

function of the turns and twists of the master's private life. With the exception of his cubism, Picasso's style is inextricable from his biography.

With the Museum of Modern Art's huge Picasso retrospective has come a flood of critical and scholarly essays on Picasso, almost all of them dedicated to "Art as Autobiography." That latter phrase is the title of a just-published book on Picasso by an author who sees everything in his work as a pictorial response to some specific stimulus in his personal life, including the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, which she claims was made in an effort to exorcise "his private female demons."² This same author, who proudly pounces on a mish-mash of latter-day accounts to "prove" that Picasso's turn-of-the-century decision to go to Paris to pursue his art was due to his need to "exile himself from Spain in order to escape his tyrannical mother," provides us with a delicious, if unintended parody of the Autobiographical Picasso.³

But prone to parody or not, this argument is upheld by many respected scholars and is attracting many others. John Richardson, of course, took the opportunity of reviewing the Museum of Modern Art exhibition to forward the case for the Autobiographical Picasso. Agreeing with Dora Maar that Picasso's art is at any one time a function of the changes in five private forces—his mistress, his house, his poet, his set of admirers, his dog (yes, dog!)—Richardson exhorts art-historical workers to fan out among the survivors of Picasso's acquaintance, to record the last scraps of personal information still outstanding before death prevents the remaining witnesses from appearing in court.⁴ Richardson's trumpet has been sounding this theme for over twenty years, so on this occasion his call was not surprising. But the Autobiographical Picasso is new to William Rubin and that this view of matters should now hold him convert is all the more impressive in that it had to overcome the resistance of decades of Rubin's training. Rubin's earlier practice of art history was rich in a host of ways of understanding art in transpersonal terms: ways that involve questions of period style, of shared formal and iconographic symbols that seem to be the function of larger units of history than the restricted profile of a merely private life. So the Rubin case is particularly instructive, all the more because in his account the personal, the private, the biographical, is given in a series of proper names: Olga, Marie-Thérèse, Dora, Françoise, Jacqueline. And an art history turned militantly away from all that is transpersonal in history—style, social and economic context, archive, structure—is interestingly and significantly symbolized by an art-history as a history of the proper name.

2. Mary Mathews Gedo, "Art as Exorcism: Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon,'" *Arts*, LV (October 1980), 70–81.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 72; see also *Art as Autobiography*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

4. John Richardson, "Your Show of Shows," *The New York Review*, July 17, 1980. Eugene Thaw uses Richardson's essay as an occasion for his own attack on art as autobiography. See, "Lust for Life," *The New York Review*, October 23, 1980.