

rocal engagement in simple and complex self experiencing, in which both participants engage in moments of deep experiencing and episodes of reflective objectification. This is what I term *play work*, to honor the to-and-fro of work and play, of reflecting and experiencing, that takes place between the two participants in a psychoanalysis.

But now an interlude, as I consider just how our idiom informs the other and leaves a trace of its character.

3

Being a Character

“Something—which we could call ruminativeness, speculation, a humming commentary—is going on unnoticed in us always, and is the seed-bed of creation,” writes Helen Vendler: “Keats called it a state of ‘dim dreams,’ full of ‘stirring shades, and baffled beams.’” She quotes Wordsworth:

Those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things
Falling from us, vanishings,
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised (226)

In moments of consciousness we are partly aware of these dim dreams that stir within us, even though such inner senses lack the memorable precision of the dream content. Our inner world, the place of psychic reality, is inevitably less coherent than our representations of it; a moving medley of part thoughts, incomplete visualizations, fragments of dialogue, recollections, unremembered active presences, sexual states, anticipations, urges, unknown yet present needs, vague intentions, ephemeral mental lucidities, unlived partial actions: one could go on and on trying to characterize the complexity of subjectivity, and yet the adumbration of its

qualities does poor service to its reality. So too with self representation. How do we express the self? We speak, but only ever partly, and the unspoken is as intrinsic a part of our utterance as the enunciated. The symbolic, its rules of engagement known to the unconscious, links signifiers in infinite chains of meaning; just as the individual's diction texture and sonic imagery speak another tongue. "The image functions within the poem like the nerve of a thinking brain," writes Seamus Heaney (78) of a poem by Yeats, to which we may echo a larger assent—that images constitute another mode of self expression, each an intense condensation of many ideas thought simultaneously. We also gaze upon a dumb show of the other's gestural masque. "What is the life value of a gesture?" asks Lukács: it is "a movement which clearly expresses something unambiguous . . . the only thing which is perfect within itself." "The gesture alone expresses life," he concludes (28), a view Wittmott would arrive at many years later when he coined the term "true self" to designate the sign of life in the individual. We could go on—to somatic expression as another order of representation; indeed, to the hidden work of thinking proper revealed in the unconscious logic of sequence. Our listing of the many avenues of self expression could never truly honor the nature of human expression.

We are on different terrain as psychoanalysis, however, when faced with deciphering a sample of mental illness; psychological disturbance seems to organize the individual's self expression in such a way as to foreclose contact with the baffling complexity of mental life. In *Studies on Hysteria* Freud recounted a summer day in the 1890s when he climbed a mountain in the eastern Alps and, "feeling refreshed and rested, was sitting deep in contemplation of the charm of the distant prospect." He was quite elsewhere: "I was so lost in thought that at first I did not connect it with myself when these words reached my ears: 'Are you a doctor, sir?'" A rather depressed, but, we might add, determined adolescent

of eighteen had followed the famous doctor to the top of the mountain, where she spoke her symptom. "It comes over me all at once. First of all it's like something pressing on my eyes. My head gets so heavy, there's a dreadful buzzing, and I feel so giddy that I almost fall over," and Katherina goes on. As she lists her physical symptoms Freud somewhat impatiently asks for news from the world of thought. "When you have an attack do you think of something? And always the same thing? Or do you see something in front of you?" "Yes," she replies, "I always see an awful face that looks at me in a dreadful way, so that I am frightened," and Freud, true to his Poirot self, investigates the story, unravels clues, and at six thousand feet helps his analyst and of the moment to unravel her mystery (125–26).

Of course we know the rest of the story. Psychoanalysis preoccupied itself with a symptom that caused an expressed mental suffering; it named types of cases—hysterical, obsessional, etc.—to identify groups of common ailments and has led in our era to classifications of humanity according to broad psychic characters: borderline, neurotic, schizophrenic, and so forth. One may wonder, though, if we have not unwittingly shadowed the restrictions imposed by illness with our own corresponding restrictions in theory. Freud's lost-in-thought self was interrupted by his attending to a young girl's symptom, just as later absorption in the great depths of his self analysis was abandoned in order to be the other. Has psychoanalysis discarded an early effort to be lost in thoughts, to be inside the complexity of subjectivity by concentrating attention on the identifiable samples of psychic life: the symptom, the obvious character trait, the narrated history?

I am not suggesting that we have erred in attending to the symptom or the mental structure of a character pathology; surely a narrowing of focus is necessary to think about the nature of mental illness. But if we think of these objectivities of self experience as fundamentally characteristic

of that inner life, then symptoms, defense constellations, and dream contents mislead us. Like all of us, Freud lost in thought is participant in his own destiny just as the dream which collects us into units of narrative experience is also typical of life.

Being the Dream Work

I would like to use the individual's construction of the dream as a model of the articulation of a person's character, and in so doing to suggest a different fate—or at least a more complex fate—for the human subject than is suggested by the ego-psychological ideal of a progressive adaptation to reality. For although it is true that as we develop we acquire more sophisticated mental structures enabling the self to achieve greater psychic integration and increased ego skill in adapting to reality, it seems to me equally valid that as we grow we become more complex, more mysterious to our self, and less adapted to reality. How can one account for this rather troubling contradiction?

There is, as Freud has taught us, a psychopathology of everyday life characterized by the utterance of latent unconscious thoughts through the parapraxal skills of the ego: words are distorted or forgotten, actions are bungled in ways that spell out other hidden ideas. Each night, with luck, we dream, and this event is so instrumental to mental health that dream deprivation can lead eventually to a clinical psychosis. In human relations individuals regularly project parts of themselves into their others, shaping their relational world according to the idiom of their internal world, creating a village of friends who constitute a secret culture of the subject's desire.

Parapraxal utterance, symptomatic expression, screen memories, erotic fantasies, dreams, transferences, somatic states, ordinary relational projections, moods, and so on are

all features of subjectivity that enable the person to express himself unconsciously. The self does not evolve unconsciously; rather, the self is unconsciousness, a particular inner presence, reliably vectored by the forms "it" uses to find expression. If this sounds mysterious, as if one is assigning to subjectivity a movement beyond our consciousness, then so be it: we are that mystifying to consciousness. In some respects we are originally so: I believe each of us at birth is equipped with a unique idiom of psychic organization that constitutes the core of our self, and then in the subsequent first years of our life we become our parents' child, instructed by the implicate logic of their unconscious relational intelligence in the family's way of being: we become a complex theory for being a self that the toddler does not think about but acquires operationally.

Our private idiom and its operational matriculation into processes of care that are theories of being leave each of us as adults with a substantial part of our self somehow deeply known (profoundly us) yet unthought. The theory of the id was a crucial first step in conceptualizing an important "itness" to us, something at our core, something that drives consciousness: a figuration of personality that conjures specific objects to unravel its code by such objectifications. Above all, our itness, or our idiom, is our mystery. We imagine, dream, abstract, select objects before we know why and even then knowing so little.

As a child develops he or she chooses friends, forms of play, objects of intellectual interest, and aspects of the mother and father, to give expression to the self. Such choices are, at the best of times, spontaneous and unconsciously determine, as is the *jouissance* of the true self as "it" finds bliss in the grasping of very particular objects to yield specific experience. This joy reflects the inner sense of the self's release to its being, and the pleasures of a child who is choosing objects of desire is unmistakable to those of us who witness it. But we also see all children held up by a mood

which Freud and Breuer argued, as early as 1897, was evidence of the presence of unconscious conflict at work. Child psychotherapists observe children struggling with internal objects constituted from the conflicts of intrapsychic life, just as they may feel through their countertransference the child's representation of a part of the mother or father deposited in them through parental projective identification. Of course, each child has his own particular life history, composed of the essential mixtures of life: the first day of school, the first physical injury, a death in the family, a move.

However are we to describe the character of the internal world, given its dense complexity? We do not have separate or overlapping lines of development, we have mazes of evolving devolutions. Although our internal world registers the multivalent factors of units of experience, rendered into textured condensations of percepts, introjects, objects of desire, memories, somatic registrations, and so forth, in fact we become a kind of dreaming: overdetermined, condensed, displaced, symbolic. Instinctual, ego-characteristic, receptive, and accident-prone, we "work" our days into their notional status as vague forms of thinking. Our weeks, months, and years pass by as we continuously work experience into psychic material, most of it beyond consciousness but certainly preconsciously familiar as "our" inner texture.

Of course, themes emerge. We do have identifiable patterns to our being. We can rightly claim to have identities and speak of ourself with some sense of what is being addressed. But these "contents" are not the stuff of life any more than the dream content is the dream work. Most of the time we are simple selves engaged in the life equivalent of the dream work, and although we do have a sense of being in this place of self dissemination, it is rather like living an essential chaos.

How else can we describe the state of being a simple self, immersed in the projective subjectification of reality, as anything other than a chaos of forms, as we dissolve con-

sciousness, disseminate parts of the self in units of experience, are evoked by objects that arrive by chance, and in turn use objects as lexical elements in the elaboration of idiom? To be the simple experiencing self the individual must abandon self objectification and surrender to experience, a dissolution essential to the subjectification of reality. The schizophrenic's continuous unrelenting self observing is in some respects testimony to his difficulty in yielding to generative projection. The fear of being trapped inside the object world or of losing the self to such abandonment prevents some psychotic individuals from giving themselves to the dreaming of life.

Indeed the capacity to be the dream work of one's life, to devolve consciousness to the creative fragmentations of unconscious work, is evidence of a basic trust in the reliable relation between such dreaming and the consciousness that results in our reflections. Knowing that we will awaken from our dreaming, that we shall endure episodes of self observation and analysis, helps the individual to trust in the wisdom of surrender to subjectifications. Indeed this trust owes much to the nature of the first years of life, when we were a simple experiencing self participant in a thinking or dreaming world of the mother's unconscious. If a child feels that his subjectivity is held by some container, composed of the actual holding environment of parental care and subsequently the evolving structure of his own mind, then the subjectifying of the world feels licensed, underwritten, and guaranteed. But if this right is not secure, then a child will feel hesitant to release the elements of self to their experiences: such abandonments feel life-threatening.

We dream ourself into being by using objects to stimulate our idiom, to release it into lived expression. We do not think about it at all while doing it. We are just inside something—our dream work—that is itself a pleasure. It is subjectivities' *jouissance* to find the means of being dreamed into reality; there is true joy in finding an object that bears

its experience which we find transformational, as it metamorphoses a latent deep structure into a surface expression. Winnicott stressed how in play the child's excitement expressed the sense of risk involved in committing oneself to the imaginary. What would turn up? Abandoning oneself to play, what would happen? Or perhaps more accurately, exactly whom do we become as we express our idiom in play? To be a character, to release one's idiom into lived experience, requires a certain risk, as the subject will not know his outcome; indeed, to be a character is to be released into being, not as a knowable entity per se, but as an idiom of expression explicating a human form. Even in these moments of self-expression the individual will not know his own meaning, his reflections will always lag behind himself, more often than not puzzled by his inness, yet relieved by the *jouissance* of its choosings.

Personal Effects

Do I know the other's character, who the other truly is? Have I the means of transcribing the other's subjectivity to some collectable place? Only to a limited, if useful, extent, as we shall see. But we can observe an individual's personal effects and to some extent witness the idiom's lexical expressions implied by object choice even if what we see is more like a jumbled collection of manifest texts. I may visit a friend's house and find that he has selected sky blue for the walls of his living room, white for the kitchen, rust for the study. I may see that he collects records, particularly Mahler, and I may note that he collects records, particularly Mahler, and Klaus Tennstedt. I may see that his book collection is largely fiction, especially thrillers, but that he has a substantial literature on oriental rugs, which marries up logically with the many such rugs scattered about the house. Photos of fishing expeditions tell me he likes to fish, plenty of *haute*

cuisine pots and pans inform me he likes to cook, a messy desk that he is not so well organized, a jug full of sharpened pencils and no pens that he prefers to erase error and anticipates its reliable arrival, the absence of TV that he may seek to be unaffected by it and one could endlessly describe what else is missing. But what have I learned? Well, I have some evidence of his personal effects, don't I, but unfortunately I do not know what these objects mean to him. Neither can I assume that all I see is actually his personal choice. After all, the specific Mahler recordings could have been gifts from a friend and the shining pots evidence of a wish never actualized. But I think it is fair to say that many of the objects I see do reflect the friend's dreaming; like dream props they are overdetermined, possible condensations of wishes and needs (the pots could reflect conflicts) or they may be substitutions (blue wall instead of red) or displacements (thrillers instead of pornography). What I believe we see, then, is something of the dream work, although the latent dream thoughts are not for us to know.

We are, however, imagining the room without its inhabitant. What if we could watch this person move about his room, picking up objects, moving them about, giving form, as it were, to his person? To make this imagining sharper, throwing into relief the point I wish to make, let us think of this person's idiom by conceiving him to be a ghost. We are in the room, then, with a ghost, whom we can see only as objects are stirred or moved around the room. By seeing the objects move, rather like observing the wind by watching the moving trees, we would, in effect, be watching his personal effect as he passed through his life, and theoretically, we could film subjectivities' enacted dissemination by catching the movement of objects over time.

This metaphor enables me to get closer to what I want to say about the nature of human character. It allows us to consider the *forms of existence* selected by any human life, sculpted through the choice and use of objects, but un-

cumbered by the imposing physical presence of the subject who seems to be self-defining in and through his own presence. The ghost moving about the room does not, however, indicate the most important place of the moving object, as we are not witness to those internal objects conjured in the mind. But we do know something of this movement when our internal world is characterized by the other's effect upon us, something that the theory of projective identification and other theories of unconscious communication now address. In other words, we are internally shaped by the presence and actions of the other. Although it is difficult to witness how one person "moves through" the other, like a ghost moving through the internal objects in the room of the other's mind, we know it is of profound significance, even though exceptionally difficult to describe.

Let us think of someone in particular—our father, for example—to see what we register within ourselves; what we think of. Perhaps some image of the father's expression will cross our mind, but this hardly adds up to the experience that is taking place within us. Indeed it is important to stress that at the moment of thinking of the father we are undergoing an experience, as inner constellations of feelings, unthought ideas, deeply condensed memories, somatic registrations, body positionings, and so forth are gathering into an inner sense. But what is this? The total experience is, in fact, the effect upon oneself (naturally reflecting the self we are as well as the other whom we represent) of the father. And if we think of anyone else, our mother, our spouse, one of our children, a close friend, a neighbor, a shopkeeper, then we feel an inner forming inside ourselves, a restructuring of our inner world that is evoked by the name of the person we are then considering.

I think that this inner form within us, this outline or shape of the other, dynamic yet seemingly consistent, is indeed rather like a *revenant* within, as we have been affected by the other's movement through us, one that leaves its ghost

inhabiting our mind, conjured when we evoke the name of the object.

Gathering Our Self

But what, then, of our self? To begin with the simple, and misleading again, what happens as we look about our room, our house, what do we see of this very particular self that we are? Well, certainly here or there we can identify objects that serve to bring us into a dreaming episode, when we imagine our self into its being. I have several copies of *Moby Dick* on my shelf, a faint trace of my Ph.D. thesis on Melville. I know that by choosing Melville's book I selected an object that allowed me to be dreamed by it, to elaborate myself through the many experiences of reading it. In some ways its mental spaces, its plot, its characters, allowed me to move elements of my idiom into collaboration with the text and hence into being. Selecting it as the object of such personal concentration was an intuitive choice, in my view, based on my knowing (yet not knowing why) that this book—rather than, say, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*—would bring something of me into expression. I did not think, at the time, that it connected to an episode at the age of eleven when I was swimming some hundred yards off the shore of my favorite cove in my hometown when I saw what initially looked to me like a large reef moving in my direction. In fact, it was a whale and it passed by me so closely that although it did not touch me I could still feel it. It was a profoundly upsetting moment and linked in the unconscious, I believe, to an experience at the age of nine of riding up over a wave to collide with the bloated body of a woman who must have been dead at sea for some time—an experience whose memory I repressed, but which "resurfaced" some years after writing the dissertation when I incorrectly assumed that it was pure fantasy. Although I subsequently

discovered its authenticity, it nonetheless collected to it, like a screen memory, many factors in my psyche which had then organized into a repression. Thus in choosing to work on *Moby Dick* (embarked on in 1969, the nine perhaps designing the task of elaborating a prior experience at the age of nine) I selected an object that I could use to engage in deep unconscious work, an effort that enabled me to experience and articulate something of my self.

I can retrace some of my psychic footsteps, and a favorite novel allows me to detect some of its unconscious meaning. Interesting though this may be, it is the exception: so much of what we choose to process the self is ahmerneutic. For example, why at twenty did I develop a passionate interest in Beethoven's Third Symphony? This interest was circumstantially elicited as I happened to hear it in concert, but I felt very drawn to it. Like a holding environment, a musical work puts the listening subject through a complex nonverbal inner process. I also heard Bach's Mass in B Minor, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* that year and went to a James Brown and a Janis Joplin concert, all of which I enjoyed, but the Third Symphony became a musical object that I listened to again and again. In my twenties I sought many musical objects, works of passionate investment succeeding one another, yet is it possible to discover the meaning, the unconscious message of such works, as it is possible in part to specify with *Moby Dick*?

These two works of art, used by me, are intended to shadow an earlier example of trying to see what we can know about a person by noting the very particular objects he selects in the course of a life. Although in considering what I can know of myself by listing such important actual objects, I obviously operate in a different field than in the example of visiting a friend's house to see his personal effects. But when I think of *Moby Dick* or when I recall the period of my youth when I listened to the Third Symphony, memory becomes a kind of gathering of internal objects, developing

an inner constellation of feelings, ideas, part images, body positions, somatic registrations, and so forth that nucleate into a sustained inner form.

Inhabited by the Object World

I am inhabited, then, by inner structures that can be felt whenever their name is evoked; and in turn, I am also filled with the ghosts of others who have affected me. In psychoanalysis we term these "internal objects," which clearly do not designate internal pictures, or clear inner dramas, but rather *highly condensed psychic textures*, the trace of our encounters with the object world.

This suggests, among other things, that as we encounter the object world we are substantially metamorphosed by the structure of objects; internally transformed by objects that leave their traces within us, whether it be the effect of a musical structure, a novel, or a person. In play the subject releases the idiom of himself to the field of objects, where he is then transformed by the structure of that experience, and will bear the history of that encounter in the unconscious. To be a character is to enjoy the risk of being processed by the object—indeed, to seek objects, in part, in order to be metamorphosed, as one "goes through" change by going through the processional moment provided by any object's integrity. Each entry into an experience of an object is rather like being born again, as subjectivity is newly informed by the encounter, its history altered by a radically effective present that will change its structure.

To be a character is to gain a history of internal objects, inner presences that are the trace of our encounters, but not intelligible, or even clearly knowable: just intense ghosts who do not populate the machine, but inhabit the human mind. If idiom is, then, the it with which we are born, and if its pleasure is to elaborate itself through the choice of objects,

one that is an intelligence of form rather than an expression of inner content, its work collides with the structure of objects that transform it, through which it gains its precise inner contents. This collisional dialectic between the human's form and the object's structure is, in the best of times, a joy of living, as one is nourished by the encounter.

I believe we have a special knowledge of the nature of this dialectic, and the Freudian unconscious is the stuff of that knowledge. That is, the processional integrity of any object—that which is inherent to any object when brought to life by an engaging subject—is used by the individual according to the laws of the dream work. When we use an object it is as if we know the terms of engagement; we know we shall “enter into” an intermediate space, and at this point of entry we change the nature of perception, as we are now released to dream work, in which subjectivity is scattered and disseminated into the object world, transformed by that encounter, then returned to itself after the dialectic, changed in its inner contents by the history of that moment.

But are such moments the arrival of essence, the deep truth of subjectivity? In a way yes, in a way no. It is true that as we evolve we release our idiom into units of being and that in time we gain a sense of the self that we are. But that is all. We gain only a sense. Or the sense is more importantly valued than what we perceive to know about the history of the self or the character of its mental process. Only a sense partly because the fate of each of us is to be dreamed by the contexts of idiom and object and partly because the forms of experience and for expression undermine thematic serenity. So although I may rightly say that I know certain themes of my identity, although I may specify my life history and establish the narrative of myself, the truth of my life, one I believe true of all of our lives, is that to be human is to be recurrently lost in thought (and the use of object) when we are involved in the process of living and informed by the ghosts of experience. We live this

process all our life, we know it deeply, yet it is exceptionally difficult to describe, even though psychoanalysis has selected samples of the process and subjected them to great scrutiny.

What we come to know as we mature into more sophisticated creatures is that we add new psychic structures that make us more complex, increase our capacity for the dream work of life, and therefore problematize the sense we have of an established reality, a world of psychically meaningful convention, available to us for our adaptation. As we age we know that our destiny is a rather paradoxical psychological unraveling. Wisdom is measured by increased uncertainty about the meanings of our self, or of life. Decentered by experience, radically historicized, not given integrating memories neatly unifying the nature of life, we are nonetheless inhabited by the *revenants* of the dream work of life, thousands of inner constellations of psychic realities, each conjurable by name or memory; even if few are truly intelligible. And as we mature, is it any surprise that we come to believe more and more in life's mystery and in the strangeness of being human, as we are in possession of—or is it possessed by?—these inner realities, which we know, but which we truly cannot think, however hard we try. And yet they are there. Not only there, but the inner senses we have when we think of our inner objects seem more a part of us than anything else. How do we name them?

The Spirits of Life

I shall extend the metaphor of our containment of ghosts, the feeling of being inhabited by our history and its objects, by saying that the objects we contain are spirits. We contain what for us will have been the essence of our encounters with objects, reflecting in the synthesis something that transcends our idiom and the structure of the object, but which owes its origin to each. They are the stuff of psychical reality.

They can neither be seen nor described. It is possible to inaugurate an effort of representation through free association, but what that gains is less the articulation of the content of the spirit than its elaboration through the formal effect of the free associations, particularly if we consider this from the viewpoint of the transference and the countertransference, where what is being addressed tends to be enacted in the form of the discourse. I can talk to my analyst about my father, but what happens over time is that he will know him less through the precise contents of the associations than through some intriguing effect upon himself which gathers into his inner experience something of the nature of what I hold within myself.

Being a character, then, means bringing along with one's articulating idiom those inner presences—or spirits—that we all contain, now and then transferring them to a receptive place in the other, who may knowingly or unknowingly be inhabited by them. My analyst may know, for example, when his inner experience constellates that presence I have objectified as “father,” but in the ordinary to-and-fro of life, as we pass back and forth the spirits of life, we hardly know quite whom we are holding for the other, however briefly, although we will know that we are being inhabited. And perhaps we struggle to conceptualize in the vernacular philosophy of everyday life the nature of spiritual communication (of transference and countertransference), as we shall, for example, say that person X emits certain “vibes” which we may or may not like. We also say that we are or are not on someone’s “frequency,” just as we also claim that we are or are not “in tune” with X. Why are we using sonic images to talk about certain types of human communication? Possibly because the sheer unspecificity of the content of what is being discussed is true to the sense of the occasion; one cannot be specific, although the selection of the sonic form is clear enough and points to a belief in the shaping effect of form as the conveyer of meaning.

Being a character means that one is a spirit, that one conveys something in one's being which is barely identifiable as it moves through objects to create personal effects, but which is more deeply graspable when one's spirit moves through the mental life of the other, to leave its trace. Perhaps there is a special form within each of us for the perception of this type of communication. Maybe we have a special ear for it, as we may have for music. If so, then we are capable of a kind of spiritual communication, when we are receptive to the intelligent breeze of the other who moves through us, to affect us, shaping within us the ghost of that spirit when it is long gone. It also suggests that some people may be spiritually impoverished, with a diminished capacity for the reception of spiritual communication, meaning that they lack an intelligent inner space available to receive the other's spirit. Some individuals may be spiritual imperialists, greedily moving through others, militantly affecting people in destructive ways. Can we talk about people who are more or less spiritually good, and those who are spiritually bad, if in daring to include a morality to interpersonal life, we have in mind both the capacity to be inhabited by the other and the capacity to know the limits of any other to host us?

Spirit is, however, a word that opens itself to many ideas, lending itself, by its very polysemy, to a kind of mystification. Indeed, Derrida reminds us that the overusage of this word in the nineteenth century, its incantatory presence surrounding the interrogation of the nature of thought and being, eventually marked “a lack of interest, an indifference, a remarkable lack of need . . . for the question of the Being of the entity that we are” (19). Use of the word “spirit” indicated an indifference to the investigation of thought itself, and were this to be the fate of the entry of spirit in my discourse, it would be a sad folly indeed. Is it possible to resist the pendulum force of intellectual passions that perverts the use value of any idea? Is it possible for spirit to enter into the language of psychoanalysis without falling in

love with its suggestive power? Or will it herald the movement of a neosurrealist romanticism in which the ungraspable, the seeming essence of experience, displaces the effort to dissect, to deconstruct, indeed to despiritualize?

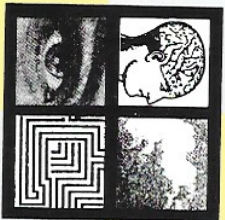
To my way of thinking, the challenge is to find a middle ground, a "midworld," in which the vector of idiom signified by "spirit" is allowed its contribution to the mulling over of self experience as is the vector of objectivity signified, say, by the word "empirical," or "observational." These vectors create a tension in the individual if allowed to be, and clearly there is an inclination to please the self by ridding the midworld of one or another of these disquieting words or forces that attract attention and make claims upon consciousness.

This is the way it should be, however, and our concepts should sustain the "experience of questioning" (Derrida) as preliminary to the gathering of data or the supply of observations. "The more original a thought," says Derrida, quoting Heidegger, "the richer its Unthought becomes. The Unthought is the highest gift (*Geschenk*) that a thought can give." In our place and in our time the word "spirit," perhaps unsaturated with meaning and yet evocative, may call forth associations, as did the word "id" in the early half of the first century of psychoanalysis, as then did the word "ego" in the midcentury, and more recently as does the word "self." But our words often need displacing (as I may be doing with Winnicott's phrase "true self" by substituting "idiom" for it) because the overusage of a term, though transitionally essential to individual and collective efforts of objectifying the signified, eventually loses its meaningfulness through incantatory solicitation, devaluing any word's unthought potential.

To be a character, then, is to abandon the "it" of one's idiom to its precise choosings, an unraveling and dissemination of personality: a bearer of an intelligent form that seeks objects to express its structure. The idiom that gives form to any human character is not a latent content of

meaning but an aesthetic in personality, seeking not to print out unconscious meaning but to discover objects that conjugate into meaning-laden experience. As we move through the object world, breathing our life into the impersonal, we gather and organize our personal effects. As we collide with other subjectivities, we exchange differing syntheses, and leave the other with his or her inner senses of our self, just as we carry the spirit of the other's idiom within our unconscious. We can conjure these spirits within us as we evoke the name of the other, although what we deeply know is only ever partly thought, and strangely defies the codes of thought we have valued so highly in Western culture. And of ourselves, I think it can be said that we are spirits, that we shall scatter our being throughout the object world, and through the winds of interforming human mutualities. A dream that defies its content, it enjoins the world through the dream work. We will have had, then, a spiritual sense, a notional grasp of the force to be what we have been, and this presence, valued yet ungraspable, is consolation amidst the human march to wisdom's end, punctuated, as always, by the question mark.

Being a Character



PSYCHOANALYSIS &
SELF EXPERIENCE

Christopher Bollas