. Hence Gorz's need to reinsert his idealistic abstractions into their concrete contexts--rather than imagining his concepts to be real objects in the world, he must consciously and purposefully turn his ideas into things, that is, in the context of his autobiographical work, translate them into images and thereby concretize them. Defetishizing his theoretical intelligence that separates him from real knowledge entails, of course, becoming self-critical and self-reflective: Gorz needs to talk about the questionable conditions from which his conceptual abstract thought springs and under which it is produced. His task thus is to rediscover the human being in and underneath his own alienated and estranging products. In short, it is life-historically indispensable for Gorz to restore the subject-object dialectics.

The concept of subject-object dialectics proceeds from the Hegelian principle that the self and the world are always in

²³ Arnold Hauser, The Sociology of Art, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago/London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 337.

reciprocal dependence on each other, that there is a nexus between these antithetical concepts ("Begriffsdialektik") and the antagonistic reality ("Realdialektik") to which they refer and from which they are derived. Subject and object, then, are not two independent sets of phenomena or actualities, they are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are chained to each other to such an extent that they cannot only not exist without each other, but that one cannot, in any dialectical relationship, conceive of the one term without, in fact, having the notion of the other at least in the back of one's mind.²⁴ However, as Arnold Hauser convincingly argues in an extremely substantive treatise on the problem, dialectics must not stop at the "reciprocal influence" of "antithetical facts and standpoints" and at "their mutual adaptation to each other"--their correlation is one of "mutual penetration".²⁵ What this means is that individual consciousness and its object, the world, are not just in continual tension, their relationship being constantly renegotiated. They do not just condition and occasion each other by dialectically reacting against and acting on each other; instead "the decisive moment of [their] dialectic" is the fact that "the constitutive function of the one moment [is] the

²⁴ For an illustration of this dialectical process, see my discussion of a seemingly one-sidedly "negative" author like Beckett, in "Samuel Beckett: The Dialectics of Hope and Despair," College Literature, 8, 3 (Fall 1981), 227-248.

²⁵ Arnold Hauser, The Sociology of Art, p. 333.

genesis of the other".²⁶ The world (object) is formed and forms itself owing to the fact that the self (subject) produces it while also being part of it, and conversely the self is constituted and constitutes itself in that the world works on it as well as being substance of it. The essence of the subject-object dialectic consists, then, in a dialogical interpenetration of its two antithetical components.

The question now becomes: How does this dialectic apply to the story of André Gorz? On the level of his life-historical development, Gorz comes to recognize in the course of his autobiographical tracing of evidence for his existence the dialectical movement between subject and object in accordance with which, as Hauser puts it, "the subject becomes what he is only because of them [the social structures], the personification of a social being's individual freedom and of the collective constraint of an individual".²⁷ Gorz himself calls this process his "dialectical becoming" (78-9, 147, 268, 281).

What will be of prime concern in this analysis, however, is not so much the question of how Gorz dialectically evolved in the real world, but rather that of how he translates the discovery of this development into a "dialectical becoming" in

²⁶ Hauser, p. 340. The best pictorial presentation of this interpenetration is, I believe, the Taoist circle of ying and yang polarities (☯) which, if imagined to be in a constant flux, can serve as a perfect illustration of the concept of dialectics.

²⁷ Hauser, p. 336.

his autobiographical narrative. In this respect it is possible to detect two dialectical movements in The Traitor, one being vertical, as it were, and the other being horizontal. The former consists of Gorz sinking "into subjectivity until it hits bottom: society"²⁸ --to use an image of Russell Jacoby's--while at the same time probing into the social objectivity until it lays bare its integral part: the subject. If the individual is, indeed, as Marx contends, "the ensemble of the social relations,"²⁹ , that is, if objective society is essentially substance and origin of the individual Gorz, and if his objective theories contain the negative presence of his subjectivity (his repressed and negated subjectivity), then The Traitor constitutes a dialectics, an "objective (or nonsubjective) theory of subjectivity"³⁰ . Hence Gorz's autobiographical exploration of himself as a being of culture is a critique of civilization and its subjectively experienced objective discontents, an indictment of a world which functions at the expense of suppressed life. Negating his negation by concretizing his life-historical undoing, and by situating the

²⁸ Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia, p. 79.

²⁹ Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," trans. W. Lough, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, Vol.5 (New York: International Publ., 1976), p.4. Marcuse overlooks this Marxist axiom in his Aesthetic Dimension when he writes, in uncharacteristically non-dialectical fashion, that "with the affirmation of the inwardness of subjectivity, the individual steps out of the network of exchange relationships, withdraws from the reality of bourgeois society, and enters another dimension of existence" (p. 4).

³⁰ Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia, p. xxii.

residues of his subjectivity in the context of the lived experience of the suppression and repression of his subjectivity, the subject-less intellectual Gorz tries to rid himself of his false objectivist consciousness in order to establish an identity for himself and to be able to speak in the first person singular.

The second--horizontal--dialectical movement in Gorz's autobiographical narrative concerns its form. Formally, The Traitor oscillates between, on the one hand, abstract speculations on the author, on his times, and on issues in contemporary social and psychological theory, couched in scientific conceptual terminology, and, on the other hand, intimate personal recollections, written in a concrete, graphic, and vivid language, which are at first introduced somewhat shyly and hesitantly but are later put to use more and more frequently and confidently. These formally antithetical elements dialectically act on each other and push each other forward so that ultimately Gorz is able to determine the key issue that has been governing his life as a complex of non-identification. The method Gorz employs in preparing the groundwork for him to become a subject is thus a doubly dialectical one: he both brackets subjective and objective knowledge together, bringing out their mutual interpenetration, and pursues his subjectivity "till it issues into the social and historical events that

performed and deformed the subject".³¹

1) Dialectics of Form

In his struggle to (re)constitute himself as a subjective human being, an intention stated in the very first pages of his autobiographical account, Gorz frequently relapses--probably to the surprise of those readers who expect to read a traditional straightforward life-history--into highly conceptual deliberations. In fact, The Traitor consists of such a mixture of objective and subjective knowledge that it is rather difficult to establish where exactly Gorz's actual as opposed to his intentional priority lies and to decide whether he lapses from concrete life-historical recollections into abstract thought or vice versa.³² Instead of writing an impersonal monological, objective treatise as his Fondements had been, however, he is now working on a dialogical autobiographical essay with his subjectivity at its core, the discovery of which is dialectically driven onward by his objective analyses of subjective life-situations at the same time that these abstractions are given life and taken further by his autobiographical findings. The characteristic principle of

³¹ Jacoby, p. 79.

³² As was mentioned earlier, though, his theoretical ventures must, to some extent, also be regarded as autobiographical material, see p. 66 this thesis.

Gorz's procedure in writing The Traitor--the construction of a mixed, non-identical form--is thus the same as that which Frederic Jameson sees operating in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory, namely "a constant shuttling back and forth between the historical facts of the world of artistic practice [applying Jameson's observation to Gorz's autobiographical work, this should read "life practice"] and the abstract conceptual categories through which that practice is perceived, at the same time that they reflect it".³³ Thus The Traitor, using the method elaborated in its abstract predecessor³⁴, constitutes an Aufhebung of Fondements in that Gorz's purely conceptual writing is "being overtaken by a more developed form in which the more primitive is partly dissolved and extinguished and partly retained and embodied" and is thus dialectically transposed to a higher level³⁵. The result of this Aufhebung, of this dialectical process, is a mixture of subjective inwardness and objective expression, the two antithetical elements emphasizing, intensifying, and qualifying each other. Gorz's specific subjective history is given a more general collective perspective by being analyzed in terms of universal theories, while his abstract thought is turned into a more personal knowledge as a result of being particularized and substantiated by its author's actual experiences. Hence The Traitor

³³ Frederic Jameson, Marxism and Form, pp. 57-8.

³⁴ Gorz, Fondements pour une morale, p. 18.

³⁵ Arnold Hauser, The Sociology of Art, p. 360.

dialectically mediates between image and concept, between narration and reflection, theory and experience, literature and social science.

This formal--as well as thematic--tension between subjectivity and objectivity results in a narrational anti-illusionist estrangement effect (Verfremdungseffekt), as Brecht calls it. The Traitor is not just an easily consumed, conventional dramatic "Life" to which the readers have direct access and with which they can comfortably empathize; instead, it is a constructed, episodic "Life and Reflection on a Life" that distances and confronts the readers. Shifting back and forth between life-historical reminiscences and abstract and self-critical reflections on the author's "dialectical becoming" as well as on the social and psychological theories used to elucidate this historical development, Gorz allows neither the readers nor, by the way, himself merely to become a contemplative spectator of a particular private existence. Rather than simply entrusting the readers with and leaving them to the unquestionable authority of the author's lived experience, and thus fostering a passive consumer attitude towards his text, Gorz declines to fulfill the readers' traditional expectations as to the form of an autobiographical account. He changes and therefore estranges it. This creative challenge potentially involves the readers in reconstructing the text, initiates new processes of coming to consciousness, and makes it possible to dissent from the author's interpretation

not only of his life-history but also, of course, of general theoretical issues. In this sense, Gorz's method of dialectical montage, his interlacing of contemporary history, theory, and individual experience, renders his "autobiographical essay" much more transparent and thus more universally valid and generally comprehensible and relevant than any conventional autobiography modelled on established narrative structures could ever hope to be.

By calling The Traitor an "autobiographical essay" Gorz also conceptually conjoins two historically separate genres of literature, the practical bracketing of which prompted Jürg Altwegg to discuss Gorz's assault on traditional patterns of life-historical writing in terms of a "loss of genre"³⁶. However, instead of presupposing normative narrative models--models moreover which were mostly defined and canonized during the 18th and 19th century, the "golden age" of modern Western autobiography--and then classifying contemporary autobiographical works according to these ideal types (a practice which led Bernd Neumann to cut off the future of the

³⁶ Jürg Altwegg, "Exemplarische Existenz eines europäischen Intellektuellen," FAZ, 18 Nov 1980, L 10 (literary supplement) (my translation). On the mixed form of The Traitor see also Georges Sion, "La littérature éclatée," Revue générale, 15 August 1958, 131-2. Compare also Sandra Frieden's study of a "confusion of genres" in Christa Wolf's autobiographical A Model Childhood: "'Falls es strafbar ist, die Grenzen zu verwischen': Autobiographie, Biographie und Christa Wolf," trans. Bernd Fischer, in Vom anderen und vom Selbst: Beiträge zu Fragen der Biographie und Autobiographie, eds. Reinhold Grimm und Jost Hermand (Königstein: Athenäum, 1982), p. 158 (my translation); Bernd Vesper, for example, calls his autobiographical work Die Reise a "novel-essay" ("Romanessay").

autobiographical genre as a result of having systematized and turned into an absolute model its past, and to come to the categorial, apodictical, and somewhat absurd conclusion that because of the now dominating "other-directed character" [Riesman] "there can be no more autobiographical subject" and that "the lack of a 'continuous psychology' makes autobiography as the [hi]story of the development of individuality impossible")³⁷, rather than being that prescriptive, it makes much more sense to acknowledge the wide diversity of autobiographical writing practiced today and to analyze their heterogeneous features, all the more so as a survey of the existing body of criticism forces one to conclude that, as Avrom Fleishman puts it, "there are no agreed upon norms for a genre of autobiography"³⁸. Contemporary autobiographical works in general, and Gorz's life-historical narrative in particular resist being subsumed under rigid and restrictive abstract and normative categories, since they incorporate a variety of genres: this kind of writing is an open forum with an open form.

³⁷ Bernd Neumann, Identität und Rollenzwang: Zur Theorie der Autobiographie (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1970), p. 189 (my translation), also p. 183. For an argument against the canonization of autobiography and in favor of its historization, see also: Klaus-Detlef Müller, "Probleme der Gattungsgeschichtsschreibung literarischer Zweckformen--am Beispiel der Autobiographie," in Textsorten und literarische Gattungen: Dokumentation des Germanistentages in Hamburg vom 1. bis 4. April 1979, ed. Vorstand der Vereinigung der deutschen Hochschulgermanisten (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1983), p. 304.

³⁸ Avrom Fleishman, Figures of Autobiography, p. 35.

Subverting and estranging (verfremden) the conventional form of a self-contained autobiographical account, The Traitor (re)produces the alienated and discontinuous nature of its subject. Just as Gorz, being "only half, half Jew, half Aryan, a half man" (99) and always wanting to be Other, defies any unambiguous identification, the story of his life, the various elements of which are in a productive dialectical relationship with one another, is not unified and does not allow any clear classification: part essay, part autobiographical narrative; The Traitor is a half-breed. "Fallen apart is the identity of experience, the continuous and articulated life, which only allows for the posture of the narrator,"³⁹ Adorno says in an essay on the position of the story teller in the contemporary novel, and Gorz's self-reflective, existentially uncertain, and episodic discovery of his complex of non-identification eloquently and painfully exemplifies this contention. It is exactly here, in the identity of the autobiographical narrator's experience, which has split asunder, that the vertical and horizontal dialectical movements in Gorz's work intersect, that the form of his writing and its content converge, so that the discontinuous narrative constitutes the discontinuous narrator who produces it. In other words, The Traitor's non-identical

³⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman," Noten zur Literatur (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), p. 42 (my translation).

form expresses its non-identical content.⁴⁰ Hence the subject-object antagonism--the driving force behind Gorz's life-historical investigation and also its subject--finds expression in the mixed form of his essay to recover his identity. Participating in a fundamental way in its author's predicament, The Traitor therefore gives evidence as to how Gorz is still entangled in his fate, but at the same time also as to how he has already begun to transcend it by naming and identifying it. This "process of intellectual experience" "whose moments interweave like in a tapestry"⁴¹ is precisely the characteristic constituent of the essay as form: "He writes essayistically who composes experimentally, that is, who turns his object back and forth, questions, touches, examines it, and thinks it through, who approaches it from different directions, and collects, in his mind's glance, that which he sees, and turns into words that which the object, under the circumstances created in the process of writing, allows to be seen".⁴²

⁴⁰ See also the section in this thesis on language and the problem of the narrator switching back and forth between the third and the first person singular (pp. 127-37).

⁴¹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," Noten zur Literatur (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), p. 21 (my translation). See also Georg Lukàcs, "On the Nature and the Form of the Essay: A Letter to Leo Popper," Soul and Form, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974), pp. 1-18.

⁴² Max Bense, quoted in Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," p. 25 (my translation).

2) Dialectics of Content

The subject the fate of which is being thus negotiated essayistically in The Traitor is the author himself, is Gorz's subjectivity, or what is left of it. In his endeavor to come to consciousness of the possibility of his being the subject rather than the object of history, Gorz delves into the remnants of his subjective being and manages to disclose not only the central issues of his "becoming"--his complex of non-identification, his desire to be Other, and his glorification of the mind and of will power at the expense of the body and of emotions--but also their anchorage in the objective social totality. This exploration constitutes a second dialectical movement which complements (while at the same time finding expression in) the formal dialectical oscillation between subjective and objective narrative moments. Here Gorz encircles his crippled subjectivity until it reveals its core: "the social configurations that suppress and oppress the subject".⁴³

a) The Complex of Non-identification

The specific social and historical constellations, then, which define the terms of the existential dilemma that Gorz "remembers, repeats, and works through" in his autobiographical

⁴³ Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia, p. xxii.

essay, are characterized by rifts, splits, and contradictions: both the family and the city (country) he grows up in are divided against themselves. Being born a half Jew, half Aryan in the Vienna of the 1920's and 1930's, a Vienna that is increasingly coming under the influence and domination of German fascism whose cult of the masses and subsequent mass annihilation reduces the individual subject to an until then unprecedented unimportance, to an insignificantly small moment of the social whole, Gorz from the very beginning of his life finds himself between two stools, as it were. In other words, owing to the social realities that surround and invade him, he is programmed both historico-individually and historico-culturally to feel incomplete, imperfect, excluded, and hence alienated not only from the world outside but also, and this is of more importance and more serious consequence, from himself as a whole being, a being in accord with itself.

In the familial sphere it is particularly his all-powerful yet conflict-laden Aryan mother who--frustrated by her Jewish husband's almost pathetic and chronic weakness, lucklessness, and mediocrity (he is a "box manufacturer with money and business worries" [130]) that thwarted all of her ambitions, while at the same time hoping for her son to compensate her for this disappointment and to satisfy her fantasies of a handsome "virile aristocratic super-Aryan" (128)--pressures her son into identifying with a role she has designed for him, a role which turns out to be incompatible with his desires and needs. His

mother thus conditions his complex of non-identification. In society at large it is the ever-growing strength of the fascist regime which makes Gorz, the introverted, powerless child full of doubts about his identity, vacillate back and forth between feelings of reverent admiration for, and sceptical disapproval of the Nazis' self-assured exhibitionistic authority, brutality, and omnipotence. Unable to identify with anybody, he turns into a passive alienated and isolated spectator of the objective world around him in which he feels he does not have a place; and limits his involvement in life to mental analyses of the contradictions of reality (see particularly 91-2). Plagued by continuous doubts about himself and his value as a human being, not being offered any convincing model for identification, that is, one that corresponds to his personal needs, and hence incapable both of forming a definite self-identity and of seeing the world in meaningful unambiguous terms, the wavering child develops a "terror of identification": the discovery of the discrepancy between what he is for himself and what he is for others (namely, exactly not what he is for himself), between what he perceives to be his subjective possibilities and the objective expectations other people confront him with, is too traumatic for Gorz to be at peace with himself or the world.

Thus in terms of both his family history and sociopolitical history in which the former is embedded and takes its course (these two moments of his development are obviously not isolated from one another; they are indissolubly linked), Gorz is

suppressed and oppressed by what he fittingly calls the "persecuting forces of reification" (134) which press him to conform with the ruling way of thinking and being, to adopt the values and norms presented to him by those in power, and to act accordingly. Negating his particularity and individuality, and attempting to turn him into somebody he does not want to be and feels he cannot be, that is, into his contrary, the fascists' as well as his mother's tutelage aims at forcing him to be reasonable against his better judgement and very own interest. Just as, subjectively speaking, it is not reasonable for him to conform to their expectations, objectively speaking they are so powerful that it does make sense: "The will to live finds itself dependent on the denial of the will to live: self-preservation annuls all life in subjectivity".⁴⁴ Thus any possibility for Gorz to develop an identity and to be a subject in his own right is effectively eliminated: "The world is shutting itself off from him" (125).

This uninhabitable, contradictory, and inimical world which expels him, while he at the same time internalizes this antagonism, is the world of the exchange process. If the complex of non-identification is Gorz's primary complex, then the exchange principle to which it is a reaction and which it reflects, is the principle that underlies and defines the society which withholds an identity from Gorz. Adorno describes

⁴⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), p. 229.

it thus: "The exchange principle ... is fundamentally akin to the principle of identification. Exchange is the social model of the principle, and without the principle there would be no exchange; it is through exchange that non-identical individuals and performances become commensurable and identical. The spread of the principle imposes on the whole world an obligation to become identical, to become total."⁴⁵ Thus in the exchange process individualities are distorted into something other than what they are, their specificity and peculiarity are extinguished by being made exchangeable. Adorno's contention that this process permeates "men through and through and [objectifies] each of their impulses as formally commensurable variations of the exchange relationship"⁴⁶ is corroborated and life-historically illustrated by Gorz's upbringing, the alienating, depersonalizing, and objectifying nature of which Gorz himself describes, interestingly enough in the language of economics, as a tyrannical process during which you are "being made to feel that your 'I' does not belong to you but to others, and that in order to come into possession of it you must deserve it, pay for it with obedience as if it were an object you had pawned, thereby contracting a debt which must be discharged" (273).

⁴⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, p. 146 (For reasons of consistency I replaced the terms "barter principle" and "barter" in the original translation with "exchange principle" and "exchange".)

⁴⁶ Adorno, Minima Moralia, p. 229.

However, what Gorz gets back from the societal pawnbroker is, of course, not his I, but "a mask beneath which his contradictions intensify" (210), as he puts it. Reproducing the subject-object split that had originally forced Gorz to trade in his ego which is still in the process of being developed, this character mask "structures the whole individual in its social existence and in its forms of consciousness"⁴⁷ and thus turns Gorz into somebody he is not. In other words, instead of pursuing his self-identity, he becomes identical with the world of the pawnbroker in whose currency he is now calculable. Giving up his original will to and desire for self-realization, he gives in to society's universalizing jurisdiction over its members, and this is precisely the quintessential law of the exchange principle: the particular (commodity/identity) is subsumed under the general (money/character mask), the concrete is translated into the abstract.⁴⁸

The extent to which this principle of exchange applies to the principle of identification becomes obvious by looking at Gorz's own characterization of the former in light of his life-historical (non-)realization of the latter. His analysis of

⁴⁷ Jutta Matzner, "Der Begriff der Charaktermaske bei Karl Marx," Soziale Welt, 15 (1964), 136 (my translation). Compare also Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment: "Here in America there is no difference between a man and his economic fate. A man is made by his assets, income, position, and prospects. The economic mask coincides completely with a man's inner character" (p. 211).

⁴⁸ See also the section on "Objectivity" in this thesis (pp. 56-67).

the result of the exchange process accurately describes the outcome of his unsuccessful bid for individuation: being a character mask means the annihilation of the concrete (his budding identity) in the abstract (the character mask), the triumph of the imaginary over the real, the denial of diversity, and the annihilation of concrete doing and being in a perfectly impersonal having (267-8).⁴⁹ This destruction of his subjectivity then "permits" him "to pass unnoticed" (268) as he becomes an identity-less cog in the machine of the exchange society. In the process of his socialization, the potential subject Gorz is therefore depersonalized, objectified, and supplied with a character mask; his self-identity being nipped in the bud, as it were, he is integrated into and disappears in the whole, the social totality: "The individual law is a puzzle-picture of the exchange of equivalents".⁵⁰

b) The Desire to be Other

The world of pressures, of demands, of false, that is, for him unrealizable models for identification, and of denied individuation, a world in which one wants, "with a stick and a

⁴⁹ See particularly p. 106 for an instance of Gorz not at all feeling at one with who he is portraying to others.

⁵⁰ Adorno, Minima Moralia, p. 161.

carrot, fabricate a life and an identity for him"⁵¹ , as Gorz puts it in a short autobiographical piece published a few years after The Traitor, is experienced by him as so tutelary and alienating that very early on in his life he begins to want to be Other (for the first time probably when his sister is adored for her beauty and he consequently wants to be a girl [137]; later on he is adored for what he is not: a native speaker of French [141]), Other than what he is expected to be as well as Other than what he is. This tendency toward singularization, contestation, self-denial, and self-defeat, that is, his conscious dissociation from everything which is, shall become a dominating law in Gorz's life:" Man, for him, [is] always the Other, not only Other than himself, but Other than those whose situation he [shares] and whom he [may] have called his peers" (133; also 103-4, 106, 132). Interestingly enough, already his Jewish father had, almost from the beginning of his life onward, been convinced that "greatness and ambition [are] other people's business" (118), a point of view which turned out to be, partly at least, a self-fulfilling prophecy in light of his later position vis-à-vis the rule of his domineering wife and that of the governing Nazi regime. Unlike his father, however, who submits without any resistance to what he considers his fate, Gorz does not surrender that easily: his desire for self-government is so great that he both dreams of being

⁵¹ André Gorz, "Le vieillissement," Les Temps Modernes, 17, No. 187 (Dec 1961), 642 (my translation).

somebody he is not and also actually attempts to change his nature, to take on the characteristics he is so inexplicably lacking, and to be Other. Consciously desiring to be the opposite of what he is, he desperately hopes to escape the repressive and reifying world that denies him his identity: "By wanting to be a Negro, a Chinese, a hermaphrodite, a squirrel, a cowering lemur (or some other animal: when he [isolates] himself under the sheets, under a sofa, in a closet, or [walks] on all fours barking or mewling), he [is] seeking to escape the human realm and its coercion" (134-5). His fantasies of being special and extraordinary, repudiating the whole objectifying and universalizing "social and cultural nexus, the origin of his complications and his exclusion, ... of his alienation, his laceration, and his guilt" (113), are, then, ultimately a critique and negation of the socially imposed denial of his individuation under the exchange principle. Against his instrumentalization by the powers that be he thus registers his will to autonomy and particularity.

Gorz's longing to be Other, though, does not limit itself to flights of fancy. However, his real attempts to alter his nature--through, for example, physical or religious asceticism--while of course also motivated by the desire to be a somebody, end up making him a nobody divided against himself: he now lives in conformity with alien standards and rules and is identified with and integrated into the social totality. By negating who he is, by forsaking his potential self-identity,

and by willing himself Other, he does not negate the world which imposes this self-denial on him; instead he follows its law and becomes identical with it. His alienation is therefore all the more extensive and complete: the split between his self and the world, between subjective and objective reason, now reappears within himself (106, 114). In other words, as his rejection of the maternal and societal models of identification consists of consciously adopting a role different from the ones he is being offered, his revolt still reproduces the social pressure for him not to be who he thinks and feels he is, thus contributing to his self-alienation. Estranged from himself, he participates in the abrogation of his selfhood: "Because he [has] originally [been] convinced of his fundamental inadequacy with regard to the 'I' he should have been, he [has] done everything, objectively, to make his conviction a matter of fact" (277).⁵² At the bottom of his subjective rebellion, then, is the objective principle which denies subjectivity. Gorz's flights of fancy of being a squirrel or a cowering lemur are as conditioned and structured by the social objectivity that necessitates this kind of escape from the human community as are his real attempts to will himself Other--both reflect a world that does not allow self-identity and makes people divest themselves of anything not commensurable with the social whole. Thus, in Gorz's subjective endeavors to be Other is still revealed the objective dominance

⁵² See also the section on "Will Power" in this thesis (pp. 98-105).

of the desubjectivizing exchange principle which refuses people their particularity and specificity by rendering them exchangeable, and subsumes them under the common denominator of universal alienation.

As Gorz does not see, in the world which is, any potentiality for him to realize himself as a human being, he tries "to suppress himself as a subject, to stop living (erleben) in order to stop realizing his lived contradictions at the same time" (75-6). Hence the rather frequent instances--on the level of concrete life-historical experience--of Gorz concealing himself in various hiding places where he seeks security from and warmth within the threatening and cold world of oppressive facts and--on the level of narrative metaphor--of Gorz describing his intellectual retreat as a shelter from and in a hostile world. Both Gorz the child and adolescent and Gorz the author of learned books endeavor to screen themselves from and guard themselves against reality: "Perhaps that's why he was always concealing himself under draperies, in dark holes--trying to plug up the world into which he leaked away by an agonizing hemorrhage of his being, to wrap himself in protecting limits as if in a quilt" (69), Gorz writes about himself the child, having just portrayed himself the writer as somebody working "alone in a room he thinks of as a hole in the middle of the world" (64)⁵³. In this room, in this shell against reality, the intellectual Gorz "annihilates the world and himself by the

⁵³ See also p. 124, note 90 this thesis.

corrosive work of the mind" (64) just as the adolescent defeats and eliminates himself by willing himself Other in a world in which what is essential to him is inessential to others and what is essential to them does not have anything to do with him. To live in the inner sanctum of his mind is thus a means of reducing "to a minimum the lived contact with reality" (76), of "existing as little as possible" (75) in the real world of contradictions, alienation, and unhappiness. For Gorz the mind is both a refuge from a world in which he does not feel at home and does not count as an individual and which denies him the possibility of becoming a subject, and at the same time a tool for contesting and controlling this inhuman universe.

c) The Glorification of the Mind and of Will Power at the Expense of the Body and of Emotions

In order to avoid being hurt by the powerful reality of this inhuman world Gorz successfully all but represses his knowledge of it and makes himself at home within the four fortified walls of what he variously calls his mental "Non-Universe, the annihilated universe" (65), his "draftproof universe" (70), or his "unreal universe, woven from abstractions" (70). In this isolated and padded cell of his mind his concrete fears, conflicts, and contradictions are exiled

into what Freud refers to as an "internal foreign territory".⁵⁴ His alienated and alienating flights from his actual homeground, as it were, allow him to imagine himself to be the architect of his fortune as well as of that of others, for in his idealist speculations he solves the problems of humanity at large. Interiorizing his existence altogether, he solipsistically rises into the sphere of his intellect and thus becomes self-sufficient and omnipotent, and assumes control and power over the world which, below his cloud-cuckoo-land, threatens to dominate him and to rob him of his identity. Thus his entirely abstract and conceptual mammoth treatise Fondements pour une morale is a tool for "thinking oneself".⁵⁵

However, retreating into an inner exile and repressing reality does not mean eliminating it; it only means displacing it and therefore perpetuating its effects: commenting on the "'true historical source of repression'," Freud writes to Ernest Jones that "'every internal barrier of repression is the historical result of an external obstruction. Thus: the opposition is incorporated within'."⁵⁶ As The Traitor makes painfully obvious, Gorz has a long history of translating outer conflicts into problems of volition and consciousness, the most

⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," trans. James Strachey, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), Vol. 22, p. 57.

⁵⁵ André Gorz, Fondements, p. 23.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia, p. 32.

conspicuous instance of which is his effort, in order to become Other, to achieve the intrinsic strength, muscles, and body his peers enjoy by sheer extrinsic discipline and will power: "He, by nature, [has] none [nature]. What they [are] naturally, he [has] become by having wanted to" (103). His very attempt to develop his body, then, reveals his deep alienation from it. Disembodied ever since his early childhood (271-2), Gorz fosters his mental faculties and lavishes care and attention on them in his existential struggle to change his nature. His intellect thus takes over the functions of his body, "the finalizing thought" replaces feeling (243): his perpetual abstractions are "intellectual gymnastics" (164) performed in order to spirit the world away and to make it into "a garden planted for and by the mind" (243)⁵⁷. This garden of the mind, though, is as dormant and inanimate as Sleeping Beauty's enchanted forest: Gorz's abstract, reasoning, and idealistic meditations put his brain to work, his being, however, to sleep. Discovering life rather than living, knowing rather than being⁵⁸, the intellectual Gorz renounces his instincts and represses his emotions, passions, and sensuality. The story of his denial as a particular, living and breathing human being and of his concomitant

⁵⁷ Placing all value on his mind and distorting the reality of his body, Gorz is firmly entrenched in the idealist tradition of Western history. For a succinct critique of the latter in terms of its alienation from the body, see Arthur Efron, "Philosophy, Criticism, and the Body," Paunch, Nos. 36-37 (1973), 72-162.

⁵⁸ See Norman Brown, Life against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History (New York: Vintage, [1959]), p. 171.

self-fabrication as a universal abstract mind thus life-historically illustrates D. H. Lawrence's indictment of contemporary body-repressive culture: "The history of our era is the nauseating and repulsive history of the crucifixion of the procreative body for the glorification of the spirit, of mental consciousness."⁵⁹

In Gorz's life this worship of the mind at the expense of the body is most commonly and frequently expressed in the form of writing. At one point in The Traitor, though, describing his previous entirely conceptual and alienating work as "the interminable labor of abstraction, which he [incarnates] in his manuscripts" (70), Gorz betrays not only his yearning for his thoughts to be made flesh, but also his profound self-deception about his intellectual undertaking: his Fondements, for example, will never produce its author's existence (184). His impulse to will himself going back to his childhood days of not being accepted for and himself not accepting who he was, the project of writing, ever since as a pupil he studiously copied his idolized French authors in order to be able to feel and think the way they did, has always been one of transforming himself, of fabricating himself as Other. As it turns out, however, he does not just become Other, he becomes Nobody: his abstractions take the life out of himself and the world and sink both into rigor mortis.

⁵⁹ D. H. Lawrence, "Introduction to These Paintings," in Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 569.

Hence The Traitor is an attempt at resuscitation and at breathing new life into his derealized universe by recovering the lost ground of concrete life-historical experiences. However, as Gorz himself must--somewhat begrudgingly perhaps--admit towards the end of his autobiographical rescue bid, "because this reflection upon myself has been made in writing and [intends] its completion in the form of the text, it necessarily [sums] up and [confirms] my fundamental choice to write because of my terror of identification. This text [can] therefore not hope to affect that choice; it [participates] in it" (279). In other words, The Traitor is again an attempt by Gorz to produce himself as Other, this time as Other than a conceptual being. If before he tried to abstract himself from the real and to become pure spirit, he now endeavors to tear himself away from the abstract and to reinstitute himself as a living human being. He does this, though, by using the same instrument: language, and the same method: sublimation, a mode that cannot hope to bring an end to the repression of the body by the mind which it itself is a form of.⁶⁰ The Traitor, thus, while helping Gorz to come to consciousness of the deadening effects of his life-long repression of his body by formulating them, participates in this suppression: it is still a substitute

⁶⁰ Compare Jutta Matzner who argues that the character mask can only be taken off in a negation of class society (136). Adorno, similarly writes: "Even the most radical reflection of the mind on its own failure is limited by the fact that it remains only reflection, without altering the existence to which its failure bears witness" ("Culture Criticism and Society," p. 32).

gratification, a proxy for the act of concretely changing himself.

The extent to which the author of The Traitor still subscribes to the ideal of the predominant importance of the mind is revealed when, discussing the dispossession of his body during his childhood, Gorz writes that "he [was] spoken by his body. Unrealizable significations, intentions he [was] certain he [did] not have because he [did] not understand them, [came] to inhabit him from outside, establishing themselves within him like parasites that eat away the flesh or, worse still, the consciousness..." (272). Damage done to the garden of his mind is still considered, almost as a matter of course, more dangerous than a threat to his body.⁶¹ Gorz's alienation from his body is further bespoken by the total denial of that which does not speak in The Traitor: the voice of the belly.⁶² Phantom-like though he was and still is in his all but purely intellectual curiosity and existence, Gorz has nevertheless always possessed a procreative body. In his life-story, however,

⁶¹ The life-history of someone whose top-heavy preoccupation with "higher things" at the expense of the stuff of the body literally pushes him out of existence can be read in Fritz Zorn's Mars.

⁶² The phrase "voice of the belly" stems from George Orwell ("The Art of Donald McGill") and is later used, in an expanded sense, by Wayne Burns in order to characterize what he calls, after Sancho Panza's guts and belly, the "Panzaic Principle," a down-to-earth power which undercuts the lofty idealism of Don Quixote. According to Burns, the Panzaic in a novel brings out "the discrepancy between ... impulses and professed ideals" [The Panzaic Principle (Vancouver: Pendejo Press, n. y., p. 32)], that is, it cuts through a myth or an ideal.

sexuality is conspicuous only by its almost complete absence, and this kind of "avoidance of sexual themes is," as Norman Brown maintains in an essay on the general ambiguities in the relation between culture and the body, "itself an evidence of the repression which deflected the libido toward sublimation".⁶³

The life-historical primacy of Gorz's intellect and the atrophy of his sexuality, that is, his aversion to the concrete world in general and to the body in particular, is very explicitly exposed when he categorically declares that he used to be convinced that "for him, the defect of all societies, as of any undertaking, [was] to be incarnated, to drag behind it style, themes, and instruments that [could not] be deduced by reason, and which therefore [could not] be assumed by reason," and also that the "absolute defect" of "every human action" was that it could not "be put down to an idea or a clear will" (213-4). However, what Gorz the raving sublimator and objectifier does not have an inkling of here, is that in despising "the grease of historical density" (214) in which particular human truths are caught, he himself is hopelessly stuck in an alienating, repressive idealist tar, as it were. Willing himself to be pure reason, he represses, as a result of

⁶³ Norman Brown, Life against Death, p. 140. See also Gorz's categoric--and, of course, protective--resistance against and, in light of his otherwise almost unquenchable thirst for knowledge, his curious lack of interest in, acquainting himself with Freud's theory of human sexuality: "He couldn't care less about the Freudian interpretations, their way of basing man on the libido regarded as irreducible; besides, he does not know them in detail and does not want to risk discussing them" (58).

the contradictory social constraints, demands, and pressures that overwhelmed him as a child⁶⁴, himself and his individual and emotional needs and becomes Other through the work of abstraction. This objectification of his existence as well as the sublimation of his bodily energy into mental energy, that is, the subsumption of the concrete historical being under its general idea (he is, for example, much more familiar with the theory of the couple than with the actual lived experience of being part of one [251-6]), thus again reproduce the ruling universalizing principle of the exchange society which produced these repressions in the first place.⁶⁵ The "dialectic of sublimation" is therefore as alienating, as "cumulatively abstract and cumulatively deadening"⁶⁶ as the dialectic of the exchange process.

⁶⁴ The metaphors he uses show the connection between his hate for the body and his exclusion: "...the failure of all communities was their very particularity and their historicity, whatever they were; the fact that every existing society is not a determined creation of the mind but the resumption and the transformation of acquired knowledge made up of innumerable products of past undertakings--a great flabby body which you can animate only by espousing it, which one either has or hasn't, flesh which one never tears oneself out of if one came into the world inside of it, and which one never incarnates oneself in if one were born outside of it" (213).

⁶⁵ See also the section on "Objectivity" in this thesis (pp. 56-67) on the exchange principle as underlying his drive toward objective knowledge.

⁶⁶ Norman Brown, Life against Death, p. 173. See also Gorz's general discussion of sexual repression in which he obviously implicitly also refers to himself and his particular experience of non-existence: he writes that "the sexually inhibited person ... not only avoids his sexual existence but by doing so avoids existence itself; ... his inhibition ... has cancerously invaded his entire person..." (84-5).

Autobiographical Writing as Dialectical Culture Criticism

The Traitor thus can be read as dialectical culture criticism. Constructing his life-story rather than presenting it epically, Gorz adopts an epistemological methodology that is marked by the same characteristics as those which, according to Walter Benjamin, distinguish the historical materialist's procedure: for him history is "the object of a construct which is not located in empty time, but is constituted in a specific epoch, in a specific life The historical materialist explodes the epoch out of its reified 'historical continuity,' and thereby lifts life out of this epoch.... Yet this construct results in simultaneous preservation and suspension (Aufhebung) ... of the epoch in the life-work and of the course of history in the epoch".⁶⁷ This practice constitutes the fundamental difference between Gorz's autobiographical work and his previous conceptual deliberations. Before he began working on The Traitor, his historically founded preoccupation with negating his concrete subjectivity and with disregarding and repressing the specificity of his individual experiences had led him narcissistically to fetishize his own consciousness to a point

⁶⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Eduard Fuchs: Collector and Historian," trans. Barbara Correll and Jack Zipes, New German Critique, No. 5 (Spring 1975), 28-9; see also Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," trans. Harry Zohn, in Illuminations (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 256.

where his thought, originally a means of liberation from an oppressive and unreasonable world, took on its own dynamic and turned into a means of enslavement that confined its captive to an almost entirely abstract and unreal existence. Gorz's life-(hi)story thus illustrates, within the bounds of an individual experience, what Horkheimer and Adorno, with regard to the general development of Western society, call "the dialectic of enlightenment"⁶⁸ : the idolization of the concept results in the deadening subordination of personal life experiences to general abstractions. It is the painful awakening to this reality--namely to the fact that his edifice of ideas constitutes only a "perfectly impersonal having" and did not lead to a "concrete doing and being" (267-8), that his life work was a "lie" because "it was not looking for a way for him, it was looking for The Way" (38), in other words, that his Fondements, voluminous though it is, turned out not to be the philosopher's stone, after all, since it failed to transform his base non-being into precious being--that is such a disturbing experience for the intellectual Gorz that he starts working on an exploration of himself, the traitor, an exploration which, being triggered off by what Frederic Jameson refers to as an "epistemological shock," is characterized by "an abrupt shift to

⁶⁸ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, passim.

a higher level of consciousness, to a larger context of being"⁶⁹. The latter now includes his formerly repressed subjectivity; the former is that of dialectical, dialogical thinking which cancels (aufheben) Gorz's previous soliloquizing monomania of conceptual thought.

Adopting a dialectical, epistemological stance that consciously and expressly mediates between image and concept, between concrete life experiences ("Realdialektik") and their abstract analyses ("Begriffsdialektik"), Gorz attempts to refloat his ship of life which had run aground on the reef of pure objectivity. His recovery work, therefore, does not consist of a metaphysical dive for a lost life but, rather, of a materialist salvaging of his subjectivity which had been split asunder by the objective constellations of the world that stood in the way of its development, constellations which have left their imprint on and are preserved in the fragments of subjectivity Gorz manages to recover. In other words, the objectively founded taboo of subjectivity in Gorz's life, the notion that the individual subject, being merely a contingent particularity, does not count within the general objectivity of the world, and therefore cannot be a meaning-giving agent, is finally broken after Gorz, having observed it rigorously, suffered shipwreck. Instead of continuing to deny and to annihilate himself in vast and coherent systems of thought, he makes no idealistic pretensions to pure objectivity any more and

⁶⁹ Frederic Jameson, Marxism and Form, p. 375.

takes his personal experience of himself in history as a starting point for his endeavor to establish meaning for himself and to arrive at a sense of reality because he now understands that "the most fundamental truths are always discovered through individual situations" (179).

The autobiographical work on The Traitor provides Gorz as well as his readers with a wealth of such specific individual situations. The location for insight and knowledge has now become the personal life-historical experience of the writer who, rather than ending up in the cul-de-sac of his private individual fate, dialectically reveals the fragmented subject as a manifestation of objectivity. This objectivity is, in modern Western society, governed by the exchange process which prevents self-identity; The Traitor unfolds how this principle of exchange--the domination of the general over the particular--underlies Gorz's complex of non-identification, his desire to be Other, and his denial of his body by means of sublimatory mental activities. Expressing his non-identity in the non-identical form of the essay which, according to Adorno, annuls "the theoretically outmoded claims to completeness and continuity also in the concrete modus operandi of the mind",⁷⁰ Gorz brackets together the content of his life-historical dilemma with its presentation. For a more comprehensive understanding of his procedure in writing The Traitor it becomes necessary, however, to look beyond the form of his

⁷⁰ Adorno, "Der Essay als Form," 24 (my translation).

autobiographical essay and to examine how this non-identity articulates itself, how it speaks what it bespeaks: the subject-object antagonism which is the premise as well as the subject of Gorz's life-historical writing. What is at issue, then, is Gorz's means of production--language.

The Dilemma of Language or, Searching for the "I"

Language is the writer's--as well as the reader's--link between the self and the world; its nature, therefore, is profoundly social and dynamic: in a world in which there is only moving and becoming and in which things are never manifest but always in the process of manifesting, in a society that continually transforms itself, language "as practical consciousness is saturated by and saturates all social activity,"⁷¹ as Raymond Williams puts it. The stability and orderliness of the Enlightenment link between the self and the world having dissolved and been replaced by transience and disarray, this contract must be renegotiated constantly, and for both the writer and the reader this readjustment, this redefinition of the relationship between a changing subject and its changing object, happens in language: "It is of and to this experience--the lost middle term between the abstract entities,

⁷¹ Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 37.

'subject' and 'object'...--that language speaks."⁷²

As the Enlightenment concepts of autonomy and rationality according to which human language was considered the basis of culture and therefore a means of fostering the understanding and thus the progress of the human project, have been exposed as an ideological chimera that helped to liquidate the possibilities for emancipation, equality, and humaneness rather than re-enforcing them⁷³, language as a reasonable and unambiguous means of social intercourse has also been met with suspicion and criticism. Gorz writes: "I know, of course, that the distrust of language, the constant fear of being misunderstood, of being credited with intentions that one did not have but which the Other discovered as your faults, lies deep within each of us, like the certainty of the failure of communication, like our irremediable solitude. But we also know that we are not alone and that any authentic dialogue is based on the recognition of its own failure, on the recognition of the fact that we have never said everything and that everything still remains to be said" (276-7). Just as human beings in general have lost control over their means of subjugating nature, they have also lost control over and hence confidence in their linguistic tools for (re)producing themselves in relation to the world. The critique of Enlightenment, the crisis of contemporary reality, is thus as

⁷² Raymond Williams, pp. 37-8.

⁷³ See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, passim.

well--but on no account exclusively--a crisis of the modern idiom, that is, in the words of Arnold Hauser, of "the doubtfulness of the value of speech as a form of expression and communication, as the bearer of direct, intentional, and meaningful communication".⁷⁴

This crisis of language, this loss of control over the ability to articulate oneself and to communicate with each other--a distrust vis-à-vis language which has prompted modern writers like Beckett not only persistently to cast doubts on the communicative faculty of language but also radically to fall into silence and thus to make the unspoken word a carrier of meaning--is obviously not taking place in a vacuum: it has clear and identifiable causes.⁷⁵ Occupying the space of pictorial and

⁷⁴ Arnold Hauser, The Sociology of Art, p. 753. Similarly Christa Wolf writes about a language which begins to refuse its usual services ("Ein Satz," Lesen und Schreiben: Neue Sammlung [Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1980], p. 100).

⁷⁵ For an interesting discussion of narcissism as a problem of verbal communication, see, e. g., Hans Georg Trescher, "Anpassung an den autoritären Charakter" (p. 92) and Paul Walter, "Realität als Herausforderung: Das Bedeutungsspektrum des Narzissmusbegriffs" (pp. 56-9), both in Narziss, ein neuer Sozialisationstypus?, ed. Helga Häsing (Bensheim: päd extra, 1979) and Hildegard Adler, "Scham und Schuld: Barrieren des Erinnerns in Christa Wolfs und Peter Härtlings Kindheitsmustern und im psychoanalytischen Prozess," Deutschunterricht, 35, 5 (1983), 12-3. All three of these authors establish a relationship between contemporary forms of narcissism and of cultural illiteracy and speechlessness: narcissistic disturbances fundamentally damage the ability to symbolize, that is, to translate into sensitive and meaningful words, one's own experience (as well as that of others) in the world. Language then is no longer a means of appropriating, processing, and ultimately getting a grasp on reality; rather, it becomes empty, stereotypical, alienated, and thus unable to communicate personal meaning.

verbal imagination and hence of the potential negation and transcendence of the status quo, the technological media of mass communication bombard people with never-ending batteries of monolithic, authoritarian images and words which expose them to the ruling ideology 24 hours a day, advertize the established order of things, and propagandize the individual's identity with the spectacle of the exchange society. The brainwashing one-dimensionality of this institutionalized language--a language of affirmation and control--confronts the individual with a realm of closed definitions which in turn close the world and make it immune against any form of critical knowledge (Erkenntnis) and contradiction.⁷⁶ Although this totalitarian instrumentalization of language is reaching its temporary peak in today's co-ordinated globalization of rhetoric by means of word processors and satellite dishes, it is not at all a new phenomenon: a constituent element of what Walter Benjamin in 1935 calls "the age of mechanical reproduction,"⁷⁷ it goes hand in hand with the relentless surge of the modern mass media (in particular of journalism, recordings, and film) and their ever-increasing invasion of what once used to be people's private spheres.

⁷⁶ For a further discussion of this kind of administered discourse see, e. g., Herbert Marcuse, One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 84-120.

⁷⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Illuminations, pp. 217-51.

Growing up in the Vienna of the Nazi regime, André Gorz, a child of the age of mechanical and social reproduction, realizes quite early in his life to what propagandistic, belligerent, and alienating use language can be put: in the fascist wasteland of verbosity, words are constantly being raped, nullified, and made meaningless. A school boy at a time when "the hollow, exalted style (a la Goebbels) [becomes] obligatory, and the composition richest in pompous commonplaces [passes] for the best" (124), Gorz, sensitized to the paralyzing reification of the German language, comes to adore a professor who teaches Greek--a dead language--because he is the only one who resists "this inflation of words and sentiments" (124). Interestingly enough, Gorz later on, after his radical switch to French, is to adopt an almost equally dead idiom that elevates him above the empty common language. His rigorous definition of his own terms of reference and his uncompromising use of an abstract and conceptual vocabulary--ways of "short-circuiting all humanity, of speaking over its head, in its absence, in order to absent oneself (abstract oneself) from it in a language that one alienates from humanity by grinding it up, by violating it, by making clots of non-meaning and silence blossom within it" (204)--are clearly also attempts to defy the omnipresent evisceration of language and to restore to it its truth value.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Similarly, Gorz calls Sartre Morel "because They have poisoned the name J.-P. S. for him, because public gossip and stupidity have seized upon the name of this Man, whom he jealously adored, as a batallion rolls over the belly of a woman who, a whore for them, is your beloved and whom you decide to call Kay or L. [more pseudonyms] to try to separate her reality

Thus a language that consists only of an endless repetition of hackneyed phrases is dead with an excess of words: as a result of this kind of proliferation, alienation, and disembodiment of words--which have become merely empty shells--language has been devitalized and devalued as a carrier of critical, meaningful knowledge and communication.

However, language has not only been worn out, depreciated, and estranged due to the constant reiteration and thus nullification of concepts and words in the service of commercial and political propaganda, but chiefly owing to the fact that the world to and of which it speaks is that of alienation. In other words, if language is seen to be deficient, it is so because the subject who is speaking, the object which is being spoken, and their relationship as well as the addressee of this communication, are incomplete: in the wake of the critique of Enlightenment, the *fata morgana* of a unified human being and of a unity of individual and world vanished into the thin air it had always been. The object of representation resists representation, therefore, because the subject attempting verbally to capture it is alienated both from itself and from its potential prey as well as from its hunting equipment--language itself. If "we can no longer tell exactly what we have experienced,"⁷⁹ as Christa Wolf, author of the highly complex autobiographical work of recollection and

⁷⁸(cont'd) for you from her reality for them" (183).

⁷⁹ Christa Wolf, A Model Childhood, p. 362.

mourning A Model Childhood maintains, if the intricacies of personal sensations and experiences escape verbal representation, then this is not only the case because language, the writers' armamentarium of their art, their means of producing meaning, has become a problematic, unreliable instrument of communication, but also and primarily because something has happened to the very terms of experience itself, of the encounter between the self and the world.⁸⁰ The formerly natural--albeit ideological--and now lost ability to use language directly and unambiguously to reproduce objective reality and to relate experience thus is a problem of both how and what to communicate. In short, the crisis of an inadequate and meaningless language is first and foremost the crisis of an imperfect and empty universe. The world and the self have become unnamable partly, it is true, because of the restrictive and hollowed-out workability of language, but mainly because in order to have a name one needs to have an identity, and this requirement is irreconcilable with the principle of exchange underlying and governing our society, which precisely prevents self-identity: Gorz's life-history is an eloquent if sad case in point. Contrary to the formalist or structuralist view, then, the autobiographical subject's identity is not primarily

⁸⁰ See, e. g., Theodor W. Adorno, "Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman" (p. 42) and Walter Benjamin, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Lesskows," trans. Harry Zohn, in Illuminations , pp. 83-109.

disappropriated by language⁸¹ but rather by the social forces of the production process which dispossess self-reflective authors and alienate them from their means of production, themselves, and the world at large. Writing in general and autobiography in particular is therefore not pure discourse in which "the idea of 'selfhood' [is] disengaged from biography, the past, and history"⁸²; instead it is a dialectical mediation of the historical world in which this intellectual/artistic (self-)production occurs and of the historical possibilities and exigencies of the linguistic means of this production.

This mediation entails, then, a critical assessment of the adequacy of the author's tools, that is, of discursive language itself. For writing to resist being subsumed under the ruling ideas it needs self-consciously and self-critically to dissociate itself from any kind of fetishistic attitude towards its own medium. Refusing to employ and therefore to perpetuate a language geared to the demands of the exchange society's market

⁸¹ Roland Barthes, for example, structures the fragments of his autobiography roughly according to the law of letters, the alphabet (Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Hill & Wang, 1979]). For a theoretical elaboration of this general disappropriation by language, see, e. g., Paul L. Jay, "Being in the Text: Autobiography and the Problem of the Subject," MLN, 97, 5 (December 1982), 1046; Paul Jay, Being in the Text: Self-Representation from Wordsworth to Roland Barthes (Ithaca/London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984), particularly pp. 174-83; Rodolphe Gasche, "Foreword," MLN, 93, 4 (May 1978), 574; as well as the essays by Michael Sprinkler (pp. 323-5 and 332-4) and Alain Finkielkraut (222 and 229-30) and Marc Eli Blanchard, "The Critique of Autobiography," Comparative Literature, 34, 2 (Spring 1982), 97-115.

⁸² Paul L. Jay, "Being in the Text: Autobiography and the Problem of the Subject," 1058.

thus means driving nails into institutionalized one-dimensional discourse and putting barbs into one's own language in order that it not communicate an easily consumable and absorbable promotion of the status quo. Rather than fobbing their readers off with conventional words by simply verbally reproducing the facade of contemporary reality (reification) according to which everything is identical with everything else, authentic writers produce a critical expression (de-reification) of the fact that in this exchange society nothing is identical with itself. Adorno writes: "Those who still blindly entrust themselves to the double character of language as sign and expression, as if it were willed by God, would, considering the present state of language, become themselves victims of mere messages."⁸³ In other words, only by turning against themselves and their own linguistic conventions can literature, philosophy, and critical writing in general sustain their traditional quality of negating empirical reality and defy the assimilation of this refusal of that which is by mass society. To avoid collaborating with the powers that be it is necessary not to cloak with silence but rather to bespeak the historical rupture between the subject and the object of its creative effort, because in an unreconciled and estranged world this linguistic "reconciliation of the

⁸³ Theodor W. Adorno, "Voraussetzungen: Aus Anlass einer Lesung von Hans G. Helms," Noten zur Literatur (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), p. 436 (my translation).

reality and the subject"⁸⁴ would be but a treasonous ideological sham. Thus non-identity and alienation must be admitted into the creative work for it to become critical, and they must be allowed not only into its content, not only into its form, but also, as a constitutive element, into the very means of expressing both content and form, that is, into its linguistic substance: only then does what writing says truly become how it says it and vice versa. The prosecution of the historical conditions in which human beings do violence to human beings as well as to their instruments of communication can only have a chance of being successful if the language in which the bill of indictment is written also constitutes a charge against the deadening ruling praxis.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Adorno, "Voraussetzungen," p. 438 (my translation).

⁸⁵ Crucial in forming and formulating--often autobiographically--an opposition to this repression and suppression of subjectivity and self-identity as well as to the impersonal and empty official language in which the denial of selfhood finds its expression, is, of course, the feminist project. Repudiating while at the same time being caught up in what Hélène Cixous, in a poetic-autobiographical essay, calls "a network of millennial cultural determinations" ("Sorties," trans. Ann Liddle, in New French Feminisms: An Anthology, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron [Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts, 1980], p. 96), feminists reject the patriarchal model of reality in Western societies, which is based on logocentrism and phallogentrism. In this world of "dual, hierarchized oppositions" (Cixous, 91) women have found themselves to be reduced to economic/political powerlessness and to social/cultural inexpressiveness: historically, they have not been granted public voices and are only now beginning to make claims and to search for them and thus to negate their socially imposed anonymity and silence. Bespeaking their predominant speechlessness, these exploring female voices have to break open the closed universe of the ruling discourse which disseminates the governing male consciousness: they have to expose the "women-breaking effects" (Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism [Boston: Beacon Press, 1978], p. 327; see

8⁵ (cont'd) also her discussion of male Newspeak, pp. 330-1) and the "grammatical silencing techniques" (Daly, 18) of this language and to brush it against the grain. Thus Verena Stefan, for example, introduces her autobiographical work Shedding by saying that "writing this book the content of which, in this country, is overdue, I bumped into the existing language, word for word, concept for concept ... language fails as soon as I want to relate new experiences. So-called new experiences which are reproduced in the familiar jargon, can't be really new.... Every word must be turned over and spun around before it can be used--or is put aside" (Häutungen [München: Frauenoffensive, 1976], pp. 3-4 [my translation]. Unfortunately, this preface is not included in the English edition of her work: Shedding, trans., Johanna Moore and Beth Weckmueller [New York: Daughters, 1978]. For a critique of Shedding and its accomplishments [as opposed to the author's claims], see: Brigitte Classen and Gabriele Goettle, "'Häutungen,' eine Verwechslung von Anemone und Amazone," in Die Überwindung der Sprachlosigkeit: Texte aus der neuen Frauenbewegung, ed. Gabriele Dietze [Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979], pp. 55-9). And Anja Meulenbelt similarly complains at the beginning of her life-story The Shame is Over: "Language, my problem is language, this is not my language.... Emotions that appear too sentimental or too dramatic if they are spelled out on paper. Love. Pain. Words that become shallow, or businesslike, or hard. Cunt. Vagina. Orgasm. Not my language, but as yet I have no other" (The Shame is Over: A Political Life Story, trans. Ann Oosthuizen [London: The Women's Press, 1980], p. 3; see also the attempts to write in a new kind of language by, for example, Kate Millett, Jill Johnston, or Michelle Cliff). The female pursuit of identity, of a "coming-into-being of subjectivity free of domination," as Myra Love puts it in an essay on Christa Wolf's break with patriarchy ("Christa Wolf and Feminism: Breaking the Patriarchal Connection," New German Critique, 16 [Winter 1979], 34), thus involves working on, with, and through language (see also p. 128, note 96 this thesis).

However, this search work consists of attempting to create not only an appropriate language but also a congenial form that can communicate and produce these specifically female perceptions and experiences. If the organizational system of the Western world is patriarchal, then of course the models for cultural expression in general and for literary productions in particular, are also male. Hence feminist writers need not only, in an act of esthetic distancing, to challenge and to transform traditional language, but also to disrupt and alter conventional narrative form in order to appropriate reality and to develop and impart their new knowledge. Although the autobiographical mode, allowing a coming-to-consciousness and a reworking of one's process of socialization and of its results, is particularly suited for these kinds of attempts to arrive at liberating and de-alienating self-definitions, feminist autobiographical authors must resist modelling their

Such a language, then, is multi-dimensional, dynamic, i.e. open-ended, and transparent; its product is self-conscious, self-critical writing which demystifies literary works, their production process, and their producers (and hence, by implication, their reception), undercuts and negates itself, reflectingly appropriates and therefore produces reality rather

8⁵(cont'd) life-stories on existing prototypical male autobiographies: their task cannot be to try to produce the contemporary female Rousseau, Goethe, or even André Gorz; rather, they must forge new and open forms of writing about the process of their subjectivities becoming aware of and trying to emancipate themselves because "a closed form presupposes, at the start of one's work, a great overview over the material--groundwork by others. Women have not had any groundwork done for them. They must find their truth and their form, simultaneously" (Irmtraud Morgner, quoted in Sara Lennox, "Trends in Literary Theory: The Female Aesthetic and German Women's Writing," German Quarterly, 54, 1 [January 1981], 70; for a critical look at problems of contemporary female esthetic production in general and of autobiographical writing in particular, see, apart from the already mentioned texts, e. g., Silvia Bovenschen, "Is There a Feminine Aesthetic?," trans. Beth Beckmueller, New German Critique, No. 10 [Winter 1977], 111-137; Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism, ed. Estelle C. Jelinek [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980]; Jeanette Clausen, "The Difficulty of Saying 'I' as Theme and Narrative Technique in the Works of Christa Wolf," Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik, 10 [1980], 319-333; Nancy K. Miller, "Women's Autobiography in France: For a Dialectics of Identification," in Women and Language in Literature and Society, eds. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman [New York: Praeger, 1980], pp. 258-273; Evelyne Keitel, "Frauen, Texte, Theorie: Aspekte eines problematischen Verhältnisses," Argument, No. 142 [Nov/Dec 1983], 830-841; Brigitte Wartmann, "Schreiben als Angriff auf das Patriarchat," in Literaturmagazin 11 [Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979], pp. 108-32; Jutta Kolkenbrotz-Netz and Marianne Schuller, "Frau im Spiegel: Zum Verhältnis von autobiographischer Schreibweise und feministischer Praxis," in Entwürfe von Frauen in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts, ed. Irmela von der Lühe (Berlin: Argumente, 1982), pp. 154-74; Ros Coward, "Cautionary Tales," New Socialist, No. 18 (July-August 1984), 46-7.

than directly reproducing it⁸⁶, and thus gives the lie to what Adorno calls "the lie of representation".⁸⁷

André Gorz, however, in his self-critical self-investigation The Traitor, displays no doubts whatsoever as to the representational faculty of language. He writes his autobiographical essay as if the relationship between language/literature and reality were not in the least problematical, as if the reality of his life-story constituted itself in a one-to-one transcription of the reality of his life-history rather than in the refractive process of constructing and reflecting the tentative possibility of its verbal representation. In other words, the function of language in The Traitor is unambiguously its traditional one, namely that of reproducing the world rationally and without any detours, and of equally unequivocally passing on the author's view of it--this deeply uncritical and uncontemporary use of language is Gorz's blind spot. Adhering to the linguistic assumptions of the Enlightenment according to which the orderly link between the self and the world, corresponding to an equally stable tie between the word and the world, could directly be represented in language, Gorz does not establish any esthetic distance between material and literary reality: the language in his

⁸⁶ See, e. g., Jürgen Nieraad, "Pronominalstrukturen in realistischer Prosa: Beobachtungen zu Erzählebene und Figurenkontur bei Christa Wolf," Poetica, 10, 4 (1978), 485, 488, 497.

⁸⁷ Adorno, "Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman," p. 45 (my translation).

autobiographical work is unmediated. The author of The Traitor thus turns a blind eye to the modern "crisis of literary representationalism"⁸⁸ and fails to allow his own experience of non-identity and alienation to enter his discursive language itself.⁸⁹

Gorz's failure to do so is all the more surprising as the "disturbing experience" that triggers off his autobiographical venture is fundamentally informed by a dissatisfaction with and a critique of language: he writes The Traitor in an at least partially concrete language in order to revoke his conceptual language of abstraction (in Fondements) and the abstraction of conceptual language. In fact, already during his childhood he is sensitized to the alienating and depersonalizing effects an authoritarian rule of language can have. Growing up under the "jurisdiction" (274) of his mother's language--"language (like the whole world, moreover) [is] the exclusive property of his mother. She [rules] over words in order to rule over men by cascades of talk, holding her disconcerted interlocutors paralyzed, as if in a glue....Speaking necessarily [means] using her own language (since she [confiscates] it) and providing significations over which she [expects] to rule incontestably. Speaking (and being silent) always [means] saying what she [hears], and the flood of words that [greet]s his murmur (or his

⁸⁸ Adorno, p. 42.

⁸⁹ This is also true, for example, for Fritz Zorn's Mars (see Adolf Muschg, Literatur als Therapie?: Ein Exkurs über das Heilsame und das Unheilbare (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), 68.)

silence) [makes] him say what she [thinks] or [wants] to hear" (274)⁹⁰ --the child Gorz is violated by the maternal discourse which prevents him from developing his own voice. He thus experiences language as an alien object which is implanted in his mind by external powers. An institutionalized, repressive, and manipulative convention, language does not only not belong to him, but also threatens to nullify him: the child feels himself "exiled in the other people's universe of discourse and incapable of finding a suitable expression, the consecrated formula which would satisfy their expectation" (276). The author of The Traitor therefore realizes that the web of socialized consciousness he is trying to explore and untangle also includes

⁹⁰ The child internalizes this verbal silencing technique to such an extent that as an adult he reproduces it to a "T": his abstract analytical sermons are as monological and overpowering as his mother's long-winded chatter. Interestingly enough, the narrator of The Traitor uses even the very same metaphors to characterize his mother's and his own tongue-tying and dispossessing soliloquies. Describing his mother's rule over language, he writes that he "was a prisoner in the kingdom of maternal discourse, fettered to the fabrications by which she identified him, and, unable to free himself from her verbal ascendancy, could escape only by a stubborn silence" (274). He then illustrates this general statement with the account of a particular incident when her "welcoming words in the station were like an attack, a spider web she was spinning around him, ensnaring his limbs, insistently reducing him to the appearance she wanted to find, assailing him with questions, exclamations and commentaries to which there was no possible personal response...." (274). Discussing his own conceptual reign, he notes that his "work, his room, were the walls of the fortress he was raising against the world, and whoever entered his life was an intruder he immediately put in irons; he kept the intruder under observation until he came to rest, sitting on the couch, then swiftly overcame him with a few questions, then with silence, and finally bound him hand and foot by reading him long passages. The intruder, thus anesthetized, was inserted by force into his unreal universe, woven from abstractions. Caught like in a spiderweb" (70).

linguistic threads; he understands that the life-historical denial of his self-identity is fundamentally related to the denial of his having been able to become the subject of his language. Towards the end of his autobiographical discovery he comes to recognize his "terror of identification", as "a terror of being identified by the Other with an 'I' that is Other; a terror of saying more than he means or something different from what he means. Hence a terror of saying anything at all. His voice hollow; fast, cold; monotonous; short, very low, easily unnoticed. And this terror goes as far back as his articulated memory extends, back to the age when he was beginning to speak; it is the meaning which communication with others by means of language immediately assumed for him; it has always paralyzed the act of speech" (270).

Gorz, then, theoretically grasps the connection between his complex of non-identity and his alienating linguistic socialization; he fails, however, to draw the practical conclusion: to admit and to translate the abstract knowledge of his fear of the wrong word into the concrete linguistic substance of his literary (self-)production. In other words, although he renounces his previous systematic technique of only committing finalized thoughts to paper and now allows his readers to some extent to participate in the actual process of his thinking--the narrator in The Traitor "advances hesitantly and elaborates his thought, giving birth to it and moving it forward, pencil in hand" (63)--and thus makes writing in general

and the production process of his autobiographical essay in particular also a subject of his reflections, although he often qualifies, expands, and at times even revokes previous views of his,⁹¹ his relativizations, criticisms, and recantations always only concern the content of the knowledge gained and imparted but never its form, that is, the representational faculty of the language in which this knowledge is communicated. The problem of finding a suitable expression, so crucial for the child Gorz, does not seem to exist for the adult narrator of The Traitor: only three times in the course of the whole work does he doubt the contextual validity of his own terminology (57, 63, 79), but not once does he question its ability to express what he wants it to convey. He even theoretically discusses the workings--or, rather, non-workings--of verbal communication (276-7); his life-historical "distrust against language," however, does not find entry into the very work in which the revelation about the communicative deficiencies of language is made. Although the language in The Traitor is much less anonymous and much more concrete than that in Fondements, there is still no evidence in the linguistic construction of the text itself that the

⁹¹ In his introduction Sartre, exaggerating somewhat, describes this process thus: "In vain you will try to cling to these first declarations; they are constantly being transformed by the action of those that follow. What you read on page 28 you learn, on page 78, one did not really think--one merely supposed one thought it; on page 148 you learn one did not even think it, and on page 168 you find out one had not even written it--one had written a certain sentence dreaming one was writing another one; and on page 198 you discover that dreamt and written significations are strictly interchangeable and are both false besides" (5).

autobiographical author is aware of the limitations of language, or that he has doubts about its representational qualities. The form of Gorz's writing, then, that is, the dialectical montage of abstract essay and life-historical prose narrative⁹², is multi-dimensional, dynamic, transparent, self-conscious, and self-critical; the language of his work is not. The form of The Traitor dialectically turns against itself and is non-identical; the language of Gorz's reconstruction of his complex of non-identification progresses straightforwardly and is identical.

There is, however, one crucial exception to this general rule and this breach in the wall of identical language is made at the very location where form and content converge: in the person of the non-identical narrator who autobiographically searches for selfhood. It is, interestingly enough, only when he dramatizes his own non-identity that he does not fall victim to "the lie of representation"⁹³ and turns his own alienation itself into an esthetic means of production⁹⁴: he attempts to constitute himself in a highly complex alternation of third and first person singular narratives. The narrator's discontinuity,

⁹² See the section on the "Dialectics of Form" in this thesis (pp. 80-7).

⁹³ "The partisanship against the lie of representation," Adorno writes, "[is] actually [one] against the narrator himself who, as a wide-awake commentator of events, strives to correct his own unavoidable approach" ("Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman," p. 45 [my translation]).

⁹⁴ Adorno, p. 43.

already materializing in the alterity of The Traitor's overall form--the mixture of objective and subjective knowledge--thus also finds expression in his discontinuous use of the pronominal indicators of identity. Objectifying his existential insecurity and division, which is both the raison d'être and the subject matter of his autobiographical exploration, he oscillates between assigning himself the status of an object and that of a subject; wanting to negate his crippling loss of selfhood yet not knowing who he is, he switches back and forth between referring to himself in the third and the first person singular.

This dramatization of Gorz's experience of non-identity by means of an alternating use of the personal pronouns "he" and "I" warrants a closer analysis. It becomes immediately obvious that the narrator predominantly uses the third person singular in the past tense, thus distancing his present writing self from his previous historical being: alienated from his childhood and adolescence, his past confronts him as an object, as the life of a different person, as Other (he thus refers to his past self with the same personal pronoun he uses to talk about other males in his life [for example his father and Sartre] and in his thought [for example Marx and Sartre]).⁹⁵

⁹⁵ There is, however, another less obvious and certainly less self-evident aspect of the grammatical structure of Western languages which further complicates and confuses Gorz's use of the third person singular, and that is their essentially patriarchal bias. Hence the following sequence of sentences (which is by no means the only one in The Traitor): "Now the man of praxis is necessarily an adult (he becomes adult as soon as he acts and is conscious of creating the world). But before having been an adult, he has been a nonacting child, and it is as a child that he assumed certain habits, that his affectivity

Conversely, the first person singular refers primarily to the present narrator who analyses his past existence and writes what could be called his own case study. A good illustration of this split in personality is his discussion of his former tendency to isolate himself in his world of idealized thought and to draw

9⁵ (cont'd) was formed, his taste for life, things, other people, his 'character'...." (59), does not only testify to the patriarchal orientation of this language--the human being is "man," the adult and the child are "he's"--but it also exemplifies, particularly in The Traitor's narrative context of frequently changing personal pronouns, the at least potential bewilderment on the reader's (as well as ultimately on the writer's) part as to who the various "he's" actually refer to, "man," "the child," "the child Gorz," "the adult," or "the adult Gorz".

As this kind of language excludes women as subjects and nullifies their existence, patriarchal discourse has, of course, become a crucial concern for feminist authors whose critique, however, does not stop short at taking exception to the conventional use of the third person singular. Mary Daly characterizes women's alienation and depersonalization through traditional male-dominated language thus: "When women become aware of the manipulable ambiguity of the pronoun he, we have perceived only the foreground of grammatical silencing techniques. ...As Monique Wittig has shown, the pronoun I conceals the sexual identity of the speaker/writer. The I makes the speaker/writer deceptively feel at home in a male-controlled language. When she uses this pronoun, she may forget that she is buried in the false generic pronoun he. The fact is that the female saying 'I' is alien at every moment to her own speaking and writing. She is broken by the fact that she must enter this language in order to speak or to write. As the 'I' is broken, so also is the Inner Eye, the capacity for integrity of knowing/sensing. In this way the Inner Voice of the Self's integrity is silenced; the external voice babbles in alien and alienating tongues" (Gyn/Ecology, pp. 18-9; see also pp. 324-33). The question of female identity obviously being tied up with how this identity is--and is able to be--produced in language, the feminist project of reconstituting a female self free of domination thus implies both a critique and a transcendence of current patriarchal practices of linguistic expropriation (see also, e. g., the special issue of Women's Studies International Quarterly, 3, 2-3 (1980) and Marthe Rosenfeld, "The Linguistic Aspect of Sexual Conflict: Monique Wittig's Le corps lesbien," Mosaic, 17, 2 (Spring 1984), 235-241.

any intruder into his "unreal universe"; he comments: "As well as I can imagine him, the intruder probably finds him a distant, inattentive creature, unapproachable.... An elusive man, certainly, who had cut himself off from reality, including his own, by becoming the surgeon of the consciousness of all reality, an absent man. / But I've digressed. Feeling safe only when he was cut off from a reality dismissed as a spectacle..." (70). Grammatically offsetting his past from his present self by using different pronominal referents, the narrator of The Traitor thus manifests and objectifies his experience of himself as a series of discontinuous and divergent identities.

However, this narrator is not simply assigning the third person singular to his past being while the "I" refers to his present self. His use of personal pronouns is much more complex and less clear-cut than Bernd Neumann believes when he maintains, in his study Identität und Rollenzwang, that in The Traitor "Gorz speaks in the first person only in the philosophical reflections that frame his life-history; otherwise he describes himself by means of the third person, as the object of social and psychological constraints".⁹⁶ Apart from the fact that Gorz does not frame his autobiographical pieces with speculative reflections but rather dialectically bounces them off against each other, thus producing an autobiographical

⁹⁶ Bernd Neumann, Identität und Rollenzwang, p. 108 (my translation). Ironically, this analysis holds true with respect to Gorz's short autobiographical text "Le vieillissement," published several years after The Traitor, which Neumann, however, never mentions.

essay⁹⁷, he is also far too historical and dialectical a thinker not to realize that these philosophical deliberations are made under considerable constraints from his past as well as from his present circumstances (the whole project of writing this autobiographical exploration is, after all, the result of existential pressure) and that they are on no account unconstrained meditations. Neumann's contention thus does not hold water; in fact, it is proven wrong already in the very first pages of The Traitor where the narrator, at times almost frantically, switches back and forth between the third and first person singular and by no means only refers to himself as "I" in abstract observations. Gorz writes, for example: "I loaded her [Kay] up with all of Morel's books, and if she hadn't said she liked it, I think I would have dropped her.--And when she disagrees with Morel, he becomes exasperated and refuses to argue; he explains why Morel thinks as he does and is furious that this explanation is not enough for her.--She expects a personal contribution from me, but I have nothing to give her. / I want to see Morel and tell him: 'Don't waste your time, I'm worthless; it's all a cheat; just intellectual games, words.' And then he'd send me away. 'Unworthy son,' he would say, 'I condemn you to eat dry sand forever.' I'll say, 'Yes, yes,' sobbing, and I'll feel the floor swaying, as it did when the school principle told me, 'Dirty Jew, we're doing you a favor keeping you on,' and when the priest said, 'Can't your father go

⁹⁷ See pp. 80-7 this thesis.

to mass?' / Let them condemn me. He had been asking for it for a long time now" (39-40).⁹⁸

It becomes obvious from the above section--and there are numerous similar ones in Gorz's work although they most definitely do not predominate in The Traitor--that the narrator at times alternates between "he" and "I" while simultaneously switching tenses, thereby attesting to a lack of both a historical and psychological continuum, but also that he occasionally employs both the third and the first person singular either in the past or in the present tense, thus indicating at least traces of continuity and non-alienation.⁹⁹ Contrary to Neumann's interpretation, Philippe Lejeune's analysis of Gorz's use of the third person singular proves correct; in his L'autobiographie en France he writes without, however, going into any detail at all, that Gorz employs the personal pronoun "he" in order to put "his past at a distance (the character becomes 'he'), but also his present and his

⁹⁸ See also, for example, this section two pages later: "So with this business of Morel: Morel has still not said anything to me; I'm doing the talking. I'm the one who heaps abuse upon myself in advance (a preventive accusation--he anticipates abuse in order not to be crushed when and if Morel heaps abuse on him; pride), because I cannot believe in what I have done: because he has always doubted his success, because it seemed impossible he should succeed in such an undertaking, because basically he has begun it with every expectation of failure, because he has a taste for failure" (41-2).

⁹⁹ He uses "he" in both the present and the past on pages 38-42, 65-8, 71-2, 75, 90-5, 183; he employs "I" in both these tenses on pages 39, 41, 178-9, 183-4, 187, 231-2, 239, 259, 261.

writing itself (the narrator becomes 'he')." ¹⁰⁰ Significantly enough, this complex use of pronominal and temporal indices becomes the modus operandi of Gorz's narrative chiefly when his primary modus vivendi--his loss of a sense of reality as a result of his abstract, mental existence, which is, of course, the very reason he embarks on this autobiographical project--and also the writing of The Traitor itself, that is, his attempt to revert his complex of non-identification, become the subject matter of his self-critical literary self-production. ¹⁰¹ In other words, the "schizoid personality" (77) of the narrator presents itself in the most disconnected and confused form exactly when its own disconnectedness and confusion as well as their potential transcendence are at issue: the anxiety over his selfhood is dramatized in the very way his not yet consolidated identity expresses itself.

The life-historical urgency for Gorz to regain a sense of reality and to establish meaning in his life suggests, then, that his translation of his deep-rooted identity crisis and also of his attempt to rid himself of the "terror of identification" that has shaped his whole life, into a narrative alternation between the perspectives of the third and the first person singular, is more than just a "figure of speech" or a "game," as

¹⁰⁰ Philippe Lejeune, L'autobiographie en France (Paris: Colin, 1971), p. 23, note 2 (my translation); the other reason Lejeune gives, namely Gorz's intention "to avoid the solemn nature [le caractère solennel] of the 'I'" is, however, rather vague.

¹⁰¹ See pages 38-42, 47-51, 65-79, 90-5, 179-89, 231-9, 256-61.

Lejeune claims in his article on "Autobiography in the Third Person"¹⁰²; rather, his shifting reference to himself as "he" and as "I" bespeaks his serious difficulty of achieving an identity, and also his earnest determination to assert and (re)define himself as a subject of his (hi)story. His multifarious selves constantly qualifying, intensifying, and completing each other, the dialectical tension created by this dialogical oscillation between the narrator on the one hand distancing himself from himself and seeing himself as an object and on the other hand identifying himself with himself and considering himself the agent of his rescue work, is therefore similar to that between the objective and subjective knowledge imparted respectively in the abstract essayistic and the concrete life-historical sections of The Traitor. In a stimulating contrast to his otherwise one-dimensional and unmediated use of language, Gorz does not fall prey to the fallacy of saying "I" in a carefree manner and of then even also meaning himself, which is, according to Delf Schmidt, one of the biggest problems of the vast majority of today's authors of life-stories who, denying any possible splits between author,

¹⁰² He calls, for example, "the anguished contortions of Gorz" "games" (39; see also pp. 23-4 this thesis). In a short reference to Gorz's autobiographical work, Germaine Brée similarly writes without any elaboration at all: "... Gorz's triumphantly emerging 'I' could just as well be nothing more than a grammatical solution, a matter of vocabulary, the mark of that first person wedded to autobiographical discourse: a rhetorically wrought illusion" (Narcissus Absconditus, 12). Reducing Gorz's identity crisis to a linguistic problem, she entirely unjustifiably claims that the central theme of The Traitor is "the fissure between self and language" (11).

narrator, and protagonist, swim with the current autobiographical tide, as it were, and uncritically produce what he calls a "placebo literature" or a "literature of immediacy".¹⁰³ In contrast to this kind of writing, The Traitor, a partly third and partly first person singular narrative, consists of a mediation of autobiography and biography of (non-)self, thus both acknowledging and negating Gorz's own alienation and non-identity. His reasons for writing such a "broken" autobiography resemble a great deal the ones that compelled Christa Wolf, in her autobiographical montage A Model Childhood, to split herself up into a "you" and a "she": "But it was really not just a need to evade the 'I,' which I don't deny, and to switch into the third person, but above all a feeling of an uncanny strangeness. As if I'd deceive myself and the reader, if I said 'I' to this creature.... And that's exactly what I wanted to express with the third person, because one result of this multiply broken biography is also that several persons are spooking around in us, and it is not at all easy to relate to them."¹⁰⁴

Similar to Wolf, however, Gorz does arrive towards the end of his autobiographical search for self-identity at a point

¹⁰³ Delf Schmidt, "Gegen die Placebo-Literatur," in Literaturmagazin 11 (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979), p. 15 (my translation).

¹⁰⁴ Christa Wolf, "Diskussion mit Christa Wolf," Sinn und Form, 28, 4 (July/August 1976), 867 (my translation). The question of how to handle a first person narrative is also a primary concern in, for-example, Kate Millett's autobiographical work Flying.

where he overcomes his personality split, says "I", and is also able confidently to sustain his use of the first person singular.¹⁰⁵ He achieves this goal exactly when he becomes aware of his primary complex of non-identification, thus neutralizing the unconscious power this "terror of identification" has had over him. Gorz's autobiographical analysis, then, his process of (re)appropriating reality, produces a subject able to say not only, "This is I," but also, tentatively, "This is we"--the life-story of a traitor to humanity ends with the words: "... it is my reality in the eyes of those who are on the same side as I which is important to me. Not to bow humbly beneath their verdict, not to make myself their instrument, but to play according to the rules that we have in common and in the determination of which it must be possible for a dialogue to get under way. While waiting for something better" (304). This "we" (faintly hinted at as a potential), as opposed to the "we" of the first section of The Traitor, will not be an "abstract universality" or the "anonymity of the generic" (95), but rather the embodiment of a concrete community of individual human beings who act in solidarity with each other in order to achieve

¹⁰⁵ Wolf's use of the personal pronoun "I" is far more timid and probationary than Gorz's, though; the first person singular only appears five times altogether and then only on the very last page of her attempt "to escape the mortal sin of our time: the desire not to come to grips with oneself" and to break the hegemony of "the past, which can still split the first person into the second and the third" (Christa Wolf, A Model Childhood, p. 406.).

the same historical aims.¹⁰⁶ Indicating this possibility and having achieved his own self-identity in his autobiographical writing, Gorz thus turns into reality Christa Wolf's demand that prose help "the human being to become a subject".¹⁰⁷

Autobiographical Writing as Self-Help or, Trying to Break Away From a False Life

As a result of his autobiographical work, Gorz has thus arrived at a point where he is finally able, unquiveringly, to write in the first person singular since, as he puts it, "at last the knowledge I have gained of myself meets my lived

¹⁰⁶ Compare Sartre's comment in his introduction: "At the very moment when at last he can say, I am doing this, I am responsible for it, he realizes that he is speaking to us. For today there are only two ways of speaking about oneself: the third person singular and the first person plural. It is necessary to know how to say 'we' in order to say 'I'--that is beyond question. But the opposite is also true: if some tyranny, in order to establish the 'we' first, deprived individuals of the subjective thought, all 'interiority' would at once disappear and all reciprocal relations with it. They would have won forever, and we'd never stop running through the experimental labyrinth, crazed rodents at the mercy of Vampires" (35-6). See also Michel Leiris' conclusion to his essay "The Autobiographer as Torero". Discussing the writer's task, he demands that "on the intellectual and emotional level, he must contribute evidence to the trial of our present system of values and tip the scales, with all the weight by which he is so often burdened, towards the liberation of all men, without which none can achieve his own" (Michel Leiris, "The Autobiographer as Torero," in Manhood, trans. Richard Howard ([ondon: Jonathan Cape, 1968], p. 22).

¹⁰⁷ Christa Wolf, "The Reader and the Writer," in The Reader and the Writer, trans. Joan Becker (New York: International Publishers, 1977), p. 212. The above is my translation of Wolf's phrase "das Subjektwerden des Menschen".

experience" (280). Having traced his present disturbance--his sense of non-existence--back to past conflicts, having remembered and, in writing, repeated and worked through life-historical experiences which had previously been censored and not allowed entry into the realm of consciousness, Gorz possesses, at the end of his self-exploration, a stronger sense of self, of who he is. This strengthening of subjectivity, this turning of the objectified human being into a subject of history, is precisely also the goal of the therapeutic treatment of psychoanalysis: "Where It was, there I shall become"¹⁰⁸. Counteracting and overcoming the de-realization of the world implies (re)appropriating previously alienated and disowned life-history; the ultimate objective of psychotherapy¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," p. 80 (the above is my literal translation of Freud's famous axiom: "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden".).

¹⁰⁹ It is important to note the fundamental difference between the theory of psychoanalysis--which I will not be concerned with here--and its practice: the theory is a critical diagnosis of cultural disorders whereas the therapy is an attempt to overcome the individual's disturbances created by the general discontents of civilization. In light of this crucial distinction it becomes apparent that any individual treatment claiming to be an immediate and/or total cure from repression is of necessity not only self-deceptive, but also repressive itself. As the individual character is firmly embedded in the dynamics of the social whole, healing the analysand would imply curing the social totality which is, of course, well beyond the actual possibilities of psychotherapy; reconciling the analysand with a repressive, antagonistic world, on the other hand, means adjusting the individual "to the mad whole" and thus makes "the cured patient ... really sick--which is not to imply that the uncured are any healthier" (Theodor W. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," trans. Irving N. Wohlfarth, New Left Review, No. 46 [Nov-Dec 1967], 78. Compare Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia: "Insofar as civilization [is] repression, individual therapy [is] education in repression, albeit conscious repression" (p. 121). Freud himself is well aware of this therapeutic impasse:

is the undoing of repressions, that is, the enlargement of the I at the expense of the unconscious, in order that the analysand be more fully able to develop a self-identity and to become the author of his or her own life. If it is true, therefore, that, as Christa Wolf maintains, "one of the most important preconditions for the coming-into-being of literature is the longing for self-realization" which is the primary motive for "the compulsion to write as perhaps the only possibility for authors not to miss themselves"¹¹⁰, then the writer--and particularly the autobiographical writer--and the analysand are in a very similar situation: working towards emancipating themselves from a state of tutelage, heteronomy, and ignorance in favor of more autonomy and (self-)knowledge, they both try to

¹⁰⁹(cont'd) he repeatedly stresses not only that his discoveries are "'not primarily a heal-all'," but rather "'a basis for a very grave philosophy'" (Sigmund Freud, quoted by Jacoby, p. 124), but also that "'the recognition of our therapeutic limitations reinforces our determination to change other social factors so that men and women shall no longer be forced into hopeless situations'" (Sigmund Freud, quoted by Jacoby, p. 126). In an effective and comprehensive praxis of liberation individual therapy must thus be complemented by broader social change (On the dangers of psychoanalytical theory being superceded and absorbed by therapy, see, e. g., Part II of Adorno's essay "Sociology and Psychology," New Left Review, No. 47 [Jan-Feb 1968], 83-4 and Russell Jacoby's Social Amnesia, particularly Chapters IV and VI, where Freud is quoted as saying: "We do not consider it at all desirable for psychoanalysis to be swallowed up by medicine and to find its last resting place in a textbook of psychiatry under the heading of 'Methods of Treatment'" [p. 123].)

¹¹⁰ Christa Wolf, "The Reader and the Writer," p. 208 (since the English version is faulty, the preceding is my translation).

make "the conscious step out of prehistory into history"¹¹¹ . Gorz himself, discussing at the outset of his autobiographical search for self-identity the validity and merits of the psychoanalytical as well as the Marxist critique of society--the former being subject to the latter since "the ultimate reason for subjective alienation is the objective alienation of freedom in a human world which, being estranged from freedom, must be changed" (61)--and their different ways of appropriating reality, defines the purpose of therapy thus: "The goal of psychoanalysis must be to remove the psychological obstacles, to liquidate the choice-complexes of being which oppose both the consciousness of objective alienation (of which they are the accomplices) and the total realization of man in total doing. Psychoanalysis, in other words, must lead to the comprehension of the necessity for freedom to change the world, to change its condition, to modify its situation, as it must also lead to the activation (or actualization--that is, to the recovery in the perspective of doing) of every region of existence and dimension of being-for-itself as so many possibilities to make oneself free, to produce a human world" (62, see also 77-9). By trying consciously to inhabit and critically to work through the--partly unconscious, unmastered--past in order to make the future more liveable, analysts and autobiographical authors like Gorz and Wolf share the aim of reinforcing their (self-)awareness and self-confidence, of transforming their

¹¹¹ Christa Wolf, p. 212 (this is also my translation).

character, and of establishing their self-identity. In short, they hope to have achieved at the end of their work of remembrance and (re)construction a greater ability to bear but also actively to shape reality. Is it legitimate, then, to call the practice of autobiographically confronting one's (non-)self and the world in general and of writing The Traitor in particular, a psychoanalytical process?

The psychoanalytical work consists basically of moving "inward, backward, and downward,"¹¹² as Erik Erikson succinctly puts it, in order to break down and to destroy, that is, to make inoperable, the childhood impulses and complexes that prove destructive for the analysand and that have shaped his or her psychological make-up. It is thus an attempt to lay bare character structures and the process of their formation at the same time that it calls for their lasting transformation and reconstruction: as an analysand one "learns to 'use' that which one is in order to transcend oneself" (290). Although there are different kinds of analytical work--following Freud, Paula Heimann, for example, distinguishes between "dream work, joke work, creative work, and mourning work"¹¹³ --they all aspire to break the spell of infantile conflicts and to counteract the compulsion unconsciously to repeat patterns of childhood. In order to gain a knowledge of what the analysand resists knowing,

¹¹² Erik Erikson, "'Identity Crisis' in Autobiographic Perspective," p. 39.

¹¹³ Paula Heimann, "Bemerkungen zum Arbeitsbegriff in der Psychoanalyse," 321 and passim (my translation).

and to help him or her to undo unconscious repetition compulsions, the analyst predominantly uses material released from the analysand's unconscious (such as dreams, parapraxes, and spontaneous associations¹¹⁴), interprets it, and then guides the subject of the analysis in such a way that the repressed past is relived, acted out, and worked through and ultimately becomes part of the conscious present. Freud writes: "This revision of the process of repression can be accomplished only in part in connection with the memory traces of the processes which led to repression. The decisive part of the work is achieved by creating in the patient's relation to the doctor--in the 'transference'--new editions of the old conflicts; in these the patient would like to behave in the same way as he did in the past, while we, by summoning up every available mental force [in the patient], compel him to come to a fresh decision. Thus the transference becomes the battlefield on which all the mutually struggling forces should meet one .

¹¹⁴ The use of such material from the unconscious distinguishes authors of autoanalyses from "merely" autobiographical writers like Gorz. See, e. g., Didier Anzieu, L'auto-analyse, son rôle dans la découverte de la psychanalyse par Freud, sa fonction en psychanalyse (Paris: P. U. F., 1959), pp. 242-50; Didier Coste, "Autobiographie et auto-analyse, matrices du texte littéraire," in Individualisme et autobiographie en occident, pp. 249-63; Philippe Lejeune, L'autobiographie en France, pp. 92-4; compare also Bernd Neumann's hypothesis that, due to the contemporary lack of a "'continuous psychology'" traditional autobiography "as the history of the development of an individuality" has become impossible and might be replaced by a kind of "psychic record" ("psychisches Protokoll") which takes down only "stimuli of the outer world and reactions of the inner world" (Identität und Rollenzwang, p. 189 [my translation]).

another."¹¹⁵ The psychoanalytical effort of removing all of the analysand's amnesias and of strengthening his or her I is, therefore, work in which both the analyst and the analysand are engaged--it is a common project.

If psychoanalysis ultimately is a joint work and if its decisive factor is the transference, then it becomes immediately obvious that there is a fundamental difference between the analytical and the autobiographical pursuit.¹¹⁶ The actual intellectual and affective human exchange in the psychoanalytical situation is replaced, in the autobiographical practice, by a symbolic dialogue: examining one's own

¹¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," trans. James Strachey, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1963), Vol. 16, p. 454.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of the many differences between writing autobiographically and undergoing a therapy, see, e. g., Bernard Pingaud, "L'écriture et la cure," Nouvelle Revue Française, 18, No. 214 (Oct 1970), particularly 147-158. On the same problem see also: Hildegard Adler, "Scham und Schuld;" Didier Anzieu, L'auto-analyse, pp. 242-50; R. Victoria Arana, "The Psychoaesthetics of Autobiography," Biography, 6, 1 (Winter 1983), 53-7; Hubert Brochier, "Psychanalyse et désir autobiographique;" Didier Coste, "Autobiographie et auto-analyse, matrices du texte littéraire;" Michel de M'Uzan, "Aperçus psychanalytiques sur le processus de la création littéraire," Tel Quel, No. 19 (Fall 1964), 27-39; Serge Doubrovsky, "Autobiographie/ Vérité/ Psychanalyse," L'Esprit Créateur, 20, 3 (1980), 87-97; Rockwell Gray, "Autobiography Now," 38-9; Philippe Lejeune, L'autobiographie en France, pp. 91-104; Bruce Mazlish, "Autobiography & Psycho-analysis," Encounter, 35, 4 (Oct 1970), 28-37; Adolf Muschg, Literatur als Therapie?, *passim*; Jean-Michel Rey, "Freud's Writing on Writing," trans. G. W. Most and James Hulbert, Yale French Studies, Nos. 55-6 (1977), 301-28; Reinhold Wolff, "Die Konstruktion der biographischen Wirklichkeit im analytischen Prozess und in der Autobiographie," Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte, 4, 1 (1980), 92-107.

life-history in writing means taking on the role of analyst and analysand at the same time, the autobiographical work being the result of the productive tension between these two stances. Rather than repeating what has been repressed by acting it out and by transferring it unto somebody else (the analyst), the self-reflexive writer (re)produces it by remembering it and self-critically spelling it out. In other words, where analysts uncover the analysands' resistances and acquaint them with their insights so that they may then work toward overcoming these resistances and their underlying repressed impulses, autobiographical authors are left to rely on themselves and their own knowledge only--their dialogue is an inner one. The autobiographical (and even also the autoanalytical) act of "remembering, repeating, and working-through" the history of the subjective (non-)self and its dialogical relationship to the objective world is thus intrinsically dissimilar to the psychoanalytical process: the former is solitary and ultimately monological (the addressee, if different from the author, is not present), whereas the latter is interlocutory.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ That autobiographical writing and, in fact, writing in general, is ultimately a soliloquy does, of course, not mean that it does not have an addressee, nor does it imply that there might not be an exchange between the author and the reader. However, the recipient of a piece of writing does not have any means of influencing the actual composition of the work; his or her author-ity is restricted to post partum--or, depending on one's perspective--post mortem diagnoses, so to speak. Yet this asynchronicity does not preclude acts of transference and countertransference. Writing, the author can transfer unconscious and repressed conflicts unto the imagined reader (after the discovery of his complex of non-identification, Gorz realizes that rather than disidentifying himself and "speaking in the void" to "an anonymous and silent public," he should now

Bernard Pingaud trenchantly summarizes the disparity between the artistic and the analytical production process thus: "...the work answers neither yes nor no, it doesn't use the formulas so dear to analysts: 'I know, but anyway,' or 'I would have never thought of that'. Well within its rights and without remorse, it can remain silent because what it says is forever fixed within

117(cont'd) write in order to define who he can be: "But to do this, one must be two; to know what I can be I must know whom I can address, for whom I can be whoever it is I can be. / This text has, therefore, not escaped what analysts call transference: it sums up perfectly the meaning and the nature of my relationship with others" [280]). Reading, the recipient can, in turn, transfer unconscious impulses from the infantile past unto the author (see, f. ex., Bruce Mazlish, "Autobiography & Psycho-analysis," 37 and R. Victoria Arana, "The Psychoaesthetics of Autobiography," 53-7). But neither author nor reader are in any position to question and dispute each other at a time when that challenge could alter or influence the process of creation and that of reception respectively. Even though the motive for producing and consuming art in general and writing in particular is a need for communication with other people, even though the very basis of language--be it verbal or pictorial--is dialogical (writing on art as communication and discussion, Arnold Hauser, for example, in The Sociology of Art [pp. 429-39], quotes Hegel's statement that the "'work of art is not as free of itself, but is essentially a question, an address to the echoing breast, a call to souls and spirits" [p. 437]; see also Peter Sloterdijk's characterization of the communicative purpose of the Suhrkamp series of "Verständigungstexte" [p. 10, note 22 this thesis]), usually the production as well as the reception process of art is a solitary one: modern bourgeois authors and their readers are alienated, isolated, and private individuals. Despite the fact that, as Arnold Hauser expounds, "the object of artistic experience is the joint achievement of author and public" (Arnold Hauser, The Sociology of Art, p. 429) just as the object of psychoanalytical experience is the common work of analysand and analyst, the artistic situation is essentially different from the analytical one in that the artist's (concrete or anonymous) addressee, as opposed to the analysand's, is, during the production process, always only present in the imagination, never in physical reality.

it."¹¹⁸

Because of this lack of a person-to-person encounter, a lack which prevents the process of transference to take place, the practice of autobiographically examining and (re)constructing one's history cannot, in strict psychoanalytical terms, be called therapeutic. However, even if in the solitary act of writing there is no room for the author to re-enact old conflicts on the interpersonal battlefield of transference, autobiographical struggles for self-realization of the kind that Gorz or, for example, Wolf are undertaking, are far too existentially momentous simply to serve the function of entertaining the author, as Pingaud, in an article on literature and healing, polemically suggests all writing does.¹¹⁹ Thus it is hardly possible to look at Gorz's painful endeavor to de-alienate and to (re)possess himself as a pleasant and casual Sunday afternoon outing: in his self-critical confrontation with his past and present complexes the possibilities of his present and future life are being negotiated. Constituting Gorz's

¹¹⁸ Bernard Pingaud, "L'écriture et la cure," 159 (my translation).

¹¹⁹ Pingaud writes: "Must one go further and attribute to writing a therapeutic value? Everything preceding demonstrates the contrary. Writing does not heal, writing entertains. The imperative of the cure is: 'Deliver yourself,' that of writing is: 'Continue, immerse yourself'....Some say that writing helps to live. I would rather say that it helps to survive. Negative protection: no problem is being solved in it, nor even posed. But kept at a distance, 'fixed,' the writer's problems cease to exert their daily pressure on him. The vice loosens, one bears oneself better. No, writing doesn't heal. It only allows one to wait" ("L'écriture et la cure," 162-3 [my translation]).

attempt both to inquire into his non-identity, that is, to deconstruct himself, and also to find his self-identity, that is, to (re)construct himself, The Traitor combines the process of analytical self-dismantling and what Lejeune calls the autobiographical "vital conduct of synthesis".¹²⁰ This fusion of contradictory life-historical elements is accomplished at the end of his self-inquiry: finally able confidently to say "I," he has achieved the "liberating synthesis" (132) he had been working, that is, in this case, writing toward. The interpersonal psychoanalytical project, therefore, sets in motion different techniques than Gorz's solitary autobiographical one, but has similar results--the (re)appropriation of (life-)history and the fostering of the act

¹²⁰ Philippe Lejeune, L'autobiographie en France, p. 104 (my translation). Following Freud, Lejeune distinguishes between the psychoanalytical activity which, deliberately aiming at dissolving the repressive elements of the analysand's character structure, is "uniquely dissociative, a sort of vivisection" and the autobiographical work which, attempting to (re)build and to give solidity to the writer's personality, is a kind of "psychosynthesis" (p. 93 [my translation]). This seems to indicate a somewhat rigid and traditional conception of autobiographical writing, a conception that is obviously unable to accommodate, for example, Gorz's life-historical tracing back of his present non-identity to his infantile "terror of identification" (comparing autobiographical work to psychosynthesis only, Lejeune contradicts, in fact, his own previous--correct--analysis that writing The Traitor is for Gorz not a question of "drawing up a balance sheet of [that is, synthesizing] a man's life, but of...liquidating the past in order truly to come of age" (p. 53 [my translation]). Lejeune's view of the goal of psychoanalysis also seems to be a little short-sighted: surely therapy aims not "only" at the analysand's dissociation from and dissolution of his or her previously unrecognized and hence unchallenged repressions, but ultimately at the analysand's self-realization in the wake of a new self-understanding (even if the analyst is not involved in this work of [re]construction any more).

of becoming a subject.¹²¹ Adolf Muschg puts it thus: "Art and therapy have one goal--enabling one for one's own life. But they do not have one way. Art--or literature--is not therapy but it encourages one wholly to continue on the way to therapy. Therapy is not art but it serves art as the guarantor for the binding nature, for the practicability of a life-changing phantasy. Both work on the sense of balance of a humanity endangering itself. From both of them the insight is to be drawn that we will not have to worry about survival any more only when we have learned to live."¹²²

Hence, not therapeutic in strictly psychoanalytical terms, the autobiographical act can, nevertheless, be a way of working

¹²¹ This similarity accounts perhaps for the relative frequency with which both contemporary autobiographical authors and their critics claim that this kind of writing is therapeutic: not applying the terms of psychoanalysis, they describe the effects that this autobiographical work seems to have on its authors. Anja Meulenbelt, for example, starts writing The Shame is Over as "an attempt to save myself" (p. 8) and, looking back on the nine intense months of writing her story, she calls that process "a therapy in which I could at last mourn for those people I had not yet mourned" (p. 267). Several reviewers of Gorz's autobiography similarly see it in therapeutic terms: Anon., "Exploring the Interior," TLS, 21 July 1961, 444 ("a moving document of self-therapy"); William Dunlea, "Sartrean Freedom," Commonweal, 5 February 1960, 528 ("auto-psychoanalysis"); Roger Grenier, La table ronde, No. 130 (Oct 1958), 139 ("not only an existential psychoanalysis and a Marxist analysis, but also a critique of these two methods" [my translation]); Leon S. Roudiez, "The Meaning of Life," NYTBR, 20 Dec 1959, 10 ("self-analysis").

¹²² Adolf Muschg, Literatur als Therapie?, p. 203 (my translation). Bruce Mazlish thinks that "it is possible that the writing of an autobiography might conceivably be a substitute for actual therapy," but also realizes that "therapy and analysis do not thereby become autobiography" ("Autobiography & Psycho-analysis," 36).

through the individual as well as the collective unmastered past and therefore of surviving the as yet unmastered present in order that the future might be more liveable. His need for autobiographical knowledge being triggered off by the disturbing experience of his non-existence and meaninglessness that had ruptured his sense of balance, Gorz thus sets out to make his objective life-history meaningful by subjectively (re)appropriating it, that is, he invents "personal means of signification in order to perform his personal unity" (83). His work on himself, the traitor, and on his story, The Traitor, is a self-rescue operation by "a man cut in two, trying to join his stumps together" (8), as Sartre graphically puts it, by a beleaguered self or, rather, non-self desperately attempting to counteract the socially imposed and personally re-enforced depletion of his I: "A reappraisal [Aufarbeitung] of the past as enlightenment is essentially such a turn toward the subject, a strengthening of its self-awareness and self-confidence, and thus also of its self."¹²³

This work of confronting the past and of fortifying the I is, particularly for a Gorz whose consistent effort it had been all along to deny his self, not easy and unalloyed; on the contrary, challenging dearly held beliefs and revealing hitherto dreaded and thus repressed knowledge, it is, at times, painful. But so is, of course, the disturbing reality of his

¹²³ Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," p. 28 (my translation).

non-existence to which he has just awoken from an almost lifelong, partly self-induced, narcosis. Overwhelmed by the powerful forces at play in the exchange society, which have been withholding an identity from him, while at the same time also having anaesthetized himself with the life-negating subsumption of his particularity and subjectivity under the laws of universality and objectivity, Gorz now attempts to stop administering himself any pain suppressants: he performs his self-vivisection fully consciously, in the express hope that it will make possible a (re)construction of his self which would mean a relief from or even a cure of his suffering from non-identity.¹²⁴ It becomes, however, obvious that, just like psychoanalysis, this kind of autobiographical project of self-recovery can, at the very best, only hope to change the individual but never the collective social character structure--writing The Traitor does not alter the rule of the exchange principle: it is "merely" a partial solution to Gorz's

¹²⁴ Only a few pages into his autobiographical search, Gorz already considers his "self-analysis" to be more important than the eight-year-long work on Fondements pour une morale since it "has progressively become the proof--which he takes a dose of every day--that all is not lost" (63); a bit later he admits that having "grasped some of his fundamental attitudes, he is already tempted to think he is through, supposes he is cured of this delirium of abstractions..." (91); and about two-thirds through The Traitor, he again speculates on the cure his writing might effect: "I no longer know what meaning it has to write. I write to find a meaning. But perhaps this meaning, once the situation and I change, is lost. Perhaps having used up this gadget, I have 'cured' myself of the project to write. 'Cured' by writing--by writing the cure of a man who is writing his disaffection from what he writes" (188).

problem of non-identity.¹²⁵ Yet this anamnesis of his non-existence is his first acknowledgement that his lack of a self-identity is hurtful.¹²⁶ The recognition of his suffering and pain and, ultimately, the illness itself as well thus become productive forces which not only destabilize his pseudo-functioning sense of balance, but also set to work a learning process that has the potential of preventing a relapse: pain has become a "gateway to curing, that is, to an insight into the self [Selbsteinsicht]"¹²⁷. Gorz's painful experience of his non-identity had become more insufferable than suffering through the discovery of its history and the attempt to transcend it could possibly be. Libido-economically speaking, he has now more to gain by working toward overcoming his lifelong inner resistances to any identification than by giving in to and thus even intensifying his terror of it. A strategy for survival, Gorz's (re)appropriation of his life-history is, therefore, what Kate Millett, referring to her own

¹²⁵ Compare, for example, Adorno's dictum: "The triumph of the ego is a particularist delusion" ("Sociology and Psychology," New Left Review, No. 46, p. 78); also Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia, pp. 124-6.

¹²⁶ Gorz himself also refers to his complex of non-identification as an illness, an illness that has "invaded his entire person like a cancer" (85) and that, toward the end of his autobiographical attempt at self-healing, has "drained like an abscess" (290).

¹²⁷ Adolf Muschg, Literatur als Therapie?, p. 182 (my translation); see also his reference to the discoveries of modern psychosomatics which looks at illness as a remedy, as an attempt at self-curing (p. 123).

autobiographical writing, calls "a safety valve of self".¹²⁸

This autobiographical safety valve operates in two directions: it releases excess pressure on the (non-)self from both inner and outer sources, the inner ones ultimately always being the result of outer ones.¹²⁹ Set off by an objective denial of self-realization and a socially administered anonymity, the autobiographical dramatization of the difficulty of being a subject and of the search for one's self is therefore particularly valuable and suited to people excluded and/or dissociating themselves from--and thus existing on the margin of--the society in and against which they live. Discussing the connection between self-reflection, that is, reflection on the self in the world, and disturbing social experiences, Peter Sloterdijk writes: "The outsider, as the subject of a 'disorderly,' disturbed life, is under a much greater pressure to reflect than the person that fits in because he is the one

¹²⁸ Kate Millett, Flying, p. 165. See also, for example, Michael Rutschky's argument regarding both critical theory and contemporary autobiographical writing: "To criticize the universal in the medium of philosophy, that is, in the medium of the universal, in order to resist it, that was Adorno's form of living. When one is scared, when one lives in the shadow of a continuous mortal threat, then one can still be smart ["klug"], smart to describe the threat and, in the development of the obstinately intelligent description, to survive for a certain time" (Erfahrungshunger, p. 76 [my translation]; Francis Hart calls "memoir...the autobiography of survival" ("History Talking to Itself," 195 and 204); and Philippe Lejeune writes that "it seems that most often these efforts [of the composition and publication of autobiographies] consist not of altering the author's balance but of momentarily making his present balance supportable for him" (L'autobiographie en France, p. 94 [my translation]).

¹²⁹ See this thesis, pp. 56-61.

who has 'stumbled' in many instances, who has had to go through many disturbing experiences, and who has been unable to accept for his life the social offers for order. His experience is important because in it the disorder of the social order 'inherent in the system' finds expression."¹³⁰ Working through and resisting being absorbed into that which is incompatible with one's needs by means of autobiographical writing is thus especially befitting a strategy of survival, that is, a way of collecting one's thought and gathering strength to oppose the threatening status quo, for exiles (be they "only" inner or also outer ones)¹³¹, for those whose only liveable alternative to the official life, to "the rule and power of the whole, the superimposed, administered unification"¹³², is to be "marginal in regard to society and history" (42), as Gorz puts it with respect to himself. Having interiorized his exile from the human community as a "permanent and fundamental condition" (203), Gorz

¹³⁰ Peter Sloterdijk, Literatur und Organisation von Lebenserfahrung, p. 115 (my translation).

¹³¹ See, e. g., Helmut F. Pfanner, "Schreiben als Selbstbestätigung: Erzählen im Exil," in Erzählung und Erzählforschung im 20. Jahrhundert, eds. Rolf Klopfer and Gisela Janetzke-Dillner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981), pp. 83-94; Wolfgang Müller-Funk, "Das Exil ist eine Krankheit: Autobiographie als ein Mittel sich zu behaupten," Merkur, 36 (1982), 1231-6; Rainer Zimmer, "Die Autobiographie des Exils 1933-1945: Verarbeitung und Vermittlung geschichtlicher Erfahrung," in Faschismuskritik und Deutschlandbild im Exilroman, eds. Christian Fritsch and Lutz Winckler (Berlin: Argumente, 1981), pp. 214-27; H. R. Klieneberger, "The 'innere Emigration': A Disputed Issue in Twentieth-Century German Literature," Monatshefte, 57, 4 (April-May 1965), 171-80.

¹³² Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, p. 50.

realizes, towards the end of his autobiographical (re)possession of his "internal foreign territory"¹³³ that, in fact, his alienation and derealization are not a definitive imposition of an impersonal fate, but rather constitute a socio- and individual-historical crisis and are thus potentially transcendable. His work on The Traitor serves exactly this purpose: to liquidate his past, to leave his exile of abstraction and non-existence, and to establish his self-identity.

Not only is Gorz's eventual break through to himself as a subject able unequivocally to say "I" an act of self-help, though, but it can also be, in a broader sense, an act of help and inspiration for his readers. His inquiry into his "contradictory singularization" (134) has both a private individual and a social and public importance: a subjective expression of the objective crisis of meaning and identity, his self-critical exposure of himself as a subject that, on the one hand, has not yet been able to realize itself and that, on the other hand, is trying to work through and to overcome this predicament--which is the predicament of the contemporary Western bourgeois world in general--constitutes an emancipatory force whose potential field of influence clearly reaches beyond the "merely" personal, authorial realm. Bruce Mazlish, discussing how the reader of a life-history can discover "in the 'clinical' cum 'literary' encounter with the autobiographer's

¹³³ Sigmund Freud, see this thesis, p. 99.

self some insight both into that self and into his own self," recognizes that "autobiography, psycho-analytically viewed, is binocular: it offers us equal knowledge of the development and meaning of ourselves as well as of our 'other self,' the writer of autobiography".¹³⁴ Not only can Gorz's life-(hi)story be enlightening though, but what is ultimately more instructive and more applicable to the reader's own situation is his manner of dealing with his disturbing experience, that is, his struggle to resist the negation and meaninglessness of his life by self-critically organizing his life experiences, by putting the disorder of his existence into some kind of new order. Alienated from himself and humanity at large (just like, in all probability, the overwhelming majority of his bourgeois readers), the bourgeois intellectual Gorz dialectically and autobiographically writes himself closer to himself and the human community in general--and this meaning-giving method now belongs to us, this "process Gorz is ours" (34), as Sartre affirms. Betraying (in the sense of both disclosing and being unfaithful to), in his autobiographical act of self-discovery, his life-historical need for self-negation, the traitor Gorz "has not relieved [us] of [our] duty, the duty of inventing

¹³⁴ Bruce Mazlish, "Autobiography and Psycho-analysis," p. 37. Adolf Muschg similarly writes that the "effect of literature on others" could be liberating, binding, healing, and could, in fact, take the form of therapy" (Literatur als Therapie?, p. 121 [my translation]); see also Hans Rudolf Picard, Autobiographie im zeitgenössischen Frankreich, p. 164 and pp. 210-2; Hans Heinrich Muchow, "Über den Quellenwert der Autobiographie für die Zeitgeistforschung," Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte, 18, 4 (1966), 300-3.

[ourselves]. But he has proved that the totalizing invention is possible and necessary. Closing this book, each reader confronts his own underbrush, the poisonous trees of his private jungle: it is up to him to hack out his own paths, alone, to clear his own ground, to drive off the Vampires, to burst the old iron corsets, the exhausted actions into which resignation, fear, and self-distrust have laced him" (Sartre, 34). In other words, setting an example Gorz incites us to try to (re-)define ourselves to ourselves and, by implication, then to live our own lives--he gives us "the courage of [our] own experiences".¹³⁵ Instead of continuing to take on the pose of the supreme victim, Gorz, after the discovery of his terror of identification and his complicity in it, assumes more responsibility for his life¹³⁶: he now attempts to speak rather than be spoken, to live rather than be lived, to be rather than not to be. Before his turn toward himself as a subject, he characterizes himself thus: "Not to be here; not to be anything but a transparent

¹³⁵ Christa Wolf, "The Reader and the Writer," in The Writer and the Reader, p. 193.

¹³⁶ He writes: "The victim's position offers at least this moral comfort: The victim counts for nothing in the order oppressing him, he is not responsible for the wrong done him; he cannot, materially, realize his freedom; he can desire and dream of it without danger. Oppression protects him against responsibility....The victim is the accomplice of his condition. That is the best definition one can give of him. The man who feels and believes himself a victim is the man convinced that One is doing him a wrong against which he cannot do anything. As soon as he opposes oppression by action (by action, not by plaintive rebellion and protests in the name of the Rights of Man), as soon as he refuses it effectively, he ceases to behave as a victim..." (171).

presence, ineffable and therefore invulnerable, a glance from beyond that slides over the surfaces of events without taking hold, impervious to reproaches, uncommitted to all commitments toward others because absolutely committed toward the absolutely Other--this is how he began to be toward his twelfth year, this is how he still is today" (150). This lofty, untouchable, and irresponsible non-existence is being challenged by Gorz himself for the first time in and through The Traitor: rather than avoiding a confrontation with himself, rather than censoring his consciousness and disclaiming any share of responsibility for his life-history, he now (re)appropriates it and makes the first step toward freeing himself from the compulsion to repeat it and thus toward a responsible contemporaneity.

Postscript

In order effectively to counteract, that is, to eliminate the unconscious compulsion to repeat old behavior, it is, therefore, necessary to fill one's memory gaps and to let the repressed enter consciousness because, as Freud realizes, "one cannot overcome an enemy who is absent or not within range".¹³⁷ By autobiographically and dialectically laying bare the roots of his disturbing experience of non-existence, Gorz reinserts the past into the present. His unconscious, infantile terror of

¹³⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," p. 152.

identification is re-membered--it is repeated and worked through and thus becomes a conscious element of his present (non-)existence. The self-reflexive illumination and (re)possession of his life-history can be seen to be breaking the repressive spell of his past over the present--rendering it largely inoperative--and therefore opening up the future. In this sense, Gorz's autobiographical work of remembrance, having moved "inward, backward, and downward," as Erik Erikson describes the direction psychoanalytical work takes¹³⁸, also propels itself outward, forward, and upward: "The recherche du temps perdu becomes the vehicle of future liberation."¹³⁹ A storehouse of, and testing ground for experience and historical knowledge, dialectical autobiographical writing of the kind Gorz is involved in, has a utopian edge. Negating the officially sanctioned and induced historical oblivion and social amnesia, it contravenes the ubiquitous, alienating fragmentation of time into disconnected shreds of the now, and thus also the atomization of the self. In other words, only the critical confrontation with, and discriminating analysis of the past makes possible the development of a perspective both on the supremely reigning present and also for the future. In the tyranny of the now where history happens only in the present, dialectical autobiographical work in general, and The Traitor in particular is a time bomb in the locker of history: it explodes

¹³⁸ See this thesis, p. 141.

¹³⁹ Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, p. 18.

what Adorno calls "the nightmare ["Schreckbild"] of a humanity without remembrance"¹⁴⁰. In an age in which individual experience becomes increasingly buried and distorted "under the cliché of the conventionally accepted"¹⁴¹, the dialectical search for life-historical experiences and knowledge is destabilizing and subversive of instantaneous, repressive mass culture. The dissenting voice of the autobiographer Gorz thus has a utopian reverberation. Negating its negation, its refusal of the alienation and depersonalization of the world which is and has been constitutes a faint, germinal Prinzip Hoffnung.

The main source of hope in Gorz's work lies in its self-conscious, self-critical dialectical nature. In a world successfully attempting to homogenize, instrumentalize, and thus eradicate selves, Gorz's determined search for his self-identity, his insistent articulation of the need for self-government, challenges the primary principle by which our society functions--the exchange principle. Life in the exchange society is preformed and deformed under the rule of the general (money) over the particulars (commodities), and it is exactly this reifying and alienating domination of the universal which caused Gorz, who had interiorized it during his upbringing, to subsume his particular identity under the general, socially available character mask, a derealization and desubjectification

¹⁴⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit," p. 13 (my translation).

¹⁴¹ Ernest G. Schachtel, Metamorphosis, p. 289; see also p. 288 and p. 304.

of the world which he now suffers from and tries to undo as they prevent his self-identity. In contrast to his obstinate life-historical flight from himself as a living and breathing human being by means of an idealistic ascension into the purified sphere of his intellect and of abstract, conceptual thought (the result of which is his voluminous Fondements pour une morale), his autobiographical work on The Traitor constitutes his attempt to bring himself back down to earth, as it were, to particularize and (re)possess his up until now universal, airy, and fugitive existence, and to establish his concrete identity. In order to attain himself and to become a subject, Gorz now focusses his attention, for the first time ever, on the history of his falsified self, that is, he works through and tries to explain to himself his subjective life experiences in which the objective constellations of the world that have denied him his self-realization, are preserved. Defining the role of experience in contemporary writing, Christa Wolf also, by implication, describes the thrust of Gorz's autobiographical project: "The reservoir out of which he [the author] writes is his experience; it mediates between objective reality and the author as subject, and it is highly desirable that it be socially significant experience whose determining factors do not lie in 'the invisible realm'."¹⁴²

¹⁴² Christa Wolf, "Die Dimension des Autors: Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann," in Lesen und Schreiben: Neue Sammlung (Darmstadt/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1980), p. 78 (my translation). Unfortunately, this interview is not part of the English edition of Wolf's writings. See, however, also her essay "Faith in the Terrestrial," in which she quotes Anna Seghers' definition of

As it becomes obvious in The Traitor, the forces determining Gorz's non-identity are ultimately those of the principle of exchange which underlies the central issues of his becoming--his complex of non-identification, his desire to be Other, and his glorification of the mind and of will power at the expense of the body and of emotions--and which integrates him into the social totality and thus destroys his subjectivity.

(Re)producing the alienated and discontinuous nature of his object of investigation, that is, himself, in the very form his search for self-identity takes (Gorz's non-identity is dramatized not only in the narrator's oscillation between first and third person singular accounts, but also in the overall mixture, in his "autobiographical essay," of subjective and objective knowledge dialectically bouncing off against each other), Gorz can be seen to be writing a concrete history of the negated self or, in the words of Russell Jacoby, "a theory of a subject-less subject--or a not yet liberated subjectivity"¹⁴³. In this sense, the emancipation he achieves at the end of his dialectical (re)possession of his life-history must be understood not, of course, as a--socially impossible--victory over or escape from the principle of exchange, but rather as the ability to integrate the split narrative identities of the first

¹⁴²(cont'd) the writer as "a 'unique, peculiar, social joining of the subjective and the objective factor, the change-over of object to subject and back to object'" (The Reader and the Writer, p. 121 [my translation]).

¹⁴³ See this thesis, p. 37.

and third person singular at a more all-embracing level of consciousness: Gorz's autobiographical work has made it possible for him to overcome his non-identity and unequivocally to say "I".

What he still owes us, of course, is some evidence as to whether he can also be himself. That is to say, The Traitor is "only" a halfway house on the road to self-realization. Helping Gorz to become aware of the raison d'être of his non-identity, and inspiring the confidence in him to take steps toward overcoming it, his concrete autobiographical work tears down the smoke screen of abstractions and objectifications behind which he had self-denyingly been eking out his false existence. It can thus be seen to be a prise de conscience, but not yet what Paolo Freire calls a process of "conscientisation"¹⁴⁴ : not critically inserting himself into history, its author does not actively work on transforming the world that oppresses and instrumentalizes him. If Sartre ends his preface to Gorz's conversion by calling it an "Invitation to Life" (36), then he suggests a utopia not only for the reader but also, in a profound way, for the author himself--Gorz has laid the foundations for leading a more authentic, self-identical life. Fostering the becoming of a subject but not absolutely and totally constituting it, his autobiographical coming-to-himself

¹⁴⁴ Paolo Freire, "Conscientisation," in Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation, ed. Walter E. Conn (New York: Alba House, 1978), pp. 297-306. Freire's conscientisation would be a collective and/or societal project in Amitai Etzioni's Active Society (pp. 649-52).

hence points beyond the literary realm toward a "practical transcendence of his global situation, which, instead of avoiding, he must act upon and thereby transform" (79). It is only in this extra-literary act that he will be able "to become conscious of [himself] as creating the social order and the world" (60), and therefore to liberate himself; and Gorz knows this: not without reason does he introduce the last section of his self-inquiry, in which he is finally able to say "I," with Marx's affirmation that what "consciousness does in isolation is...without the slightest interest" (269). In this sense, the subjective investigation of the objective obstacles of him becoming a subject does not have an unburdened happy ending. The autobiographical negation of his negation refuses to sanction that which is and has been; it declines "to be an end in itself" and instead tries "to transcend itself at the very moment it comes into being" (302). If Gorz's abstract treatise Fondements pour une morale contains the instruments for him to think himself, then his concrete, dialectical autobiographical work The Traitor contains the tools for him to attempt, to the extent that it is possible in the life-denying exchange society we live in, to be himself: Hic Rhodus, hic salta.

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