



UNIVERSITY of
HAWAI'I
PRESS

What Makes Autobiography Interrogative?

Author(s): Donna Perreault

Source: *Biography*, Spring 1990, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 130-142

Published by: University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of Center for Biographical Research

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23539461>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

and University of Hawai'i Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Biography*

DONNA PERREAULT **What Makes Autobiography
Interrogative?**

In the pilot essay of *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney remarks that “it is all too typical—indeed it seems inevitable—that the subject of autobiography produces more questions than answers, more doubts by far (even of its existence) than certainties.”¹ A phenomenon related to this tendency of autobiography to raise questions is that theorists, in their turn, use the language of questions to discuss the genre. Is this exchange of questions between theorists and texts coincidental, or is there something inherently interrogative about autobiography? Autobiographers, for their part, often shape their narratives by means of an internal dialogue studded with answerable and unanswerable questions. Certain among them, like Richard Wright, draw attention to their interrogative spirit by emphasizing how, as youths, they relentlessly questioned those about them. Other more theoretical autobiographers, like Augustine and Montaigne, directly discuss their involvement with questions in the writing before them. Given the plethora of interrogative activity in and about autobiographies, it seems worthwhile to explore the connection between this unwieldy linguistic phenomenon and the genesis, art, and understanding of autobiography. This phenomenological sort of exploration reveals that autobiography produces so many questions within and without texts because questions are ultimately what the texts express. Specifically, I propose that the implicitly interrogative nature of autobiography derives from the questioning self-consciousness impelling the text and is explicitly evidenced in questions which each text can articulate if not answer.

Consider for a moment some linguistic properties of questions.

Their chief peculiarity is that they are without truth value—neither true nor false—because they do not describe a state of affairs.² Instead, they express thought suspended, an absence of judgment, and a will to know more. What motivates questions is not mere insufficiency of knowledge but the desire to mend the insufficiency through the aid of some usually designated respondent. Not every response to a question answers it, though, or relieves the frustration of insufficient information goading the questioner. The response “I don’t know,” which any given question may engender, rather turns the questioner to another respondent, or spurs him to take a different interrogative tack, rephrasing the question or requesting that another void be filled. In this way, questions often generate other questions, especially when the desire to know is sincere, acute and frustrated. If questions *do* possess a variety of truth value, it lies in their implicit assertion of this will to know. They are, as linguist Henry Hiz says, self-verifying utterances³: they always insist (rightly or wrongly) on the truth of someone’s desire to know. Consequently, the identity of the speaker is always forcibly implicated in his questions. For example, a question like “What do I know?” only expresses the truth of its particular speaker’s will to know, a fact which inextricably links it to the identity from whom it derives its force. So a question is speaker-referential even while it addresses an external state of affairs and solicits another subject’s response.

Though not exhaustive, this delineation of essential properties of questions identifies several peculiar traits which critics often attribute to autobiography. In particular, autobiography appears to share with questions a distinctive brand of truth, open-endedness, self-referentiality, the speaker/writer’s drive for coherence, and an affirmation of his will to know more. The following examination of autobiography’s interrogative roots reveals why its distinctive features mirror those of questions. Brief considerations of Augustine’s *Confessions* and Montaigne’s *Essays* will illuminate how questions implicitly and explicitly inform the autobiographical act. After providing a basis for conceiving of autobiography as a questioning response to selfhood, this essay moves to an application of the conception in an interpretation of Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*. A rich example of autobiography as question, *Black Boy* teems with questions which illuminate the narrative’s genesis and principal themes, as well as the narrator’s particular philosophy of life. In this way, it typifies how autobiography may represent a meaningful response to questions which it cannot, and usually claims not, to answer.

This discovery of a psycho-linguistic identity between questions and autobiography lends support to previous articulations of what autobiography is and what its roots are. Critics' frequent recourse to the language of questions can be justified by proposing that the essential interrogativity of the genre compels it. "Language of questions" includes all terms that directly or indirectly suggest the interrogative act: question, quest, dialogue, response and answer. Consider their use in the descriptions of autobiography below:

1. (Susanne Egan) "[Autobiography] represents the activity of the quest and, if it is successful, it becomes the answer that was sought."⁴
2. (Georges Gusdorf, on Christianity and autobiography) "Christian destiny unfolds as a dialogue of the soul with God in which, right up to the end, every action, every initiative of thought or of conduct, can call everything back into question."⁵
3. (Georges Gusdorf) "There is never an end to this dialogue of a life with itself in search of its own absolute truth."⁶
4. (William Spengemann) "Augustine wanted his *Confessions* to answer, once and for all, the questions that must confront anyone who seeks to know the absolute truth about himself and to portray his life as an example of that truth. But he did not answer the questions: he passed them on to all those later autobiographers."⁷

Characterizing autobiography as a quest, or a search, unites it linguistically to the act of inquiry, as both quest and question derive from the Latin word *quarere* meaning to seek, to ask, to inquire. In a related vein, the word "dialogue" introduces into descriptions of autobiography an act of communication, usually between two persons or two selves, which is typically shaped and sustained by question-response patterns. Spengemann's and Egan's use of the word "answer" in conjunction with "quest" and "questions" likewise signals the act of dialogue, though a dialogue that brooks completion in contrast to Gusdorf's image of endless dialogue. This debate over autobiography's (in)conclusiveness comes into greater focus when we consider its interrogativity as manifested in individual texts: what are the questions a text poses, are they answered, are they answerable, does the text finally rest question-like? Spengemann attempts to give the genre some conclusiveness in framing *the* four questions which primarily elicit autobiographical responses.⁸ And he is not alone. In great numbers, theorists have been consciously or unconsciously defining autobiography with their questions and its questions—a rather paradoxical enterprise con-

sidering that questions open up rather than limit reflections on a given subject. Given the self-referentiality of questions earlier discussed, it seems curious yet somehow natural that theorists attempt to (re)define autobiographers' questions for them. For what they simultaneously obtain are questions they need ask themselves. And one such essential question that we need ask of the genre and ourselves is, "What makes autobiography interrogative?"

At the outset, it seems safe to assume that what makes autobiography possible is the human propensity to express self-consciousness in language. In its pre-articulated form, self-consciousness, which is akin to a phenomenological turning back of the self upon itself, leads naturally to its linguistic expression as a question. Gusdorf, among others, depicts the self in this "pure" state of self-consciousness as being "wonderstruck" and filled with "disquiet" regarding the mystery of its personality.⁹ The wonder of the self vis-à-vis itself effects self-division which can be linguistically expressed best by means of a question which the self produces and to which it responds. In addition, giving form to wonder in a question guides the attention of the selves in dialogue to a particular state of affairs, within or without the mind, and consequently provides at least a potential direction for inquiry. Interrogatives thus invest curiosity of the self, endemic to autobiography, with a presumed end or *telos*, more or less unknown. David Fischer has this *telos* in mind when he states, "[Questions] are the engines of the intellect, the cerebral machines which convert energy to motion, and curiosity to controlled inquiry. There can be no thinking without questioning—no purposeful study of the past, nor any serious planning for the future."¹⁰ Fuelling and directing the autobiographer's study of his past from the purview of present self-consciousness, questions begin by informing the narrative and end by characterizing it, as we shall see. An autobiography thus testifies to its author's self-conscious awareness of his ability to convert wonder to inquiry, inquiry that characterizes or depicts his peculiar brand of wonder.

To complicate matters, questions underlying autobiographies are the potential means of achieving unity between the selves—author, narrator and/or character—while emphasizing their division. Some theorists require the achievement of unity or coherence, wishing to efface the self-division that questions emblemize. Asking for coherence in autobiography is tantamount to asking for a cessation of dialogue, an end to questioning, and a discontinuation of the very self-consciousness engendering the text. Yet these theorists have their reasons. Insofar as autobiography, as Egan says, answers the autobio-

grapher's questions about himself, his life and his representation of the two, it does strive for unity. But should we expect autobiography to put to rest its motivating questions *or* permit those questions to represent unachieved coherence as the *raison d'être* of the genre? With typical insight, Gusdorf finds logical coherence "the original sin of autobiography,"¹¹ implying that the affirmative language in the texts creates an illusion of coherence that *betrays* the questions bubbling indefatigably in the author's self-consciousness. Where one stands on the debate of coherence depends on whether one can ignore the infiltration of autobiography's interrogative roots into the narrative and view each text as *the* answer to the author's questions of selfhood. Generally, autobiographies themselves prevent this. Questions informing an autobiography surface all too often in the narrator's dialogue with himself: *they* constitute a response, and not the answer, to the moving self-consciousness living beyond the text.

Hence this description of autobiography: it is a questioning response to changeability of selfhood that brooks patterning but not conclusion. The patterning alluded to is often explicitly demonstrated by questions within the narrative. The questions spotlight the creation of a patterned self-consciousness, and frequently indicate that there are snags, as it were, in the pattern. Alternatively, they indicate that the snags are essential to the pattern, underscoring the narrator's recognition that, despite the ordering imposed, all is not square in himself, in his life, or in his writing. We would do well to call the perpetrator of these snags "change." Change or the perception of change seems requisite to the autobiographical act. Jean Starobinski goes so far as to say, "[One] would hardly have sufficient motive to write an autobiography had not some radical change occurred in his life—conversion, entry into a new life, the operation of Grace."¹² Thus, autobiographers' questions made explicit in their narratives signal that patterns of self-ordering have been interrupted by evidence of change the self has undergone or is undergoing even at the time of writing.

But if Starobinski is right about a once-and-for-all conversion being the *sine qua non* for the act of autobiography, what is one to do with an autobiographer like Montaigne, whose peaceful existence witnesses no greater change in himself than that which transpires from moment to moment with the rhythm of the pen? For that matter, what would Starobinski have us do with the second part of Augustine's *Confessions*, when, the conversion behind him, Augustine confronts the insuperable changeability of his present consciousness? The perception of change, great or small, appears to generate questions concerning the

self's transformation(s); the attitude of the narrator towards this change determines whether he will quell or nurture the questions that, open-ended, express the mystery of change. A consideration of the questions that surface in the narratives of Augustine and Montaigne, and the difference between their responses to these questions, will clarify this point.

In the second part of the *Confessions*, Augustine moves from a depiction of his past self, confidently rendered from the vantage point of conversion, to a tortuous philosophical inquiry into the nature of time and memory shaping his present existence. Suddenly self-conscious of the means by which he is able to know and disavow his old self, Augustine enters into a trialogue with himself and God, relentlessly questioning who he is, what he is doing, how his memory empowers him to call himself "himself." Tortured by the impenetrability of his present consciousness, which he would have as immutable as God, Augustine marshals all of his interrogative forces to penetrate the frontiers of time and memory. For a time, the questions about his self's transformations—questions implicitly driving the *Confessions*—rear their heads, only to be forced back into hiding in Augustine's soul. He ultimately chooses to arrest the dynamic of questions within the narrative: he distrusts his questions because they suggest his kinship to his former, wandering self.¹³ Unwilling to prolong this type of self-conscious examination that testifies to the changeability of his galloping thought, he writes: "Truth, you are everywhere in session. . . . you give the answer to every diversity of question. You answer clearly although everyone does not hear clearly."¹⁴ What this proclamation shows is that in the post-conversion books of the *Confessions* Augustine relinquishes the truth of autobiography in favor of a search for the Truth of theology. In these books, the Truth Augustine desires is no longer the truth of himself, nor the truth of his narrative: he and his self-inquiry belong with the truth of the interrogative which is changeability, open-endedness and frustrated will to know more.

In direct contrast to Augustine's distrust of his self's changeability and questions is Montaigne's happy acceptance of his thought's inquiring waywardness. Though they do not teem with questions as the *Confessions* do, his *Essays* spin continuously around the central question, "What do I know?"¹⁵ The question infuses his *Essays* with the interrogative's timeless, inconclusive truth which presupposes no one answer. Montaigne's contradictory responses return him and the reader to the question. Undaunted by his contradictions, celebrating the changes that betoken vital and fluid self-consciousness, Montaigne

portrays “passing,” likening himself to the wind (75). Since learning oneself is life’s highest aim for Montaigne, he takes his self as an ever-new subject of investigation, from statement to statement, from moment to moment, causing his inquiry’s progress to equal its end. Converting the mystery of change into an ally, then, he explores himself by means of a central, self-disclosing, self-opening question. His autobiography is thus structured not by a single grand Conversion but by endless conversions, incremental turnings and returnings around the central question.

The foregoing comparison of Augustine’s and Montaigne’s attitudes towards their self-inquiries illuminates two further motives for conceiving of autobiography as a narrative correlative to the interrogative. These motives concern the issues of inconclusiveness and truth that typically plague theorists allied with the coherence camp of autobiography. As we saw, Augustine’s desire for the conclusion of Truth aborts but does not invalidate the truth of his changeability, while Montaigne’s spirited immersion in self-inquiry leads him to the truth of his unfixable self. Both “conclusions” suggest that autobiography inherently defies neat conclusions about the *autos* and *bios*, and the act of writing about them. Open-ended, they share with the questions that generate them, and are generated within them, the framing of problems which no one solution or story resolves. Hence the frequency of second, third and fourth autobiographies: the questions either persist or must be phrased anew, responded to anew. If autobiography defies a last word or answer it is because it emerges from questions of self-consciousness and inherits from them the frustration of the will to know—for self-consciousness will always outrun narratives that it patterns. Insisting ultimately on questions of selfhood, autobiography cannot be deemed conclusive.

For the same reason, it cannot be reckoned as nearing its end as a genre. So long as the self is self-aware and venturing responses to its questions, there will be autobiography to verify the truth of the inquiring self. For that seems to be autobiography’s brand of truth: that true to the questions spawning it, it does not contain an immutable truth that the ongoing self, questioning, does not itself possess. This formulation of autobiography’s truth justifies Barrett Mandel’s dissatisfied sense of contrivance in reading narratives in which “an author thinks he has the *truth* and forgets that he is at least as wrong as he is right.”¹⁶ Despite occasional pretension to the contrary, autobiography cannot finally answer questions of selfhood. Instead, incorporating all of the properties of the questions impelling it, each autobiography only

validates its author's will to know himself, exposing what he has found as well as what he has yet to discover, to pattern, to formulate, to reveal.

This theory of autobiography's interrogativity avoids Spengemann-like tactics of framing universal questions goading or underlying all autobiographical acts. The self-referentiality of questions, essential to the theory, prohibits it since it fuses the autobiographical/interrogative will to know with highly self-conscious and so particular ends. In addition, it seems dubious that there exist "out there" questions which autobiographers universally adopt to inform their narratives. Rather, it is more plausible that they attempt to pose and respond to questions that communicate their individual perplexities about being alive as women or men in their skin, in their time and place, with their distinctive pools of values, experiences, and aspirations. Some autobiographers' questions being left implicit, it seems highly artificial to assign them after the fact. What we may do, however, is focus on questions explicitly at stake in individual narratives: not what autobiographers *may* ask themselves, but what they *do* each ask themselves. It is there, in the individual autobiographer's explicit questions, that the clues to his or her quest may be found.

No autobiography teems more with questions—questions its author poses without hope of answering—than Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. To understand the genesis of *Black Boy*, one has to concede the mystery of black boy's transformation into Richard Wright. The narrator of *Black Boy* creates the internal and external context of this transformation, but importantly is himself searching for the reasons behind it. That two selves are in question, literally and figuratively speaking, is undeniable. Black boy could never have written the autobiography that Richard Wright the author writes because the former is immersed and so constrained by the repressive environment of the South, while the latter, belonging to a new world, can only look back at black boy through a distance in time and space. Though this distance provides objectivity, the objectivity fails to expose entirely how Wright delivered himself from the psychological maze of the Southern Negro that *Black Boy* rigorously describes. And the narrator recognizes this mystery, wondering:

But what was it that always made me feel that [I couldn't stay there]? What made me conscious of possibilities? From where in this southern darkness had I caught a sense of freedom? Why was it I was able to act upon vaguely felt notions? What was it that made me feel things deeply enough for me to try to order my life by my feelings?¹⁷

These questions address the inexplicability of Wright's metamorphosis from black boy to author, and likewise frame the problems impelling him to recreate the metamorphosis in his autobiography. Put another way, *Black Boy* is a response to Wright's questions about his ability to become another self. But the response is necessarily interrogative since it can only describe and express the narrator's will to understand the transformation.

Questions in *Black Boy* have two interdependent sources: the narrator and the child subject, both of whom are autobiographical personae of Richard Wright. The propensity of both to question constitutes a psychic link between the narrative's two "I" 's, and signifies their provenance from the one self-consciousness whose dialogue forms and informs the narrative. From his earliest years, black boy was always "asking far too many questions" to suit his family and acquaintances (30). His questions, in conjunction with those of the narrator, articulate the principal themes of the narrative, themes concerned with black boy's identity, with his environment, and with his conscientious refusal to assimilate himself into that environment. Certain of their questions, for example, reveal black boy's struggle at developing an identity, a struggle still alive at the time of Wright's departure from the South. In a dialogue with his mother, black boy inquires about his grandmother's and father's race, and ultimately asks, "Then what am I?" (57) Other questions the narrator asks reveal his self-conscious perplexity about the early corruption of black boy's innocence: "How could I have told [my uncle] that I had learned to curse before I had learned to read? How could I have told him that I had been a drunkard at the age of six?" (109) Still others highlight his will to understand the relationship between his destiny and the destiny of his race. Why race must negatively determine his destiny is in fact the central theme and question of the narrative. The disclosure of the narrator's *and* black boy's questioning reflections following the brickyard episode exemplify how the narrator's preoccupation with this theme converges with black boy's preoccupation with the reality:

I grew silent and reserved as the nature of the world in which I lived became plain and undeniable; the bleakness of the future affected my will to study. Granny had already thrown out hints that it was time for me to be on my own. But what had I learned so far that would help me to make a living? Nothing. I would be a porter like my father before me, but what else? And the problem of living as a Negro was cold and hard. What was it that made the hate of whites for blacks so steady, seemingly so woven into the texture of things? What kind of life was possible under

that hate? How had this hate come to be? Nothing about the problems of Negroes was ever taught in the classroom at school; and whenever I would raise these questions with the boys, they would either remain silent or turn the subject into a joke. They were vocal about the petty individual wrongs they suffered, but they possessed no desire for a knowledge of the picture as a whole. Then why was I worried about it? (181).

Still possessed of a desire to know the picture of racial prejudice as a whole, Wright recreates this emergent inner dialogue to emphasize that from the beginning the negro plight was uniquely a problem for him, and continues to be so. Expressed in an interrogative mode, the themes of racial prejudice and blacks' submission to its dehumanizing effects develop as problematics bereft of a valid rationale. These thematic questions serve to fuel black boy's journey to Wright's life as well as Wright's recreation of black boy's journey. For the problem of the Negro continues to be cold and hard for the narrator dramatizing one boy's frustrated efforts at understanding its causes and effects.

The prevalence of questions signifying Wright's and black boy's conscious separation from their natal environment ultimately makes questioning itself a theme of the narrative, as well as its *raison d'être*. In discovering within himself a self-conscious resistance to the demands of the black and white communities alike, Wright depicts himself as being alienated from both, then as now. This alienation finds linguistic support in the self-referentiality of his many questions, which insist as only questions can insist on the speaker's right and will to understand that which disturbs him. In the paragraph following the one quoted above, the narrator/black boy emphasizes how intrinsic the exercise of this right to question is to the preservation of his sense of self:

Was I really as bad as my uncles and aunts and Granny repeatedly said? Why was it considered wrong to ask questions? Was I right when I resisted punishment? It was inconceivable to me that one should surrender to what seemed wrong. Ought one to surrender to authority even if one believed that the authority was wrong? If the answer was yes, then I knew that I would always be wrong, because I could never do it. Then how could one live in a world in which one's mind and perceptions meant nothing and authority and traditions meant everything? There were no answers (181-182).

Despite his use of the past tense, Wright establishes his continuing resistance to traditional racial beliefs simply by exercising his right to question their authority over himself. His questions both express and

support his internal rupture from the authority that would have him be silent. Thus questions are his weapons in articulating his struggle against a system whose incongruities and injustices conspire to vanquish his self-consciousness.

Ultimately, Wright boards a northbound train with the hope that “some day [he] might understand [the South], might come to know what its rigors had done to [him], to its children” (284). But does *Black Boy* demonstrate that Wright has reached this understanding? It would seem not. There were no answers and there continue to be no answers, for there is no way to make sense of the madness of prejudice into which Wright was born. In addition, no answers are forthcoming to resolve the conundrum of Wright’s ability to escape the determining influences of this prejudice. When the narrator states, “All my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thoughts” (276), one wonders, why Wright, why not every black boy in his circumstances as well? However, if by “life” we understand Wright to mean the interaction of his experiences with his peculiar psychic configuration, we are in a position to accede to the necessity of Wright’s mysterious transformation from black boy. Because for Wright, that psychic configuration includes a propensity to question and so to challenge his environment, a propensity which later enables him to recreate the process of his life in an implicitly and explicitly interrogative autobiography.

Evidence of the centrality of questioning in Wright’s psychic configuration surfaces in his philosophy of life, a philosophy less pessimistic than paradoxical. Wright describes the early formation of a conviction based on a ceaseless and frustrated will to know:

At the age of twelve, before I had had one full year of formal schooling, I had a conception of life that no experiences would ever erase. . . . a notion as to what life meant that no education could ever alter, a conviction that the meaning of living came only when one was struggling to wring a meaning out of meaningless suffering (112).

This conviction possesses the same paradoxical dynamic as the will to question that which one knows to be unanswerable for the sake of validating the question. And Wright explicitly recognizes the distinctly interrogative nature of his philosophy when he continues:

[The spirit I had caught] directed my loyalties to the side of men in rebellion; it made me love talk that sought answers to questions that could help nobody, that could only keep alive in me that enthralling sense of wonder and awe in the face of the drama of human feeling which is hidden by the external drama of life (112).

Black Boy helps keep alive the sense of wonder in the internal drama of life, serving as a manifestation of Wright's search for answers to questions that help no one. Or are the questions so fruitless? The search, after all, virtually leads to black boy's transformation into an author capable of dramatizing the liberating effects of self-inquiry in autobiography. Consequently, should not *Black Boy* be viewed as a tribute to that search, by virtue of its inconclusiveness? The search constituting an end, a source of meaning for Wright, its closure would signify the triumph of meaninglessness over a self withdrawing from internal dialogue. Open-ended, however, it represents an act of self-verification, like the interrogatives fuelling it. And paradoxically, its interrogative nature affirms the self questioningly in motion. Though its individual questions admit no answers, *Black Boy* is itself an indirect response of self-affirmation to the question Wright asks himself: "Then how can I change my relationship to my environment?" (219). For he creates himself and that environment through an inversion of authority, where the self insists on its right to literally call into question the prejudicial assumptions afflicting a racist society.

Having suspiciously circumvented the issue of reader implication in autobiography's questions, I close this analysis with a few remarks on the subject, with the questions of *Black Boy* fresh in mind. Surely the search for meaning in this autobiography is originally Wright's. Both questioner and respondent, he embarks on a written journey of self-inquiry to express his particular wonder about human experience. But if his inquiry is to become meaningful to readers, they too must assume the roles of questioner and respondent. To attempt to enter the interior of another is impossible, but to attempt to ask and respond along with a narrative inquiry is not. In fact, it is crucial that readers of an autobiography make the questions the text poses their own (as questions, if they are to function as questions, must belong to the questioner). In this way, the exchange of questions between text and readers may occur, an exchange which permits us to investigate an autobiography as a narrative inquiry that retains its interrogativity long after the time when the incipient questions were posed.

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

NOTES

1. James Olney, "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 5.

2. Henry Hiz, "Introduction," in *Questions* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1978), p. ix.
3. Hiz, "Difficult Questions," p. 157.
4. Susanne Egan, *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 7.
5. Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," trans. James Olney in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, p. 33.
6. Gusdorf, p. 48.
7. William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 33.
8. Spengemann, p. 32. He writes: "St. Augustine set the problem for all subsequent autobiography: How can the self know itself? By surveying in the memory its completed past actions from an unmoving point above or beyond them? By moving inquisitively through its own memories and ideas to some conclusion about them? Or by performing a sequence of symbolic actions through which the ineffable self can be realized?"
9. Gusdorf, p. 32.
10. As quoted in Stephen Gale, "A Prolegomenon to an Interrogative Theory of Scientific Inquiry," in *Questions*, p. 320.
11. Gusdorf, p. 32.
12. Jean Starobinski, "The Style of Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, p. 78.
13. Spengemann, p. 30.
14. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Rex Warner (New York: The New American Library, 1963), (x, 26).
15. Montaigne, *Selections from the Essays*, ed. and trans. Donald M. Frame (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1971), p. 63; hereafter cited in text.
16. Barrett Mandel, "Full of Life Now," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, p. 57.
17. Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1945), p. 282; hereafter cited in text.