

Mary Shepherd

### WHY PSYCHOANALYSIS?

Life is a race. Out of death. Against death. Toward death. Every move forward carries with it a weight of undoing. Life is heavy-hearted. A billion sperm lunge. One wins. A startled egg stirs. Cells divide. Begin dying. A baby grows to bursting. A mother evicts. They survive. The screaming killer devours. Sleeps. Devours. Sleeps. Dreams. These are the first pictures. This is mind. Pictures painted on your retina by the forces of life and death, pleasure and pain. Deep within the old reptilian brain, forces swirl toward. And away from. This is your engine, the boiler-room of your desire. Blind lunging toward. Away from. Toward pleasure. Away from pain. Pain. Pain. Spit it out. Squirm. Cry. Sleep. Dream. Pictures of fulfillment; pictures of rage. What satisfies. What blinds. In this the rhythm of the first days, the patterns are formed, cuts and ruts form the runways of to and fro. To the extent that pleasure is maximized and synchronized, the paths complexify, soften, bend, take new turns, seek new pleasures, make pictures of green and gold. Life is union, expansion, multiplication. To the extent that pain replicates, it congests, contracts, coagulates, chokes, distends, repeats. The roads stiffen into limitation. The ruts toward destruction deepen and dominate desire. Death is older than life, tougher, darker.

(pretty soon) there you are. Barely animate bundle of desire straining against fixity. Some mind. Colors for the world you look out on. Is it black, or green? Is April the cruelest month? Or the most joyful? Do you see what you have? Or what you do not have? What avenues are available to you to satisfy your desires? Can you go down the road you want to, or do you get stuck? Writhe? Careen? Hit trees? Freeze? Run in circles? Shriveled up? Go nowhere? Go Backwards? Mark time? How congealed in you are the downward pulls? How far did you get in the amalgamation of life and death which is character?

Psychoanalysis has the power to release the energy trapped in these deadly ruts. The analyst enters the energy field of the organism, desire and fixity. A contract is made.

Two people meet regularly, out of ordinary time. One pays attention to the desires of the other, responds only to these desires, and by so doing becomes a reflection of the other, a receptacle, a mirror, a familiar, terrifying, friendly, horrible or insignificant image of all in you that is unknown, unknowable, unbearable, lost and forgotten, loved and despised. A twoness emerges and moves through space. The you you know and the you you don't know. The missing pieces of you are lost early, carried away by emotion untamed by language. There is an unrecognized completion in this two-ness. An emotional prescription develops. Is applied. You begin to speak. Words carry the lost energy up into consciousness. You speak the unspeakable. Your desires increase. You repeat your stuckness. You repeat your image, the image stuck on your retina the day you first looked out, your perception of the world painted the colors of your conflict. What stops you is not what you don't know. What stops you is what you haven't said. The analyst catches the fire in the belly of the unsaid and helps you say it. And when you can say what you couldn't say, the energy trapped in the ruts of death comes loose, wobbles, snuggles up to some lively impulse, binds, blooms, and blossoms in the alchemy of living.