B.R. NELSON

Forms of Enlightenment in Art

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To Sarah

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Preface

This essay defends the idea of art as a distinctive form of insight into our life as reflective beings. Its purpose, therefore, is to elucidate some of the ways in which different expressions of aesthetic intention, in the media of literature, music and painting, can be identified with a true representation of our moral and psychological experience. It is well known that many artists, philosophers and critics are sceptical about this cognitive value, and that art is seen variously as merely intoxication, entrancement and consolation, or, at best, a refined form of deception which distracts us from the boredom and horror of life. Attitudes of this kind are so widespread that to answer the sceptics individually would take several lifetimes, and (with the exception of Plato) I do not engage directly with any of them. Instead, the argument of this book reveals the weaknesses in theories of art that are based on the idea of mimesis, which is the most influential foundation for theories of art in Western thought. Thus an examination of this concept, as it is expounded in Plato's *Republic* and the *Poetics* of Aristotle, enables me to revise and transform our most powerful assumptions concerning the cognitive value of art.

The concept of mimesis lies at the heart of Aristotle's theory, and its vulnerability is a source of encouragement to the sceptics. His assumption that the creation of resemblances, and by extension the assembling of appearances, provides us with an adequate conception of knowledge is a fatal weakness in this theory. When we are considering reflective life, the theory of resemblance fails to incorporate a true sense of how judgement and understanding, and indeed cognitive experience in general, are affected by personal inclination. This means, for example, that while characters in a drama may represent the general moral and psychological features of a reflective being as they appear to superficial observation, resources that go far beyond the creation of resemblances are necessary to the true interpretation of these features. In the chapters that follow a conception of form in works of art emerges,

which shows how participation in a common life, and our inner experience, perception, judgement and understanding are coherently integrated in the portrayal of human life in action.

Attention to the nature of aesthetic form, as it is realized in works of literature, music and painting, is necessarily related to a cogent theory of reflective life itself, to a conception of the nature of life and experience for a reflective being. This means that, in showing how art is able to truly represent life, a radical transformation of the cognitive value of art is implied. Whereas Aristotle's theory of resemblance attributes to art a special way of representing knowledge that can be acquired by other means, a true portrayal of reflective life in action, in which the form of representation corresponds appropriately to the life that is represented, gives us insight into ourselves and the world that cannot be generated in any other way.

This preface is followed by a list of the editions and relevant sources I have used. This includes the editions of Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles and Shakespeare from which I have quoted and the scores and recordings of the music of Bach and Beethoven which I have used. I have also listed the galleries which hold the paintings discussed in Chapter 4, and books with good reproductions of the paintings.

Editions and relevant sources

Chapter 1

Aristotle. 1995. *Poetics*. Edited and translated by Stephen Halliwell. In *Poetics*, with *On the Sublime* and *On Style* (Loeb Classical Library No. 199). Cambridge, Mass. and London.
Plato. 1955. *The Republic*. Translated by H. D. P. Lee. London.
Sophocles. 1960. *Oedipus the King*. Translated by David Grene. In *Greek Tragedies*. Edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago and London.

Chapter 2

Burrow Colin (editor). 2002. *Complete Sonnets and Poems*. The Oxford Shakespeare. New York.

Chapter 3

Bach J. S. 1994. *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Part 1*. Edited and annotated by Richard Jones. London.
Angela Hewitt piano. 1998. *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1*. Hyperion Records.
Beethoven. 2002. *Streichquartet opus 132*. Edited by Emil Platen. München.
The Takács Quartet. 2004. *The Late String Quartets*. Decca.
Beethoven. 2009. *Symphony No. 3*. Edited by Richard Clarke. London.
Manchester Camerata, Douglas Boyd. 2009. *Beethoven Symphonies No. 1 & No. 3 'Eroica'*. Avie Records.

Chapter 4

Galleries

Tate Britain
Portsmouth; The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche: Tending the Vines; The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche, from Lausanne: A Funeral; The Bay of Uri from Brunnen; Lake Lucerne: Sunset; The Rigi with Full Moon and the Spires of Lucerne Cathedral.
Website: http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/

Victoria and Albert
The Lauerzersee with the Mythens.
Website: http://www.vam.ac.uk/

National Gallery of Washington
Houses in Provence – The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque.
Website: http://www.nga.gov/

Museu de Arte, São Paulo
Rocks at L'Estaque.
Website: http://masp.uol.com.br/

National Gallery, London
The Grounds of the Château Noir.
Website: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/

Musée Picasso
Château Noir.
Website: http://www.musee-Picasso.fr/

Musée d'Orsay
Rocks near the Caves above the Château Noir.
Website: http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/home.html

Recommended reproductions

Shanes Eric. 2000. *Turner: The Great Watercolours*. London: *Portsmouth* (p. 159); *The Lauerzersee with the Mythens* (p. 238).
Wilton Andrew. 1980. *Turner and the Sublime*. London: *The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche: Tending the Vines* (p. 96); *The Lake of Geneva with the*

Dent d'Oche, from Lausanne: A Funeral (p. 94); *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen* (p. 92).
Wilton Andrew. 1982. *Turner Abroad*. London: *Lake Lucerne: Sunset* (plate 122).
Tate Gallery. 1974. *Turner 1775–1851*. London: *The Rigi with Full Moon and the Spires of Lucerne Cathedral* (p. 166).
Philadelphia Museum of Art. 1996. *Cézanne*. Philadelphia: *Houses in Provence – The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque* (p. 221); *Rocks at L'Estaque* (p. 187); *Rocks near the Caves above the Château Noir* (p. 450).
Machotka Pavel. 1996. *Cézanne: Landscape into Art*. New Haven and London: *The Grounds of the Château Noir* (p. 105); *Château Noir* (p. 110).

Chapter 1

Mimesis and the portrayal of reflective life in action: Aristotle's *Poetics* and Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*

The purpose of this essay is to show how art can be understood as a form of enlightenment, with particular interest in the ways in which this can be accomplished in literature, music and painting. In order to give an appropriate scope and clarity to this venture, my exposition will include a discussion of theories that are highly respected and familiar, concentrating in particular on the concept of mimesis as it is formulated in Aristotle's *Poetics*. As an introduction to this, some remarks involving Plato's theory of Forms will serve to establish the general position from which the argument will proceed.

The concept of mimesis in Plato's *Republic*

While it has had a profound influence upon thinking about art, as an inspiration to artists and philosophers, the theory of Forms is not primarily a theory of aesthetics; its importance arises from its influence as a metaphysical theory of knowledge. In this respect it is concerned with the psychological basis of understanding itself, particularly in the possibility of our knowing ourselves and the world in the face of continuous change and the fallibility of language. The theory provides Plato with a way of justifying the universal significance of ideas, without which meaning and significance would be impossible, and, at the same time, of proposing a reality that is not subject to the fragility of continuous change but can be seen as immutably real, permanent, intelligible and perfect. In this, the world of Platonic Forms is both a philosophical interpretation of the stability of language and ideas, and

the path to a transcendent world of intellectual clarity in which we can fulfil our spiritual nature as rational beings. Thus it is attached to the intellectual disciplines of dialectic and mathematics, which are seen as reliable means of understanding the true nature of things. Art, which merely copies or imitates the illusion of things as they appear to us, is excluded from the realm of knowledge. In this discussion I do not present a critique of the theory of Forms as such, but argue, in accordance with my overall purpose, with some of the ideas it has engendered concerning the cognitive value of art.

Plato's famous elaboration of this theory of art, in Book 10 of *The Republic*, includes the following exchange between Socrates and Glaucon:

> *'We are agreed about representation, then. But, tell me, which does the painter try to represent? The ultimate reality or the things the craftsman makes?'*
>
> *'The things the craftsman makes.'*
>
> *'As they are, or as they appear? There is still that distinction to make.'*
>
> *'I don't understand,' he said.*
>
> *'What I mean is this. If you look at a bed, or anything else, sideways or endways or from some other angle, does it make any difference to the bed? Isn't it merely that it looks different?'*
>
> *'Yes, it's the same bed, but it looks different.'*
>
> *'Then consider – does the painter try to paint the bed or other object as it is, or as it appears? Does he represent it as it is, or as it looks?'*
>
> *'As it looks.'*
>
> *'The artist's representation is therefore a long way removed from truth, and he is able to reproduce everything because he never penetrates beneath the superficial appearance of anything. For example, a painter can paint a portrait of a shoemaker or a carpenter or any other craftsman without knowing anything about their crafts at all; yet, if he is skilful enough, his portrait of a carpenter may, at a distance, deceive children or simple people into thinking it is a real carpenter.'*

My argument fundamentally opposes the assumptions that are implicit in Socrates' conception of the cognitive purpose in works of art. His view that the painter fails because he merely represents an aspect of the appearance of an object depends upon the idea that, in painting, the cognitive purpose is primarily to represent the object. Compared with an informed and

comprehensive attempt to represent an object the painter is able to convey nothing more than a certain way in which the object might appear to us. Moreover, compared with a craftsman the painter produces no real knowledge of the object or how it is made. However, an alternative purpose for the painter is not to represent the object, but to represent reflective life in action. (It will become clear that Plato's mimetic conception of the representation of human actions in poetry – elsewhere in *The Republic* – is not what I mean by reflective life in action.) This means that the aspect of an object that appears in a painting, say the angle at which a bed is presented in the image, contributes to how the image as a whole represents human experience. Rather than being simply the representation of an object, like a table, the anatomy of a leopard, a social or political order, a remembered occasion or imagined event, or such abstract qualities as beauty and justice, art represents experience of oneself and the world for a certain kind of being. This is not to say that the interest of art lies simply in consciousness or in subjective experience, though the representation of reflective life in action must include these; the relevant distinction is between the portrayal of objects (or human actions) and the portrayal of an experience of life in which objects necessarily appear.

Fundamental to the emergence of anything that has significance of any kind is the relation between (a) objects of experience and (b) experience of oneself and the world. The theory of Forms, and in particular its psychology of transcendental knowledge, does not allow for the ways in which our experience of an object contributes to our perception of it, and so passes over the interaction between (a) and (b) in our apprehension of things. Fulfilment of our nature in the understanding of pure ideas, and its insight into the true nature of things, implies that (b) is merely instrumental to our apprehension of the object, and that everything else is subject to illusion and error. However, it can be shown that this conception of our nature fails to establish a true connection with the ordinary understanding upon which all theories of knowledge are necessarily based. If we compare the 'experience' of a grasshopper with that of a person there is obviously much that the two have in common: for example, allowing for certain physical differences both respond to light and are burned by the sun. However, the memory of a hot day at the beach cannot possibly be an experience for a grasshopper, and this is because such an experience is not created in a grasshopper by the interaction between objects of experience and experience of oneself and the world. Such a phenomenon, and the interaction upon which it depends, is of no consequence to the theory of Forms, as it reveals nothing about the Form of things; the theory excludes knowledge in which the object and experience

of oneself and the world are intertwined. But this kind of experience might contribute to a rich vein of insight into the nature of reflective life.

Though it may seem that the memory of a hot day at the beach provides us with little that will enable us to interpret the nature of reflective life, it possesses the basic elements of such an interpretation. It is not characteristic of even our slightest memories to be merely transient images that simply come and go without having any meaning or importance for us. For example, the memory of a hot day at the beach might, in terms of purely visual recollection, be quite fragmentary and tenuous, and yet possess other kinds of psychological significance that make it important. This is because the body of a memory of this kind lies partly in its sensuous detail, but more substantially in knowing events of the past as part of one's own experience and its meaning and purpose. A seemingly simple memory could be compelling because it recalls intentional action that is close to our spontaneous feelings of self-recognition; that beach in the late afternoon, suffused with heat and resonant with light, and scattered about with vestiges of earlier crowds of bathers, may come alive in memory with unarticulated significance. The drifting away of a moment of concentrated social life echoed in the imminence of vanishing light could be filled with anxiety about making something of our involvement in a common life, or of possibilities slipping away from us. In memory, aesthetic depth is enhanced by our psychological detachment from the original experience of the object, and imagination may contribute to the creation of a new object. (In Chapter 4 we will see how the intertwining of object and experience of oneself and the world can be discovered in the meaning and significance of various paintings.)

From this modest example it is possible to appreciate something of how interaction between the object of experience and experience of oneself and the world pervades the inner life and perception of a reflective being. The key to its importance has been deliberately suggested by presenting the example in a way that draws attention to the connection between common experience and the fundamental need for a reflective being to make something of its involvement in a common life. This need defines reflective life, in so far as it is implied in the possession of a life that is valued in itself, and not simply as a medium through which other things are valued. The interdependence of these ideas is evident: a life that is valued in itself implies that something has to be made of our involvement in a common life, the value of which is essentially expressed in *our* actions, character and experience. And since we must act upon objects of experience in order to make something of our involvement in a common life, new objects are constantly being created by

the interaction between object and experience of oneself and the world. Thus the foregoing illustration describes reflective life in action, and not simply an object of experience to which a transcendental form must apply. For it is not only the objects themselves that interest us here, we are equally interested in the transition between them. The theory of Forms is a theory concerning the nature of objects and therefore excludes the psychological significance of reflective life in action. This has implications for the understanding of ourselves and the world, for the nature of objects (as the illustration shows), and also for the nature of such abstract objects as beauty and justice.

The concept of reflective life

It is not difficult to substantiate the idea that we live reflectively in the sense that I have indicated in these opening paragraphs. The experience of a life that is valued in itself is constantly suggested by ways in which our experience is organized. A reflective being is, for example, one for which a life that is valued is evident in the rituals of a civilization. A non-reflective being may grieve the loss of a fellow but it does not observe the loss by means of a funeral, nor does it engage in other ceremonies that recognize the value of life in itself, such as those which celebrate birth and marriage. Moreover, when we consider these rituals, the corollary of valuing life in itself is also apparent. For it is only by engaging in it, and indeed by inventing it so that we can engage in it, that a form such as a ritual can have any purpose. Therefore, our taking action, and making something of our involvement in a common life, is complementary to the life-defining forms which give shape and substance to a life that is valued in itself.

However, the life-defining forms of a civilization range far beyond those that we might describe as rituals, and we can regard them as life-defining precisely because they define for us the ways in which we can experience life as something of value, and therefore as the means by which we are able to recognize the value of life and give it purpose. This does not imply, of course, that every person is equally successful or positive, or even that life cannot be lived reflectively in a relatively passive way. The important distinction is one between a life that is lived according to forms that are simply dictated by nature and a life in which it is necessary to decide between various life-defining possibilities. In general, a person decides to become a mother, a politician, an accountant or a soldier, and very often the decision is made after considerable reflection. Whatever might be said about exceptions, reflective life is evidently characteristic of all human cultures, and active participants make decisions of this kind in accordance with the life-defining forms of

their community. There may be differences that make it difficult for us to understand the customs and values of another culture but there are no cases to which the general form of reflective life does not apply.

The implications of this fundamental distinction for our understanding of the cognitive value of art turn on what is involved in our living in accordance with life-defining forms. This is related to the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding, and on other forms of apprehension. Since in order to live reflectively we must be receptive to a world of life-defining forms, this implies a need to see things as they are and not as we might otherwise be inclined to see them. The life-defining forms which determine our development can only be effective if we respect the true nature of learning: how to acquire a skill; or how to behave decently and with a proper consideration for others. This fundamental need to see things as they are is necessary to our survival and development in obvious ways. More pertinent to this enquiry, we must be receptive to the human world in which we participate, and to the significance that is placed upon its various activities and social forms. In this respect we must be naïve in seeing things 'as they are'. It is only with the benefit of thought and experience that we are able to question the beliefs and attitudes of the community to which we belong.

Moreover, as mentioned, life as something that is valued also requires us to make something of our involvement in it, and this creates a complication for our need to see things as they are. Generally we are not born into the part that we play in life, we must choose, and even where there is no great difficulty in satisfying the demands made upon us by our choices, there is inevitably some bias created by the way that we decide to live. A talented footballer will exaggerate the importance of football, a talented accountant will exaggerate the value of financial self-enhancement. In so far as the way we decide to live is the expression of a life that is valued, we cannot avoid conceiving of that way as being of special value in relation to reasonable alternatives. To a man who devotes himself to football the values represented by cabinet making or biochemistry might be completely obscure, and this kind of bias is equally true of the cabinetmaker and biochemist. (There are, of course, other ways of approaching life. For example, a person can see work as simply a means to further other things that are more deeply valued, such as the interests of a family or some leisure activity.) In every judgement concerning our sense of ourselves our need to see things as they are is qualified by personal inclination, since life has significance for us chiefly in relation to our making something of our own involvement. Responsibility to a life that is valued (i.e. morality) has meaning to us, in particular, because nothing can be made, by anyone, of

a life that is hopelessly corrupt. Hence personal inclination affects judgement and understanding, and inclination is based upon a need to see things as they are qualified by the decisions that we actually make in living reflectively. It is also significant that for a meticulous person the need to see things as they are implies attention to the value of everything, whereas to a lighter spirit an acceptance of life with all its flaws might be sufficient.

We should also note that the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding is influenced by other factors. Our making something of our involvement in a common life means that each individual lives reflectively in competition with others. For example, when a person fails in his or her vocation, or is forced to concede his place to another, his evaluation of the vocation might be severely affected, so that what had been regarded as important is now seen as futile. In this connection judgement and understanding can be influenced, in a number of ways, by rivalry, ambition and self-affirmation, and also by benevolence and solicitude. Significantly, they can be affected, interpersonally and en masse, by the pressure of values and attitudes that are commonly held. However, we also know, from observation of ourselves and others, that these various influences can be resisted by the desire to see things as they are (for example, by our moral will). It is also important to recognize that personal inclination is not simply identified with personal desire; judgement and understanding can also be affected by fear, anxiety, superstition and uncritical conformity to the will of others.

The effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding, and other forms of apprehension, will be seen as an essential element in the portrayal of reflective life in art, and therefore an important aspect of what distinguishes this theory from those of Plato and Aristotle. But before I discuss Aristotle's theory of mimesis there is a further distinction to be made concerning the nature of life-defining forms. The preceding argument broadly indicates the scope which is suggested for these forms, since it is implied that they are generally relevant to the common life to which we belong. A list could be continued indefinitely and cover the entire social and psychological spectrum of reflective life according to the information at the disposal of the compiler.

Of particular significance to this enquiry are life-defining forms which may be described as transcendent. The concept of reflective life that I have elaborated here implies the existence of life-defining forms that go beyond the simple forms to which I have so far referred. A life that is valued in itself also opens up the possibility of forms through which it is possible to represent and interpret that life. Therefore, there are forms which enable a reflective being

to examine, record, analyse, investigate and evaluate the nature of a life that is valued in itself. History, religion, science and philosophy are clearly among the life-defining forms that can be described as transcendent in this sense.

According to both this argument and Aristotle's theory of mimesis, art can be included as another transcendent life-defining form. But there are two connected points that distinguish the ideas in this discussion from Aristotle's theory. In the first place it is important to recognize that the interpretations of transcendent life-defining forms are no less conditioned than other life-defining forms by the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding. Any investigation or evaluation of the life to which we belong must draw some of its substance from the ways in which life is valued by a reflective individual with his or her own approach to making something of that life. Second, art is distinguished from other transcendent life-defining forms by representing reflective life *in action*, and this (as we will see) has implications for its capacity to illuminate the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding, and other forms of apprehension. The significance of this connection will emerge from the following refutation of Aristotle's theory, which is focused on an interpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*.

The concept of mimesis in Aristotle's *Poetics*

As a way of introducing the idea of art as true to the representation of reflective life, an examination of Aristotle's *Poetics* will help to clarify other important issues. For while Aristotle's rejection of the theory of Forms frees him from any commitment to the notion that art must be understood as being at a third remove from reality, Plato presents, in his middle dialogues – *Phaedo* and *The Republic* – more vigorous objections to the idea of art as a source of knowledge and insight. For the Plato of these dialogues the world of ordinary experience, the world as bound by sensuous impulse and apprehension, is seen as illusory regardless of how our understanding might be rectified, and therefore images and ideas which do not incline us to knowledge and insight are likely to create even greater confusion. Whereas dialectical thought and mathematics can offer both certain knowledge and a spiritual 'catharsis' which frees the mind from sensual attachments, the pleasures of art tend to produce emotional excess and intellectual disorder. This is especially true of music and drama, which characteristically achieve their effects by stirring the feelings of the audience.

In so far as Aristotle's theory, in the *Poetics*, is a response to Plato's condemnation of art, it combines a metaphysical revision of ideas from the

middle dialogues with an attempt to show that the emotional impact of works of art can be essential to their serious purpose. In opposition to the concept of knowledge as a purely intellectual domain Aristotle rejects all attempts to establish a transcendental foundation for human understanding. Seeing our apprehension of things as determined by our participation in nature as natural beings, he rejects the possibility of our possessing a form of understanding that transcends our natural limitations. Hence, there is a strong tendency in his thinking to associate human thought with the self-assertive apprehension of things which he considers to be characteristic of the natural impulses in all animals. This makes it possible to discover a place for feeling and emotion in the kind of knowledge that can be found in art. Thus there are two aims in the following examination of the *Poetics*: to show how a theory of art is related to a conception of knowledge that is rooted in our nature as rational beings, and to assess Aristotle's theory for its sensitivity to the true representation of reflective life.

Like Plato's conception of art, Aristotle's theory is closely related to a theory of knowledge. His rejection of transcendental entities such as the Forms is based on a belief that we can only know the world as it appears to us, as natural beings, with certain limited faculties of thought and perception. Therefore, the fundamental idea that governs his thought in the *Poetics*, the idea of mimesis, is seen as the way in which we naturally learn; it is both the way that we begin to learn about ourselves and the world, and an immediate source of pleasure in beings whose nature is to learn about things and form an understanding of them.

> *It can be seen that poetry was broadly engendered by a pair of causes, both natural. For it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to engage in mimesis (indeed, this distinguishes them from other animals: man is the most mimetic of all, and it is through mimesis that he develops his earliest understanding); and equally natural that everyone enjoys mimetic objects... This is why people enjoy looking at images, because by contemplating them it comes about that they understand and infer what each element means, for instance that 'this person is so-and-so'. (Poetics 4)*

This idea of mimesis is opposed to both of the main tendencies in Plato's conception of art. The idea that art moves in a world of illusion that distorts and perverts understanding is countered by Aristotle's belief in a form of understanding that is natural to us as rational beings. And, correspondingly, the pleasure that we take in mimetic representations implies that feeling,

sensation and emotion play an essential part in understanding, and cannot be purged from the process of learning by reason on its own.

Aristotle's method in the *Poetics* is to confine the demonstration of his definition of art to a discussion of the formal characteristics, history and psychological significance of tragedy, illustrating his theory mainly by reference to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and *Iphigeneia in Aulis* by Euripides. Thus the first half is primarily concerned with showing what is meant by the idea of mimesis as revealed in the formal characteristics of tragedy, and then, from Chapter 13, an attempt is made to relate our experience of tragedies to our experience in general, and thereby show what makes it significant to us as rational beings. In the course of this discussion I will indicate a disparity in the conception of tragedy expounded in these two arguments in order to expose certain weaknesses in the theory itself. Hence I will examine more closely what Aristotle intends by the idea of mimesis.

Part of the meaning of this concept is conveyed in words like mime and mimicry, especially when they are associated with how we learn and with the natural pleasure we get from experiences of this kind. But an exclusive emphasis on this meaning, in translations of 'mimesis' as imitation or copy, is inadequate in relation to literature, and this is significant when we consider the weight given to tragedy in Aristotle's theory. It is obvious that the action of *Oedipus* is not the imitation of an object, in the way that a picture of a table or an impression of a person might be; drama is mainly the work not of imitation but of imagination. For this reason similar words, such as resemblance and likeness, do not capture the full meaning of Aristotle's intention, while 'representation' is insufficiently precise. It is true that a painting of a boat is a representation, and that a drama represents human life in its various aspects. However, the specifications for building a boat are also a representation, as are the plans for a building or a city; 'representation' simply means something that is presented to the mind. The word appearance is more in keeping with Aristotle's use of the idea of mimesis, if we understand 'appearance' in the sense of a resemblance that is a revelation.

When we consider that in the *Poetics* drama is understood as the work of imagination: the ideas of resemblance and revelation are clearly interdependent, as the creation of resemblance is significant only in so far as something is revealed to us, while such revelation occurs only by means of resemblance. Thus we can express Aristotle's theory of mimesis as the appearance of an object or action in an effective medium, employing its modes in an appropriate way. Mimesis as appearance is therefore true both to the conception of art as related to learning through resemblances, and to

a theory of knowledge that is based upon the apprehension of phenomena as they appear to a rational being. Since Aristotle believes, in a general sense, in the truth of our understanding of phenomena as they appear to us, and that this is the only possible basis for a true understanding of them, he does not question the validity of art as a means of constructing a revelatory resemblance of things as they appear to us in ordinary experience.

However, the obvious response to this basic formulation of the theory is to ask in what way art can be revelatory, if it is nothing more than a resemblance, or appearance, of things as they are experienced by us. An example of the natural pleasure that we take in images is exemplified by our perceiving a likeness, as when we recognize that 'this person is so-and-so'. However, this is a modest contribution to our understanding of things; at most it could be used as a technical aid for seeing into how things are organized and how they work. Aristotle's answer to the question 'What does mimesis reveal?' is the central idea of the *Poetics*, and is presented in his conception of the nature of tragedy.

> *Tragedy, then, is mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections, employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions… Since tragedy is mimesis of an action, and the action is conducted by agents who should have certain qualities in both character and thought (as it is these factors which allow us to ascribe qualities to their actions too, and it is in their actions that all men find success or failure), the plot is the mimesis of the action – for I use 'plot' to denote the construction of events, 'character' to mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents, and 'thought' to cover the parts in which, through speech, they demonstrate something or declare their views. Tragedy as a whole, therefore, must have six components, which give it its qualities – namely, plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and lyric poetry... The most important of these things is the structure of events, because tragedy is mimesis not of persons but of action and life; and happiness and unhappiness consist in action, and the goal is a certain kind of action, not a qualitative state: it is in virtue of character that people have certain qualities, but through their actions that they are happy or the reverse. (Poetics 6)*

This definition of tragedy is developed in a way that emphasizes the centrality of plot at the expense of characterization. From this point of view the

emotional effect of mimesis in tragedy comes from the skill with which the dramatist can manipulate the unfolding of events, by means of devices like recognition and reversal, rather than from our interest in relations between (moral) character and experience. Therefore, in this part of the work Aristotle is more concerned with a definition of what makes a tragedy formally complete, in terms of a logical and aesthetically satisfying sequence of events, than with the psychological interaction between characters or the possibility of revealing the psychology of characters through the course of the action. Thus, when he is in a position to respond to the question of how tragedy can reveal life in a distinctive and significant way, his argument is hampered by an unfortunate bias towards the mechanics of plot.

In Chapter 9 he compares tragedy and history as ways in which life can be represented, and asserts the former to be more philosophical and more serious because it is concerned with universals. On the surface the comparison is reasonable, in so far as a simple chronicle of events does not interpret the forces behind them in order to indicate their universal significance.

> *It is also evident from what has been said that it is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the* kinds *of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity. The difference between the historian and the poet is not that between using verse or prose. No, the difference is this: that the one relates actual events, the other the kinds of things that might occur. Consequently, poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars. 'Universal' means the kinds of things which it suits a certain kind of person to say or do, in terms of probability or necessity: poetry aims for this, even though attaching names to the agents. (Poetics 9)*

Aristotle makes this point by contrasting the simple reporting of what a person has said or done (what contingently has happened) with the imagined world of the dramatist, in which what happens is either probable or necessary. In tragedy it is possible to shape speech and action by means of the general characteristics of the medium. Thus the representation of a complex and unified sequence of events in which speech and actions are consistent with character, and the action as a whole convinces us of its truth to life, can reveal features which are universal to human life. In relation to tragedy, moreover, the revelatory aspect of mimesis lies partly in the assembling of characters and events in a coherently unfolding narrative, such as we could never encounter in ordinary life. This extension of the idea of revelatory resemblance follows from Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of plot.

At this point the definition of tragedy as the appearance of an action in an effective medium, in which 'appearance' combines resemblance with revelation (mimesis), has been given its complete formulation in the *Poetics*. But while it is clear that tragedy possesses certain distinctive powers in the representation of life, Aristotle's conception is a limited one, and while he shows how tragedy can be seen as representing universal truth its being universal does not, in itself, make it profoundly interesting.

A skilful dramatist, like a skilful mimic, can create an appearance based upon resemblance in which a plausible sequence of events and language which is appropriate to character draws us into a world of imaginative revelation. But this in itself does not make the revelation universal in any significant way, and it is not obvious that an appearance that is amusing but superficial should be regarded as more philosophical and more serious than history. It is only when the representation of life is serious and of a certain magnitude that tragedy can be more serious and philosophical than history. And even this is not a strong affirmation of the cognitive value of drama, since the serious representation of human life is not solely the province of art. Aristotle merely points to the formal advantage of a medium for which the events represented are probable rather than actual – in such a medium it is possible to organize the different aspects of what is represented in a manner which is more convincingly lifelike.

However, it could be suggested that rather more than this is implied in Aristotle's very brief and sketchy remarks about the universality of what is conveyed in tragedy. The representation of what is probable and necessary, in the mimesis created by a drama that is serious and imposing, has the power to assemble appearances on a scale that goes far beyond the modest example that is given in Chapter 9. In addition to making a character's style of speech appropriate to the type of person portrayed, the dramatist is able to assemble appearances by creating a world of dramatic interaction in which the qualities of one character are revealed by the behaviour of another, or that of several others; and can make the play itself represent a social world by the totality of characters whose actions constitute the work as a whole. This means that the dramatist can both create appearances that are convincingly lifelike, in that different aspects of character and behaviour can be harmonized in the mimesis of a human action, and assemble appearances in a way that represents the form that is taken by human life and experience.

There are many ways in which the form of human life can be seen in relation to the concept of necessity, as, for example, in the most obvious kinds of biological necessity. Nourishment is necessary to the survival of any living

creature, and so are light and oxygen. The processes of growth and decay are biologically necessary, and necessity of this kind is relevant to Aristotle's argument: growing younger by the day, for example, is not possible by the standards of either probability or necessity. However, when we consider reflective life these concepts can be more decisively placed in relation to each other. Thus, the circumstances of Oedipus, turning upon his being required by the oracle to discover Laius' murderer and so end the famine in Thebes, are perfectly acceptable by standards of probability. Also, as the action of the drama progresses Oedipus' insistence on acquiring a knowledge that is increasingly menacing to his own and his family's welfare is within the bounds of probability, and has a psychological realism that makes the action dramatically compelling. At the same time this realism owes its power to a less obvious conformity to standards of necessity. It is significant that the famine occurs at the moment of fulfilment in Oedipus' life, when his ambitions are fully realized. Dramatic intensity is created, therefore, by the necessity for him to take action if he is to continue in his success. It further conforms to standards of probability that the only alternative to successful action is ruin, and so the very nature of reflective life (as it is realized in the world of the play) makes it necessary for him to take action.

If, by virtue of its power to assemble appearances, tragedy can represent the form of human life then Aristotle's theory might show this representation as an expression of serious and philosophical interest. His theory assumes that, as beings with a desire to learn about the world to which we belong, we naturally possess such an interest, but this raises a question concerning the disinterested pursuit of insight and learning. Any interest that we take in the form and significance of human life is unavoidably influenced by what life means to us as individuals, and therefore our beliefs are determined by feelings and inclinations, such as our hopes and fears, desires and aversions. For this reason Aristotle is concerned with questions of how and under what conditions we are able to respond to dramatic representations of human life, with respect to both the form and structure of tragedy, and the nature of its insight. In Chapters 7 to 12 he considers how the formal organization of tragedy must be related to the psychology of the audience or reader if the play is to excite our interest, and consequently affirms the need for it to conform to certain dramatic principles, such as those of narrative unity or narrative technique (for example, the structural devices of recognition and reversal). In Chapter 13, he considers the material that is suited to tragedy in relation to our psychology, and this is significantly related to our psychological capacity

for responding to serious and disturbing representations of human life and experience.

> *Next, after the foregoing discussion, we must consider what should be aimed at and avoided in the construction of plots, and how tragedy's effect is to be achieved. Since, then, the structure of the finest tragedy should be complex not simple, as well as representing fearful and pitiable events (for this is the special feature of such mimesis), it is, to begin with, clear that neither should decent men be shown changing from prosperity to adversity, as this is not fearful nor yet pitiable but repugnant, nor the depraved changing from adversity to prosperity, because this is the least tragic of all, possessing none of the necessary qualities, since it arouses neither fellow-feeling nor pity nor fear. Nor, again, should tragedy show the very wicked person falling from prosperity to adversity: such a pattern might arouse fellow-feeling, but not pity or fear, since the one is felt for the undeserving victim of adversity, the other for one like ourselves (pity for the undeserving, fear for one like ourselves); so the outcome will be neither pitiable nor fearful. This leaves, then, the person in-between these cases. Such a person is someone not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and one who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error; and one belonging to the class of those who enjoy great renown and prosperity, such as Oedipus, Thyestes, and eminent men of such lineages. (Poetics 13)*

There is an important qualification to be made of this conception of the tragic hero in Aristotle's theory. In Chapter 15, he states that 'first and foremost' the characters in tragedy must be 'good', and in Chapters 1 and 2 we are told that in elevated forms such as epic and tragedy the characters are 'better than ourselves'. This is obviously consistent with 'those who enjoy great renown and prosperity', but such a condition does not imply that the characters are morally better than ourselves. The tragic experience depends upon a change from prosperity to adversity, and so the prosperity of the hero is essential to the unfolding of the action. However, the moral superiority of the tragic hero is consistent with Aristotle's moral thought, and seems especially relevant in the case of Oedipus. Oedipus is not better in being morally sensitive, in being superhumanly just, honest or compassionate, but his social position and responsibilities expose him to dangers that raise him above the lives of ordinary men. It is consistent with Aristotle's moral thought in the Eudemian Ethics and Nichomachean Ethics, in both of which politics is regarded as supreme among the practical sciences, that such exposure entitles Oedipus

to be regarded as better than ourselves. This is especially relevant because politics is at the heart of the play and Oedipus is at the heart of the politics. For Aristotle the hero of Sophocles' play must be more than prosperous and renowned, he must be a person of moral substance.

These ideas express what is, for Aristotle, the essence of tragedy as the mimetic representation of human life. They enable us to see what he means by 'an action which is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude and through the arousal of fear and pity effecting the catharsis of such emotions'. His aim is not simply to counter Plato's objections to the power of art to arouse feeling by showing that feeling can play a significant part in the revelatory process of tragedy; it is a basic tenet of the theory that feeling should determine what tragedy can reveal. Thus, while it is possible for a dramatist to represent the transition of a morally perfect man from prosperity to adversity, this would not have the revelatory power of tragedy because it would not arouse fear and pity in us; though the action itself could be intelligible and psychologically revealing such a play would fail to engage our sympathy, and therefore our interest and attention.

The insistence upon a deep connection between our response to the action and what is revealed in it may show us what Aristotle intends by the concept of catharsis, and it is certain that, contrary to its familiar use, he does not intend it to describe an emotional state (Nussbaum 2001). To make sense of how an intense imaginative experience of fear and pity might be necessary for an act of understanding we must assume that the idea of catharsis refers to the purging or overcoming of feelings which normally inhibit our capacity for such understanding ('through fear and pity accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions': see earlier quotation from *Poetics*, Chapter 6). Fear and pity can be seen as likely to inhibit our contemplation of experiences that are painful and disturbing, and Aristotle is clearly suggesting that our inhibition can be overcome, in tragedy, by the arousal of those very feelings when our interest is engaged by an appropriate kind of mimesis. In other words, when our natural interest in human life is aroused our normal anxieties can be removed by intensely sympathetic feelings of fear and pity, and we are able to contemplate experience that is of universal significance; 'catharsis' is used by Aristotle to describe a psychological mechanism which makes it possible, by way of the feelings themselves, to overcome emotions that normally prevent us from engaging in such contemplation. He implies that in our response to the mimesis of an action appropriate to tragedy we undergo an experience of fear and pity that is continuously renewed and transformed into aesthetic

awareness and pleasure. In Chapter 14 he asserts, 'Those who use spectacle to create an effect not of the fearful but only of the sensational have nothing at all in common with tragedy, as it is not every pleasure one should seek from tragedy, but the appropriate kind. And since the poet should create the pleasure which comes from pity and fear through mimesis, obviously this should be built into the events'.

This psychological account of our willing involvement in the disturbing revelations of tragedy is anticipated by Aristotle's use of 'catharsis' in the penultimate paragraph of his *Politics*. Having promised to treat the subject with greater precision in his discussion of poetry, he makes a less subtle and complex use of the concept, in relation to the power of musical modes expressing passion and excitement to quell the feelings of individuals in a state of religious frenzy. In both cases an intense aesthetic experience of pathological emotion removes the pathological effects, and the parallel implies a psychologically specific intention behind Aristotle's use of the concept.

So while Aristotle defends the idea of tragedy as a powerful revelation of universal truths, an essential interconnection between thought and feeling means that this revelation is narrowly circumscribed in relation to experience in general. What it can reveal is strictly determined by how we respond to the representation of human life and how we protect ourselves from the contemplation of things which are painful and disturbing to us. This suggests that, for Aristotle, the value of art lies not in its capacity for a thorough investigation of the nature of human life and experience but in a distinctive experience of insight into that life, one in which a particular kind of insight is more relevant than comprehensiveness. In this respect the formal characteristics of tragedy, which make it possible to express what is universal, are significantly related to this distinctive way of seeing ourselves.

I have developed this interpretation of Aristotle's conception of tragedy, based on a careful reading of the text, in order to make the implied tendencies of the theory more explicit: for example, in the ways in which he uses the concepts of necessity and catharsis. This has helped me to provide an account of Aristotle's thought as a model for how we might understand the place of art in the knowledge of ourselves. My purpose now is to evaluate such a model in order to move from his concept of mimesis towards a more convincing theory. In the history of philosophical aesthetics Aristotle's theory is unrivalled and so it is an ideal text for this purpose, both in the breadth of its grasp relating to the philosophical meaning of art and in the cohesiveness of its various elements.

Here we should examine the conflict within this theory which has already been mentioned, in connection with Chapter 6. The first half of the *Poetics*, which discusses the formal characteristics of tragedy as a mimesis of human action, is dominated by the idea that the assembling of appearances can be identified with the arrangement and structure of events, and therefore that plot is the single most important element. In the second half, from Chapter 13, this judgement is seriously compromised by Aristotle's desire to explain the psychological conditions for an experience of tragedy. For it now appears that this experience is wholly dependent upon the representation of the right kind of person. Moreover, the universal truth that is revealed in tragedy depends to a significant degree on the character and actions of this person, as well as on his or her circumstances. Thus the character of the hero and the arrangement and structure of events in the action are actually so closely interrelated that it is impossible to consider one as being independent of, or more important than, the other.

Furthermore, the change in emphasis in Aristotle's theory implies that tragedy can be universal in an important sense only when it imaginatively explores the life and experience of individuals, and this is contrary to his assumptions about characterization. For our life and experience are only superficially understood by making reference to moral and personal qualities, as attributes which can be ascribed to a person simply and without qualification. So, while we might agree with Aristotle's assessment of Oedipus as a man who is better than ourselves because his position in society makes him pre-eminently important and responsible, the dramatist's interest in him goes beyond a simple recognition of his outward character.

Aristotle's conception of character is given a precise formulation in Chapter 6: 'Character is that which reveals moral choice – that is, when otherwise unclear, what kinds of thing an agent chooses or rejects'. However, what is seen and understood by a person is also relevant to character: for example, in the bias of his or her thought, the areas of ignorance, and the tacit assent to prevailing attitudes and values. As we will see in my interpretation of the play, Oedipus has a complex history and psychological background which is relevant to who he is, and to how he is seen by others. This background is formed by his decisions and actions in the circumstances of his life: these determine his reality as a reflective being. Most significantly, the action of the play illuminates the psychological intricacies of a life in which personal inclination affects judgement and understanding. To illustrate this point we can consider Hamlet's speech to the players, in which he describes the purpose of playing, 'to hold, as t'were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own

feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (Act 3 scene ii), and compare this version of mimesis with the exploratory force of Shakespeare's play.

These observations are closely connected to another aspect of form in works of art. A theory that is based on the idea of resemblance assumes that an artistic genre is indeed akin to holding 'the mirror up to nature'; whereas genre itself is a life-defining form and susceptible to the bias created by personal inclination. Different forms of drama are distinguished not simply by differences of subject matter, they also view human life and experience in different ways. *Hamlet*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Endgame* reflect different ways in which genre is used as a life-defining form in order to represent human life and experience. In each of these plays form has its own rhetorical purpose. In this connection Aristotle's theory of mimesis is compromised by the details in his own exposition: the idea of genre as a life-defining form is implied in his argument that tragedy should portray a certain kind of man or woman, and his endorsement of the essential part that is played in this genre by our feelings and sympathies entails that it can only function as such a form.

To summarize the argument: according to Aristotle, the formal elements of tragedy are seen as media for the creation of revelatory resemblances, or for the assembling of appearances, and this is sufficient for the dramatist to represent a complex human action which has a serious universal significance. This discussion challenges his theory by showing that dramatic form cannot be regarded as having a serious universal significance if its elements are seen simply as media for the creation of resemblances. A serious universal significance requires a more subtle conception of relations between dramatic form and the form of what is represented, namely reflective life.

The life that is common to a people or a civilization is given its character by a multiplicity of life-defining forms, and, in order to represent such a life, dramatic form must itself be a life-defining form of a certain kind, a transcendent life-defining form. By representing our life in action dramatic art is able to illuminate the interaction of nature and the forms of society with inner experience and human psychology, and thereby to illuminate the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding. Thus, for example, *Oedipus* represents kingship as a life-defining form in relation to which the hero gives form to his own life, and through which he acquires an understanding of himself and the world.

An interpretation of *Oedipus the King*

We have just seen that Aristotle's conception of mimesis, as an assembling of appearances, fails to examine the rhetorical nature of genre. For if drama is a life-defining form, and subject to the conditions affecting life-defining forms in general, then it follows that any genre will have its own perspective, and represent life from a particular point of view. In *Oedipus* there is a significant opposition of genres which has a direct bearing on the ability of the dramatist to illuminate the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding. This is an opposition between the high literary form of tragedy and the low form of the riddle, and it works because the riddle exposes the means by which tragedy persuades us to form an understanding of ourselves and the world. In this connection we can accept Aristotle's definition of tragedy as the downfall of a good but fallible man, who is better and more powerful than ourselves, and therefore likely to arouse interest and sympathy. In *Oedipus* this confident definition of the high genre represents the kind of significance that is opposed, without being simply negated, by the challenge of another genre.

Before I develop these ideas we should consider the medium of dramatic performance and its significance in our experience and understanding of the play. We cannot expect tragedy, as the representation of reflective life in action, to be immediately grasped by an audience, it can only be understood through a process of reading and reflection. However, while it is unlikely that an audience seeing the play for the first time would be aware of the complex opposition between genres which I have mentioned, there is a fusion of dramatic elements leading us to a more serious form of reflection.

Oedipus is often likened to a romance or fairy tale transformed into a horror story, these being suggested by the idea of a lost child recovered by its parents which is framed in a haunting and violent manner, and there is a bleak echo of this idea at the end of the drama, when Oedipus makes a plea for the welfare of his own 'lost' children. At the same time, the play is a murder mystery, in which, without knowing it, the person responsible for the investigation is himself the murderer. It is not difficult to appreciate that the use of these elements is closely connected to our immediate response to *Oedipus* in the theatre. So, while it is frequently pointed out that Sophocles is making use of a traditional story, the outcome of which will have been familiar to his audience, he is also recasting this story, and the use of narrative elements akin to romance, horror story and murder mystery probably created the kind of dramatic tension and excitement that we ourselves experience. In the dramatic structure of the play these narrative elements involve us

imaginatively in the action and this leads us to consider the opposition of tragedy and the riddle.

The nature of this development is relevant to my criticism of mimesis. In contrast to Aristotle's idea of revelatory resemblance, for which the significance of feeling is mainly a question of empathy for the tragic hero, emphasis upon the distinction between theatrical experience and reflection gives a different significance to feeling. An adequate grasp of the representation of life is dependent upon our feelings of involvement in the action, as it is only by means of these feelings that we can form any real conception of what is happening to the characters and its significance. In relation to this, Sophocles subtly modulates the narrative elements suggesting murder mystery and horror story, as the increasingly insistent probing of Oedipus leads him further and further into the horror of his own situation. Resonance is created by a psychological development which is most clearly suggested when the focus of interest moves from murder investigation to Oedipus' compulsion to know the truth about his own history and circumstances.

Tragedy is the more complex genre precisely because it is concerned with serious questions about character, its unity and moral significance, and the mystery and horror of the action in *Oedipus* merge disquietingly into an atmosphere of insecurity about self-knowledge. Hence we will see how tragedy, with its fundamental impulse to define and clarify character, is opposed in this play by the riddle. On the one hand dramatic form in this play goes beyond the assembling of appearances and revelatory resemblance to analyse the psychological basis of reflective life, and on the other we can only engage with such analysis by being fully involved in the story and drawn in by its emotional power.

Phases of the action

Sophocles divides the action of the play into five phases of about three hundred lines each. After the opening phase, in which Oedipus is introduced, each phase begins with the first appearance of one of the other characters; the second phase with that of Teiresias; the third with Jocasta; the fourth the messenger; and the fifth the second messenger. The moment of recognition and reversal, when Oedipus discovers that he himself is the murderer of Laius, occurs in the middle of the third phase, and therefore midway through the action of the play as a whole. This is the point at which the riddle of the murder becomes for Oedipus the riddle to discover the truth about himself.

Phase one

The action is initiated by an order from the temple of Apollo, which decrees that Thebes can only be released from a wasting famine when the agent of Laius' death has been discovered and punished. In desperation over the suffering of his people, Oedipus himself has sent Creon to the temple; everything in the subsequent action is determined by an acceptance of divine authority, and the pre-eminence of this life-defining form in the world of the play is most deeply portrayed through the characterization of Oedipus. Hence the priest, who refers to the Sphinx's riddle, is reassured by the supernatural assistance that has been given to Oedipus by the god.

> You came and by your coming saved our city,
> freed us from tribute which we paid of old
> to the Sphinx, cruel singer. This you did
> in virtue of no knowledge we could give you,
> in virtue of no teaching; it was God
> that aided you, men say, and you are held
> with God's assistance to have saved our lives.
> Now Oedipus, Greatest in all men's eyes,
> here falling at your feet we all entreat you
> find us some strength for rescue. (Lines 35–42)

Though an embattled Oedipus will later shrug off his debt to the gods and claim the power of answering the Sphinx's riddle as his own, he agrees with the people that a heartfelt appeal to the gods is essential for the welfare of the city; and this is a form of respect that is especially binding upon the person to whom the welfare of the city is entrusted. The necessity for the king to act in accordance with the will of Apollo is a basic thread in the action of the play, and it becomes an important complication affecting the situation of Oedipus.

The opposition of tragedy and the riddle is already suggested in the action initiated by Creon's appearance and his message from the oracle. The manner in which Creon's message from the oracle turns the action of the play into a riddle for Oedipus is related to certain aspects of the dramatic situation suggested by the speeches. It is significant, for example, that, in his opening speech, Oedipus announces himself as 'Oedipus whom all men call the Great' when making his response to the suffering people of the city. The speech as a whole suggests that he announces himself so as a form of reassurance to the people that he possesses both the power and the will to save their land.

This attitude is confirmed by the priest, who makes it clear that the king is great because he has miraculously saved the land in the past. In his lengthy and rhapsodic appeal, which gives expression to the sufferings of the people, the priest also conveys an important fact about the relationship between the king and his people (lines 14–57). Oedipus is able to speak of himself as he does because an unspoken agreement with them affirms his nobility as an agent of divine assistance, and this will remain unquestioned so long as he continues to protect them. This situation is relevant to the sense of upheaval that is created by Creon's delivery of the oracle's message.

> King Phoebus in plain words commanded us
> to drive out a pollution from our land,
> pollution grown ingrained within the land;
> drive it out, said the God, not cherish it,
> til it's past cure. (Lines 96–98)
>
> By banishing a man, or expiation
> of blood by blood, since it is murder guilt
> which holds our city in this destroying storm. (Lines 100–101)
>
> The God commanded clearly: let some one
> punish with force this dead man's murderers. (Lines 106–107)

In the confusion of different reactions to this message we can discern the signs of a difference between the will of the people and the interests of the king, potentially disrupting their unspoken agreement, and as the action progresses it will become apparent that the order from the temple of Apollo is intended to have this effect. This purpose is anticipated by the delayed return of Creon, about which Oedipus is clearly agitated – it is characteristic of the action of the play that, as the object of its riddle, he is constantly unsettled, at one moment by procrastination and at the next by having to make critical decisions on the spur of the moment. In this atmosphere the order from the temple, while appearing to be clear and explicit, recedes into shadow when it is closely examined. Rhetorically, Creon makes the clarity of the order seem indisputable, in the phrase 'King Phoebus in plain words commanded us'; however, though the main ideas are clear, relations between them are unexplained.

These lines convey the message from the temple as consisting of three points: that the land is burdened by a moral pollution from which it must

free itself; that this will be achieved when the murderer or murderers of the dead king Laius have been punished by exile or execution; that murder guilt is the moral pollution which keeps the city in its present despair. However, the command is not clear about the connection between the moral pollution and its precise cause. Though the suffering is linked to the murder of Laius, the message does not directly associate the pollution which has overwhelmed the city with the act of murder. Thus, it is equally possible that the origin of this pollution lies in the failure of the people of the city to investigate the crime and punish the guilty. This is implied when Oedipus questions Creon about the negligence of the people in this respect (lines 125–140). Moreover, the ambiguity seems to have been fully registered by some of those present, for at the end of this scene, and in violent contrast with the priest's optimism, the Chorus gives vent to its anxiety and fear.

> What is the sweet spoken word of God from the shrine of
> Pytho rich in gold
> that has come to glorious Thebes?
> I am stretched on the rack of doubt, and terror and
> trembling hold
> my heart, O Delian Healer, and I worship full of fears
> for what doom you will bring to pass, new or renewed in the
> revolving years.
> Speak to me, immortal voice,
> child of golden Hope. (Lines 151–158)

Instead of resolution, the old men of the Chorus express an even greater sense of insecurity before the will of Apollo. Their plea to Apollo, Athene, Artemis, Zeus and Dionysus (lines 159–216) magnifies the uncertainty of the situation, and this is related to more than the ambiguity of Creon's message. The mood of disquiet is further deepened by the belief that Laius' murderers were many in number (lines 122–123). This obviously makes the task of discovering and punishing the guilty much more difficult, and intensifies the people's sense of unease.

By now the riddle presented to Oedipus is beginning to form. His response (lines 216–275) has been cleverly elicited by Creon; while assuming a decisive attitude which conforms to the tone of decision in the command, Oedipus has been guiled into making conflicting gestures. By referring to his earlier status as a fellow citizen he unites himself in spirit with the people in a common task, as a necessary recourse to obtaining useful information. At the same

time he warns his 'fellow citizens' not to withhold information, and this is an open display of sovereignty. In this speech we are given some insight into what is meant by moral pollution in the world of the play. It is clear that in his interpretation of Apollo's justice Oedipus seeks to threaten evasiveness and concealment with punishment of the greatest severity. Making use of the ambiguity in the oracle's command, he makes a direct identification of the pollution with any citizen who refuses to help, and so revives the anxiety of the people about their negligence in connection with the murder.

> But if you shall keep silence, if perhaps
> some one of you, to shield a guilty friend,
> or for his own sake shall reject my words –
> hear what I shall do then:
> I forbid that man, whoever he be, my land,
> my land where I hold sovereignty and throne;
> and I forbid any to welcome him
> or cry him greeting or make him a sharer
> in sacrifice or offering to the Gods,
> or give him water for his hands to wash.
> I command all to drive him from their homes,
> since he is our pollution, as the oracle
> of Pytho's God proclaimed him now to me. (Lines 232–244)

This warning leads into a curse upon the murderer, or murderers.

> Upon the murderer I invoke this curse –
> whether he is one man and all unknown,
> or one of many – may he wear out his life
> in misery to miserable doom!
> If with my knowledge he lives at my hearth
> I pray that I myself may feel my curse. (Lines 246–251)

Oedipus' identification with the order betrays his anxiety. By attributing pollution to anyone who withholds vital information he makes indiscriminate allegations, while the reference to his own hearth seems to be an exaggerated gesture. Significantly, the former increases the anxiety of the people about their own responsibility, while the latter is an unwitting act of self-condemnation. However, it is evident, in this volatile atmosphere, that Oedipus has a precise sense of how justice should be administered. Debasement in the eyes of the

world, as the bearer of a pollution that has ravaged the land, is seen by him as far worse than death.

Thus, while it seems that in this speech Oedipus is at the height of his moral authority, and assumes the responsibility that is desired and expected from him, it also seems that his actions are influenced by his fear of the god. This is suggested, in particular, in the way that his speech as a whole moves from a violent and intimidating condemnation of the murderer to an incongruous identification of himself with the victim Laius (lines 259–267). This recalls another moment (lines 136–141) in which Oedipus exaggerates his affinity with the victim, since, especially as he has married Laius' widow, there does not appear at this point to be any close personal connection. The language of heartfelt tribute, embellished by inclusion of the ancestors of the dead man, intensifies the opposition between Apollo, Laius, Oedipus and his supporters on one side, and the murderer, or murderers, and their allies on the other.

In *Oedipus*, it is of the utmost significance that the will of the god is understood as being not arbitrary but concerned with some moral failure; this implies that moral clarity is crucial in any response made to his demand. For Oedipus and the people such clarity is elusive, not only in relation to the precise origin of moral pollution, but also in relation to how this pollution originates from the murder of Laius. The reason why this death should be the cause of famine remains obscure, and the obscurity is tellingly reflected in the curse which Oedipus invokes upon the guilty. Fearfully, he follows the order of the oracle and identifies justice with the will of the god. Once again it is the Chorus, in their response to this speech, who indicate an essential aspect of the action, this time by objecting that since it is Apollo who has given the order it is appropriate that he should identify the guilty for them (lines 275–278). Instead of being shaken from his subjugation Oedipus brushes them aside. At the moment of his highest expression of moral authority he unknowingly places himself in a moral limbo, a position of weakness that will soon be exploited.

Phase two

Since Oedipus refuses to question the god any further, the Chorus then suggests that help should be sought from Teiresias, as he is the person 'who sees most often what the Lord Apollo sees' (lines 284–285). As it happens Creon has already made the same suggestion, and Oedipus welcomes the seer with elaborate ceremony and a heightened sense of expectancy. Teiresias is led in by a little boy, and this gives to his entrance an air of innocent unworldliness,

an impression of his being a man of truth and wisdom, unmoved by the attractions of power. This is effective, as it attracts the sympathy of the Chorus in what turns out to be an unexpectedly acrimonious encounter between Oedipus and the seer. This begins with an exchange in which Teiresias refuses to disclose his knowledge (lines 315–344), and predictably enrages Oedipus.

Oedipus
Indeed I am
so angry I shall not hold back a jot
of what I think. For I would have you know
I think you were complotter of the deed
and doer of the deed save in so far
as for the actual killing. Had you had eyes
I would have said alone you murdered him.

Teiresias
Yes? Then I warn you faithfully to keep
the letter of your proclamation and
from this day forth to speak no word of greeting
to these nor me; you are the land's pollution. (Lines 345–353)

The implications of this accusation are clear to the audience: if the authority of Teiresias goes unquestioned then Oedipus has willingly and explicitly cursed and condemned himself. Moreover, Teiresias uses his authority to dispel the ambiguity of the oracle concerning the source of moral pollution, placing it unequivocally in the murderer, 'you are the land's pollution'. In doing this he begins to remove the unspoken understanding between Oedipus and the people; by placing the origin of pollution in the murderer the seer liberates the people from the fear surrounding their own negligence. Their sense of relief is expressed at the end of the scene in a freely flowing reflection upon the fate of the guilty man (lines 461–512).

Who is the man proclaimed
By Delphi's prophetic rock
as the bloody handed murderer,
the doer of deeds that none dare name?

> Now is the time for him to run
> with a stronger foot
> than Pegasus
> for the child of Zeus leaps in arms upon him
> with fire and the lightning bolt,
> and terribly close on his heels
> are the Fates that never miss. (Lines 462–472)

Now they are divided by a feeling of liberation from their fears and a sense of loyalty to the man whose wit rescued them from the Sphinx.

A deliberate psychological pattern can be discerned behind the action of this scene. The protracted unwillingness of Teiresias to divulge his knowledge, while repeatedly insinuating that he is unwilling because his interrogator is guilty, is designed to unsettle Oedipus, who is quick to recognize this when, at last, the main accusation is made against him ('How shamelessly you started up this taunt!' (line 354)). By goading Oedipus into making wild accusations, Teiresias wins the sympathy of the Chorus and is thereby permitted to make a revelation that might not otherwise have been accepted. Although when the people are desperate for help the seer is respectfully treated as a source of hope, the action of the play as a whole does not suggest that he is always trusted. In less threatening circumstances for the city Teiresias might generally be seen as a 'trick devising quack' (line 387); it seems that the status of prophets and seers is highly unstable and changes with the times.

The design is completed by turning Oedipus' investigation against himself and thereby releasing the people from their fears, and the deliberate nature of this action suggests a link between the seer and Creon. Creon's message from the oracle has created doubts in the Chorus about the gravity of their negligence in failing to seek out and punish the murderer; now Teiresias sways the Chorus by clearly identifying pollution with the murderer, and manipulates Oedipus in order to weaken their loyalty to him. This connection between Creon's message and Teiresias' design points to an association between the seer and Creon or the oracle, or all three, to devise a plot to depose the king. In the heat of the moment Oedipus can hardly be expected to grasp all of the possibilities, but his speech enables us to see something of what lies behind the action that is directly presented to us: 'And now / you would expel me, / because you think that you will find a place / by Creon's throne' (lines 399–401). The response has evidently been rehearsed.

> If you are king, at least I have the right
> no less to speak in my defence against you.
> Of that much I am master. I am no slave
> of yours, but Loxias', and so I shall not
> enroll myself with Creon for my patron. (Lines 408–411)

Teiresias argues that he is not the slave of kings, and therefore has nothing to gain from their deposition. To strengthen his position, he asserts that he is Loxias' (Apollo's) slave, and, by extension, a servant of the oracle at the temple at Pytho. In other words, Teiresias is a disciple, or agent, of the oracle, and this clarifies how it is that Teiresias is the person 'who sees most often what the Lord Apollo sees'. The dialectical sleight of hand in his answer both refutes the argument and reminds Oedipus and the Chorus that Teiresias enjoys a position that is beyond the authority of merely temporal powers. But it also brings the oracle into the conspiracy against Oedipus, as the close connection between oracle and seer strengthens the causal relation between the ambiguity of the decree and Teiresias' release of the people from the threat of pollution that hangs over them. Our recognition of this co-ordination of action between the oracle and the seer enables us to see the oracle's purpose as fundamental to the action of the play.

Thus we can see how Teiresias' association with the temple explains his knowledge of Oedipus' history. Characteristically, Teiresias attributes it to his prophetic gift (lines 460–461), and this is accepted by the Chorus as a reflection of his affinity with the oracle – 'Delphi's prophetic rock' (lines 462–463). Whereas Oedipus sees himself threatened simply by political ambition, it becomes apparent that he inhabits a world in which power that is connected with religion is being exercised in ways that he cannot recognize or understand. Far from being simply a 'trick devising quack' (line 387), Teiresias has unusual psychological skills, which he demonstrates in weakening the tie between Oedipus and the people. Now, having answered the accusation of a conspiracy with Creon, Teiresias creates a prophetic spell which plays upon the fears of Oedipus about his parents, and taunts him with his ignorance.

> Since you have taunted me with being blind,
> here is my word for you.
> You have your eyes but see not where you are
> in sin, nor where you live, nor whom you live with.
> Do you know who your parents are? Unknowing
> you are an enemy to kith and kin
> in death, beneath the earth, and in this life.

> A deadly footed, double striking curse,
> from father and mother both, shall drive you forth
> out of this land, with darkness on your eyes,
> that now have such straight vision. Shall there be
> a place will not be harbour to your cries,
> a corner of Cithaeron will not ring
> in echo to your cries, soon, soon, –
> when you shall learn the secret of your marriage,
> which steered you to a haven in this house, –
> haven no haven, after lucky voyage?
> And of the multitude of other evils
> establishing a grim equality
> between you and your children, you know nothing.
> So, muddy with contempt my words and Creon's!
> Misery shall grind no man as it will you. (Lines 412–427)

The purpose of this spell is to create in Oedipus the feeling that he will inevitably be driven forth from the land 'with darkness on your eyes'. In the guise of a visionary, Teiresias leads his victim towards self-mutilation, anticipating the psychological consequences when the king finally uncovers the truth about his own history. In particular Teiresias knows that Oedipus is now trapped in a moral limbo in which the question of right and wrong has been reduced to a contest between them, and that, in losing this contest, Oedipus will disintegrate psychologically before the seer's 'prophetic' eminence. Teiresias reformulates his prophecy in literal terms at lines 454–457, so it does not merely refer to a darkness of understanding ('blindness for sight / and beggary for riches his exchange / he shall go journeying to a foreign country / tapping his way before him with a stick'). Furthermore, the seer's opening remarks in this speech, 'I have said what I came here to say not fearing your countenance', make it clear that his pretence at the beginning of the scene has been planned with the intention of unsettling and enraging Oedipus.

The murder enquiry is now quite sharply focused; if what the seer has claimed is true Oedipus is the murderer, and if it is not true then the claim is a deception contrived by the actual murderer and his collaborator(s). This reduction is implicit in the altercation that begins with Creon's indignant denial of the conspiracy. Therefore, the justified act of defending himself against conspiracy to murder Laius is also a means of forcing upon Oedipus the implications of his stand. For if Oedipus cannot persuade the people of

a guilty conspiracy on the part of Teiresias and Creon then the logic of his position demands that he should accept his own guilt. Hence he accuses Creon, 'you are proved manifestly the murderer of that man' (lines 533–534), when there is no evidence to support this accusation. Now Creon is able to create the illusion that his innocence of the murder implies that there is no conspiracy of any kind, and his most important speech (lines 583–615) uses this innocence as a tacit support for his (carefully prepared) explanation for why he should be content with the power that he already has.

> Consider, first, if you think any one
> would choose to rule and fear rather than rule
> and sleep untroubled by a fear if power
> were equal in both cases. I, at least,
> I was not born with such a frantic yearning
> to be a king – but to do what kings do.
> And so it is with every one who has learned
> wisdom and self-control. As it stands now,
> the prizes are all mine – and without fear…
>
> My mind would not be traitor if its wise;
> I am no treason lover, of my nature,
> nor would I ever dare to join a plot.
> Prove what I say. Go to the oracle
> at Pytho and inquire about the answers,
> If they are as I told you. (Lines 584–605)

Creon ignores altogether the accusation that he is the murderer. He knows that there is nothing for him to answer, and that this is how the matter will appear to any impartial observer. By making no response he both avoids the impression of entanglement that might be created by protesting and implies that there is no case against him. The speech has an added dramatic dimension, for Creon is not merely replying to Oedipus in order to clear himself of suspicion, he is also acting upon the Chorus in order to influence their attitudes. Therefore, in refuting the charge of conspiracy, his disregard of the murder accusation implicitly creates an impression of general innocence. In relation to the charge of conspiracy, however, there are certain points to consider: Creon's appearance at the beginning of the action was unaccountably delayed, and, more significantly for Oedipus, it was Creon who suggested to him that advice should be sought from Teiresias. Earlier in this scene Creon

pretends that this suggestion is quite understandable, by describing the seer as highly honoured (line 563), and is calculatingly unruffled by his interrogator's sarcasm. He responds to the matter of delay along with that of the main charge, inviting Oedipus to verify the order by going to the oracle (lines 603–605). This, of course, is a safe challenge if the oracle is a fellow conspirator.

But this challenge is also aimed at the Chorus. It follows a lengthy self-portrait in which Creon presents himself as a grey eminence who is satisfied with his position; free from the perils of conspicuous power and honoured by all; a man of sober wisdom who is unaffected by ambition or envy. The Chorus commends Creon for his wisdom and self-mastery (lines 616–617). Oedipus, who is not so blessed, is exposed not merely to the injustice of his accusations against Creon and Teiresias, but increasingly to the moral limbo which he has created for himself by his response to the oracle's command. Creon needs only to hold his ground against Oedipus in order to finally break the tie between king and people upon which his rule depends.

Phase three

The appearance of Jocasta, who joins the Chorus in restraining Oedipus, marks a turning point in the action: impending dissolution of the tie between Oedipus and the people coincides with a focused investigation into the murder of Laius. At this moment of isolation Oedipus is exposed to the one purely fortuitous event which has enabled the conspirators to act against him. In explaining to him that 'human beings have no part in the craft of prophecy', Jocasta refers to the oracle from the temple of Apollo and in doing so refers to a place where three roads meet. The action of the play hinges on a coincidence, for the oracle had predicted that Laius would be killed by his own son at a place where three roads meet, and this is what has happened. Occurring at the mid-point of the action, Jocasta's speech appears at first to be a moment of calm, as she tries to reassure Oedipus.

> Do not concern yourself about this matter;
> listen to me and learn that human beings
> have no part in the craft of prophecy.
> Of that I'll show you a short proof.
> There was an oracle once that came to Laius, –
> I will not say that it was Phoebus' own,
> but it was from his servants – and it told him
> that it was fate that he should die a victim
> at the hands of his own son, a son to be born

of Laius and me. But, see now, he,
the king, was killed by foreign highway robbers
at a place where three roads meet – so goes the story;
and for the son – before three days were out
after his birth King Laius pierced his ankles
and by the hands of others cast him forth
upon a pathless hillside. So Apollo
failed to fulfill his oracle to the son,
that he should kill his father, and to Laius
also proved false in that the thing he feared,
death at his son's hands, never came to pass.
So clear in this case were the oracles,
so clear and false. Give them no heed I say;
what God discovers need of, easily
he shows to us himself.

Oedipus
O dear Jocasta,
as I hear this from you, there comes upon me
a wandering of the soul – I could run mad.

Jocasta
What trouble is it, that you turn again
and speak like this?

Oedipus
I thought I heard you say
That Laius was killed at a crossroads.

Jocasta
Yes, that was how the story went and still
that word goes round. (Lines 707–731)

There is a rich ambiguity in this moment of recognition and reversal, which reflects the dramatic complexity of the situation, in particular the uncertainties concealed within ordinary experience. Jocasta's explanation demands that she should explain Laius' abandonment of their son and its violence; her acceptance of this horror is in conflict with the reassuring purpose of her speech. Her lack of feeling coincides with the critical disclosure of the speech

and how this is related to the oracle. For the piece of information that brings focus to the murder investigation and develops into Oedipus' self-examination is merely a scrap of common knowledge in Jocasta's account, and an incidental detail in the prophecy made so long ago. The image of 'a place where three roads meet' has a poetical resonance that gives credence to the supernatural powers at work in the events that have been forecast. Hence in the action of the play there is a deliberate confusion of what is charged with supernatural significance and what is fortuitous and banal, and this is reflected in the psychological disorientation of Jocasta's speech.

To Oedipus, the supernatural elements are of such power that he is suddenly at their mercy, seeing himself as singled out for punishment by Zeus, and fearing, in spite of his contempt for the juggling antics of men like Teiresias, that in this case the seer may have been right (lines 738–748). In this demoralized state, Oedipus has no alternative but to disclose to Jocasta, and to the Chorus, the events leading up to the murder, and how the killing occurred. Already we can see that knowing the truth about himself is more to him than instinct for survival; the combined effect of extraordinary events and the power of the oracle has transported him into the world of supernatural will and influence.

I was held greatest of the citizens
in Corinth till a curious chance befell me
as I shall tell you – curious, indeed,
but hardly worth the store I set upon it.
There was a dinner and at it a man,
a drunken man, accused me in his drink
of being bastard. I was furious
but held my temper under for that day.
Next day I went and taxed my parents with it;
they took the insult very ill from him,
the drunken fellow who had uttered it.
So I was comforted for their part, but
still this thing rankled always, for the story
crept about widely. And I went at last
to Pytho, though my parents did not know.
But Phoebus sent me home again unhonoured
in what I came to learn, but he foretold
other and desperate horrors to befall me,

> that I was fated to lie with my mother,
> and to show to daylight an accursed breed
> which men would not endure, and I was doomed
> to be murderer of the father that begot me. (Lines 776–793)

In giving his account of the murder, and so giving evidence against himself (lines 771–834), Oedipus also enables us to glimpse certain aspects of the relationship between his character and the (transcendent) life-defining form that dominates the action of the play. We can see, for example, how the sudden collapse in his confidence is related to the extent to which he is in thrall to his religious beliefs, to a sense of the supernatural and to the fear of its intervention in the world of human affairs. The background to his encounter with Laius gives us a sense of how deeply his thoughts are affected by these fears and beliefs. Even his response to the rumours concerning his legitimacy, and his going to the oracle at Pytho, betray an over-reaction to the drunken outburst. He admits that as Corinth's greatest citizen (lines 776–778) he could well have ignored the slight of an inferior. Further, in making this visit secretly he has increased his isolation and vulnerability to powers that are beyond his comprehension, and so invited the oracle to exploit the weakness of his situation. Thus he is given no satisfaction over the question of his legitimacy, but instead the oracle reiterates the prophecy made to Laius many years earlier.

The susceptibility of Oedipus to the supernatural is of great dramatic significance. For though we have seen that the action of the play hinges on a coincidence, the conditions for Oedipus' act of violence have been created by the oracle. It was when in flight from the malevolent prophecy that Oedipus encountered Laius and his party, and so the murder could be seen as an act of retaliation committed by a man who has been terrified and abandoned to supernatural fears and imaginings. This association between coincidence and the power of the oracle can be extended to the action of *Oedipus* as a whole; the prophecy is, like the seer's preparation of Oedipus' self-mutilation, a prediction which helps to create the conditions for its own fulfilment. In this connection, chance can be seen as a factor in the operations of the temple of Apollo, in that prophecies are made in the hope that on some occasions coincidence will come to their aid and confirm the powers of the oracle. When this does not happen nothing is lost, as the prophecies will be forgotten. Such forgetfulness is especially prevalent in a superstitious people who are dependent upon religion when times are difficult.

We can identify the exact point at which the riddle of self-knowledge for Oedipus emanates from the murder investigation in the evidence he gives against himself.

> When the old man saw this he watched his moment,
> and as I passed he struck me from his carriage,
> full on the head with his two pointed goad.
> But he was paid in full and presently
> my stick had struck him backwards from the car
> and he rolled out of it. And then I killed them
> all. If it happened there was any tie
> of kinship twixt this man and Laius,
> who is then now more miserable than I,
> what man on earth so hated by the Gods,
> since neither citizen nor foreigner
> may welcome me at home or even greet me,
> but drive me out of doors? And it is I,
> I and no other have so cursed myself.
> And I pollute the bed of him I killed
> by the hands that killed him. Was I not born evil?
> Am I not utterly unclean? I had to fly
> and in my banishment not even see
> my kindred nor set foot in my own country,
> or otherwise my fate was to be yoked
> in marriage with my mother and kill my father,
> Polybus who begot me and had reared me. (Lines 807–827)

The interweaving of Oedipus' susceptibility to the power of the gods with the designs of the oracle is dramatically significant at this point. Oedipus' psychological state at the time of the murder, to which he alludes at the end of these lines, is now echoed in his engulfment by supernatural fears, in particular the fear that his fate has been predestined by malignant powers. Sovereignty, authority and personal eminence disintegrate, and his disjointed reference to the personal circumstances that have led to the murder betray the confusion in his thinking. He is increasingly unable to grasp what is happening and cannot connect the diverse strands in a complex web of events: in particular, the prophecy, the murder and his relation to Laius. This confusion is evident in, 'I pollute the bed of him I killed', and cruelly underscored by his mistaken reference to Polybus 'who begot me'. Here the

idea of pollution comes from Teiresias, who accuses Oedipus of being the land's pollution and implicitly links this with parricide and incest (lines 345–353 and 456–459). However, in itself marriage to the wife of a man you have killed does not imply pollution in the world of the play.

At the close of this scene, the Chorus alludes to the oracle (lines 864–910). This chorus is not inspired by sympathy for the hero, rather its tone is austere and expresses concern for the clarity of moral vision upon which understanding and purposeful action depend. In the opening verse, alertness to the moral laws and their immutable truth and authority is linked to the hope of a remedy for the people of Thebes. The obstacle to this is the tyrant, but this idea is qualified by reference to 'the eager ambition that profits the state'. Hence the Chorus considers that the law has been broken by the king, but the structure of the chorus as a whole suggests their intention is to cover themselves. Moving from the general idea of piety, and the clarity of the moral law, to a vision of what happens to life when the desecration of those laws is itself the object of honour (lines 895–896), this chorus reaches its true concern in the final verse.

We have seen earlier in the action (lines 278–279) a suggestion from the Chorus that the order from the oracle should have been more explicit, and now stress upon the need for clarity in the source of moral law is, by implication, extended to the spheres of moral judgement and execution of the law. Anxiety concerning the integrity of the oracle has been created by doubts over whether, in this case, 'the oracles are proved to fit for all men's hands to point at'. Instead of clarity in the sphere of moral judgement, we have a rigmarole of ancient and forgotten prophecy, impenetrable confusion of family circumstances, and tenuously connected events over a considerable period of time. In relation to fundamental convictions about morality and supernatural influence the ambiguous instructions of the oracle have become dubious. However, the position of this moment is highly significant, as it coincides with the disintegration in Oedipus' mastery of himself. As the Chorus wakes up to the possibility of political corruption stemming from the temple of Apollo, a terrified Oedipus advances towards a knowledge of his own history that will vindicate the conspirators.

Phase four

In the dramatic structure of the play, this moment of uncertainty from the Chorus represents the last fleeting hope for Oedipus before his enemies prevail and depose him. Upon the appearance of the messenger from Corinth (line 924), who brings news of the death of Polybus and of the people's wish

that Oedipus should succeed him, Oedipus is told more of his history. But in the course of the messenger's response to interrogation we see how a gradual disclosure of the riddle of self-knowledge for Oedipus coincides with his growing inability to put together the elements of his history. The messenger's description of the exposure and maiming of the infant, and the circumstances under which this has occurred, clearly echoes Jocasta's speech (lines 707–725) a little earlier. As Jocasta herself becomes more and more aware that her husband is the son whom she and Laius abandoned at birth, and more desperate to end the investigation, we see that as he turns away from her Oedipus loses command of his situation, while losing his grasp of what is disclosed. His mind is deranged by a panic-stricken desire to know. This reaches a climax towards the close of this scene, when he is seized by the conviction that he is the son of slaves.

> Break out what will! I at least shall be
> willing to see my ancestry, though humble.
> Perhaps she is ashamed of my low birth,
> for she has all a woman's high-flown pride.
> But I account myself a child of Fortune,
> beneficent Fortune, and I shall not be
> dishonoured. She's the mother from whom I spring;
> the months, my brothers, marked me, now as small,
> and now again as mighty. Such is my breeding,
> and I shall never prove so false to it,
> as not to find the secret of my birth. (Lines 1076–1086)

In this phase of the action, dramatization of Oedipus' need to understand is imagined from different points of view: one is the natural sense of our moral and personal qualities as they are expressed through our actions, and the other is created by a religious interpretation of how circumstances have made us what we are, that is, a metaphysical conception of character. The peculiarities of Oedipus' personal history, combined with its exploitation by his enemies, have eroded the natural sense of himself which appeared to be so strong at the beginning of the action; now he puts his faith in the hope of a 'beneficent Fortune' that works itself out in the circumstances and events of our lives. This abstract notion leads Oedipus into a final disoriented 'self-knowledge', and his enactment of the prophecy that has been made about him by Teiresias.

The Chorus appears to mock the disorder, praising Cithaeron, which is grotesquely described as 'native to him [Oedipus] and mother and nurse at once', ridiculing the idea of a beneficent Fortune, and the honour bestowed upon it (lines 1089–1097). This time the call to Apollo is one of disillusioned irony and this is developed in the antistrophe, in which the idea of a beneficent Fortune attending Oedipus is exaggerated in fanciful speculations about his parentage, invoking gods and nymphs, and the wildly inappropriate 'bride of Loxias' (that is, an easy woman casually enjoyed by the god on the 'grassy slopes'). Doubts about the oracle, which were expressed in the previous chorus, have grown into an agitated sense that the people are being diverted from their main concern. The plight of the city is receding ever further from the interests of the protagonists, as a deranged Oedipus seeks to discover the secrets of his own character. We can see how the 'mind' of Thebes has become polluted by the design of the conspirators.

In the following scene the herdsman reveals the facts about Oedipus' birth. The exchange between them and the messenger clarifies important details in the story: the rumour that Laius had been murdered by robbers was invented by the same herdsman in the interests of self-preservation (lines 750–762), otherwise he would have had to tell Jocasta that her husband Oedipus was the murderer. The messenger revives the herdsman's fears when he identifies Oedipus as the child who was abandoned on the hillside of Cithaeron (lines 1145–1146). In being forced to reveal his part in the abandonment he betrays his knowledge that the evil oracles (line 1175) have seemingly been fulfilled and that Oedipus is the pollution of the city and accursed by the gods. Furthermore, we can now appreciate that the conspirators have had a source of information concerning the actual circumstances of the murder, and, through the oracle, they must know how this is connected to the whole of Oedipus' life. Hence it is evident that the elaborate design of the conspirators has created a riddle for Oedipus concerning his own character. They have been able to assume control over the religious forms which determine his understanding of himself.

We can see that this process began with the weakening of the tie between Oedipus and the people of Thebes (as represented by the Chorus). In turn, the injustice of his accusation against Creon, which was provoked by Teiresias, led to a labyrinthine enquiry in which the will of the oracle could prevail. Instead of a rational investigation which might ensure an explanation of the causes and how they should be judged, the decisions of the people, and of Oedipus himself, have been determined by the illusion of his malevolent fate.

> O, O, O, they will all come,
> all come out clearly! Light of the sun, let me
> look upon you no more after today!
> I who first saw the light bred of a match
> accursed, and accursed in my living
> with them I lived with, cursed in my killing. (Lines 1182–1185)

These lines anticipate the form of self-mutilation by Oedipus that has been 'foreseen' by Teiresias, and they enable us to see that the whole framework for Oedipus' sense of himself has been created. His descent has been purposefully interpreted for him by Teiresias (for example, 'living in foulest sin'), so that when the truth comes out it will be all the more devastating. Oedipus is not condemned for the crimes that he committed deliberately and violently, but rather for the parricide and incest which he committed unknowingly. Instead of being regarded as a sign of innocence his ignorance is presented as proof of the deepest moral corruption, as it confirms the supernatural curse upon him. Oedipus and the Chorus are lured into seeing him as guilty, and he is systematically disarmed of the means to challenge this judgement.

The success of the conspirators is evident in the inability of Oedipus, and indeed of the Chorus, to review the earlier events of the play and realize that the terms of culpability have altered to fit the changing circumstances. The order from the oracle, at the beginning of the action, did not mention parricide and incest, and, furthermore, belief that the murder is the cause of pollution is confirmed by the Chorus at lines 462–482. Parricide and incest become relevant when developments in the action make it convenient to the conspirators. So powerful is the authority of the supernatural in the world of the play that uncanny and unnatural circumstances overwhelm any desire to question. Even the Chorus has to yield, despite its justified doubts and misgivings, and its lament for an accursed Oedipus (lines 1186–1223) betrays their altered attitude.

Phase five

In the terrible scene that follows, a second messenger describes the events in which Oedipus at first decides to execute Jocasta, and then, having been thwarted by her suicide, enacts the self-punishment that has been planted in his mind by Teiresias (lines 1237–1286). Sophocles' use of the convention of reported violence enables him to present another point of view at this climactic moment. Thus the messenger's speech is free from self-interest; his reactions are those of a fellow human being who has the misfortune to

witness appalling events. This directs a clarifying lens upon the action. Thus his account of the suffering of Oedipus and Jocasta conveys a sense of its being both extreme and incomprehensible. The eruption of one moment of violence to another is conveyed in vividly sympathetic language; we see only the turmoil of the characters and its background.

> When she came raging into the house she went
> straight to her marriage bed, tearing her hair
> with both her hands, and crying upon Laius
> long dead – Do you remember, Laius,
> that night long past which bred a child for us
> to send you to your death and leave
> a mother making children with her son?
> And then she groaned and cursed the bed in which
> she brought forth husband by her husband, children
> by her own child, an infamous double bond…
>
> Then, as she lay,
> poor woman, on the ground, what happened after,
> was terrible to see. He tore the brooches –
> the gold chased brooches fastening her robe –
> away from her and lifting them up high
> dashed them on his own eyeballs, shrieking out
> such things as: they will never see the crime
> I have committed or had done upon me!
> Dark eyes, now in the days to come look on
> forbidden faces, do not recognize
> those whom you long for – with such imprecations
> he struck his eyes again and yet again
> with the brooches. And the bleeding eyeballs gushed
> and stained his beard – no sluggish oozing drops
> but a black rain and bloody hail poured down…
>
> The fortune of the days gone by was true
> good fortune – but today groans and destruction
> and death and shame – of all ills can be named
> not one is missing. (Lines 1241–1285)

Jocasta's earlier resistance to the prophetic authority of the oracle (lines 707–725) and to the taint of incest (lines 977–983) collapses under the weight of an overwhelming realization of all that has been 'foreseen'. Suicide averts her execution at the hands of Oedipus, who in the act of self-mutilation links the curse upon his family with banishment (lines 1271–1274). Here the manipulation of Oedipus' thought by the conspirators is fulfilled in his self-banishment. The idea that henceforth Oedipus can see only in his imagination marks his exclusion from the life of his fellow human beings.

Superficially, the penultimate scene of the play resembles an orchestrated lament, in which questions and responses are both antiphonal and rhetorical (lines 1297–1369). The Chorus questions Oedipus about his act of self-mutilation knowing that a true answer is impossible, and Oedipus, who has acted in a spellbound frenzy, does not see anything of the real causes. His explanation that Apollo has willed him to self-destruction, and that this is justified by his having 'nothing sweet to see', is a view that others have devised for him (lines 1329–1335).

There is, however, another side to this lament and its tone is opposed to the disinterested horror of the messenger's speech. The Chorus does not react in pity and horror, as their discontent betrays their moral uneasiness. Thus the severity of the scene, in which Oedipus appears before the audience in his wounded state, is echoed by the severity of the Chorus. Even the initial avowal of pity is qualified by 'I shudder at the sight of you' (line 1306), and thereafter their responses confirm Oedipus in his condemnation of himself and become increasingly forceful as the scene unfolds. This makes his metaphorically divesting himself of his sovereignty, by calling the Chorus his friend, an appeal to the fellow feeling of those who remain with him. Unmoved by this appeal, the Chorus open with a piteous rhetorical question and end by damning Oedipus in his very existence, 'Unhappy in your mind and your misfortune, / would I had never known you!' (lines 1346–1369). Their attitude can be contrasted with the view of the messenger, 'The fortune of the days gone by was true good fortune'. This draws attention to the uneasy conscience of the Chorus. Having promised to be faithful to Oedipus, and then shifted from one position to another as circumstances change, the Chorus now absolve themselves by accepting the oracle's judgement that Oedipus and his family are cursed from birth by the god.

The scene closes with a formal act of judgement by Oedipus upon himself, in which he delivers both verdict and sentence (lines 1370–1415). Once again he justifies the violence that he has done to himself, asserting that in all of the things that bind him to life there is no longer anything in which his senses

can take delight, and recalling the curse that he called down upon himself in the name of Apollo and justice. The religious interpretation of character prevails over the appraisal of human actions.

> O Polybus and Corinth and the house,
> the old house that I used to call my father's –
> what fairness you were nurse to, and what foulness
> festered beneath! Now I am found to be
> a sinner and a son of sinners. Crossroads,
> and hidden glade, oak, and the narrow way
> at the crossroads, that drank my father's blood
> offered you by my hands, do you remember
> still what I did as you looked on, and what
> I did when I came here? O marriage, marriage!
> you bred me and again when you had bred
> bred children of your child and showed to men
> brides, wives and mothers and the foulest deeds
> that can be in this world of ours. (Lines 1394–1407)

He sees the murder of Laius as a desecration of nature and religion. Marriage to Jocasta is represented as a sacrament that has been defiled by the things that are most natural to it, and so procreation becomes, in the language suggested to him by Teiresias, 'the foulest of deeds that can be in this world of ours'. By passing sentence on himself that he should be banished or put to death Oedipus formally relinquishes his sovereignty to Creon.

In the final scene the severity of religious authority is associated with the inner destruction of Oedipus by his enemies. The bleak tone is essential to the extreme action of the play and to its uncompromising enquiry into our understanding of ourselves and the world. Hence the scene begins with a speech by Creon (lines 1421–1428), which moves rapidly from a feigned assurance that he will not exalt in his triumph to a lofty expression of censure. This impresses upon Oedipus the fallen stature that is already accepted by him. It is clear that Creon's will to assert order, and to conceal from his audience the horror of what has just occurred, does not relax in any way the execution of his purpose. Not only is he relentless in vanquishing Oedipus, he is unaffected by the suicide of his sister, and his inhumanity is contrasted with a true expression of feeling when he allows Oedipus to be united with Antigone and Ismene.

O children,
where are you? Come here, come to my hands,
a brother's hands which turned your father's eyes,
those bright eyes you knew once, to what you see,
a father seeing nothing, knowing nothing,
begetting you from his own source of life.
I weep for you – I cannot see your faces –
I weep when I think of the bitterness
there will be in your lives, how you must live
before the world. At what assemblages
of citizens will you make one? To what
gay company will you go and not come home
in tears instead of sharing in the holiday?
And when you're ripe for marriage, who will he be,
the man who'll risk to take such infamy
as shall cling to my children, to bring hurt
on them and those that marry with them? (Lines 1480–1496)

The role of Creon in this scene represents a stark opposition to the pathos in Oedipus' harrowing vision of his daughters' future, especially as this role is connected to their inherited guilt and social exclusion. Alongside Oedipus' despairing conviction that Apollo's curse must fall upon his beloved children, the triumphant victor assumes the guise of a defender of religious truth and generous successor ('I gave you this because I knew from old days how you loved them as I see now' (lines 1476–1477)). Throughout the scene we can see how remorseless Creon has been in his ambitions, never permitting himself to consider the consequences of his actions, or to be concerned by what is natural and just. The play ends with an abrupt separation of Oedipus and the children, and with the admonition, 'Do not seek to be master in everything, for the things you mastered did not follow you throughout your life' (line 1524). The closing chorus echoes his thought, and the deposition of Oedipus is thereby sealed by a public acceptance of his punishment by the god.

Conclusion

Tragedy is by its nature concerned with the representation of character. Portrayal of the moral purpose and meaning of human behaviour, is, therefore, a basic element of the genre. Consequently, the moral judgement associated with guilt and innocence, justice and retribution, redemption and damnation is relevant to the ways in which a tragic characterization is

achieved. Thus it is easy to identify characterization with moral terms, and in simpler forms of drama the purpose of the action is to define and judge character according to the possession of moral qualities. It is in contrast to this simplified conception of character in tragedy that the opposition of genres in *Oedipus* should be seen.

The use of the riddle as a genre is suggested by the domination of the action by a murder investigation. Beyond its serving as a dramatic device for the presentation of a serious theme, the enquiry into Laius' murder develops, according to strict dramatic principles, into Oedipus' investigation into his own character. In this respect the riddle at the core of the action begins with a murder investigation and evolves seamlessly into an enquiry into character itself (in Phase three). The uncertainties of Oedipus about himself dramatize the need of a reflective being to understand itself and the world. Such understanding is a foundation for the possession of character.

Enfolded in this dramatic development is the riddle of the oracle and its influence upon the action: the hidden purpose of the conspirators. Oedipus attempts to uncover their design when he accuses Teiresias and Creon of treachery, and his inability to solve this riddle has consequences in what follows when the murder enquiry has been solved. The 'riddle' of Oedipus' personal history is interpreted for him by his enemies, and his understanding of himself is transformed in accordance with their ambitious purposes.

At the heart of the action we see that life-defining forms essential to the hero's understanding of himself are covertly manipulated in order to paralyse his will. In my analysis of the action we have seen how religious belief confirms Oedipus in his authority as the king of Thebes, especially when he is required to take action against the murderer of Laius. The life-defining forms associated with this belief are used by the oracle, Teiresias and Creon in order to turn Oedipus against himself. In this the Aristotelian conception of character in tragedy is opposed by the complex riddle that permeates the action of the play; character is defined not simply in relation to social position and the will but also in relation to the life-defining forms which shape our judgement and understanding.

There are two further aspects of this mode of representing character in accordance with the form of reflective life. First, we have established a connection between character and the need for a reflective being to decide how it will respond to the life to which it belongs. This is fundamental to the conception that we form of ourselves as moral beings, and implies a need to see things as they are – both in ourselves and in the life. A corollary to this is the connection between character and the need of others to decide how they

will live. This means that character is grounded not only in my behaviour and understanding of myself and the world, but also in my perception of others. His ignorance of what religion means to his enemies makes it impossible for Oedipus to comprehend the ambitions of the oracle or the psychological motives and abilities of a man like Teiresias. Because of this ignorance, the effect of personal inclination on *their* judgement (for example, the inclination to see religion primarily as an instrument of power) plays an important part in Oedipus' acceptance of their interpretation of his character. Because we cannot always know the motives of those in response to whom we must fashion our lives, an element of disorder is built into the very nature of character.

Second, artistic genres themselves are life-defining forms, and therefore an expression of our need to give shape to our lives. The significance of genre for the representation of character, especially when such representation is subtle and penetrating, cannot be divorced from the importance of art as an experience. Powerful representations of reflective life are possible only because the need to understand life is itself essential to us as reflective beings. By giving us a vision of life an artistic genre fulfils its basic function as a life-defining form. However, it is obvious that genres and their use are not equally profound; often art persuades us to think and feel in ways that accord not with genuine understanding, but with how we prefer to think and feel.

Nonetheless, as I have shown, a complex use of genre can be the basis for a true representation of reflective life in action. The opposition of genres in *Oedipus* enables the dramatist to illuminate the nature of life-defining forms. This is possible because Sophocles uses the riddle in a way that challenges the tendency of tragedy to represent character as relatively stable and transparent. The characterization of Oedipus in particular explores the dependence of judgement and understanding upon personal inclination, and we have seen that such dependence is both fundamental to reflective life and potentially unsettling to our normal assumptions about the possession of moral qualities. We can conclude from this argument that, rather than being simply a medium for the creation of revelatory resemblances, genre is an instrument of analytical thought.

Chapter 2

The portrayal of reflective life in action in poetry: Shakespeare's dramatization of the poet in Sonnets 1–126

In the sonnets of Shakespeare we can find another approach to art as a form of analytical thought, and a close examination of some of these poems will enrich our sense of the ways in which literature is able to represent reflective life in accordance with *its* form. In the interests of giving a definite shape and purpose to this examination, the sonnets in question have been chosen from those that are addressed to the young man (that is, from within the sequence 1–126). It is generally understood that this aristocratic subject of the sonnets is also their patron, and that they were originally intended for the entertainment of a circle that included other poets with whom Shakespeare would have had to compete. However, it is reasonable to suppose that he was easily capable of satisfying the demands of competition, while exercising an altogether more serious purpose that could only be fulfilled in revision. Thus, we can discover in the sonnets a profound enquiry into the nature of poetry as the representation of reflective life in action. It is evident that Shakespeare's own position in relation to the young man is, at least, an inspiration for the general features of the sequence. But beyond this inclusion of personal experience in the work, certain of the poems can also be seen as the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent the world to which he belongs and this transforms the underlying purpose of the sequence. As we will see, the dramatization of artistic activity itself can affect our understanding of art as a way of representing reflective life.

It is significant, therefore, that the sequence is introduced by two sonnets in which the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent life is central to their meaning. Thus, when Sonnets 1 and 3 are read with such dramatization in mind it becomes clear that they have been conceived as a pair.

Sonnet 1
From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the riper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding:
  Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
  To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

Sonnets 1 and 3 share the same principle of organization, in that these sonnets can be understood as being spoken by two personae, contrasting voices which implicitly act both against and in co-operation with each other. This is what makes it possible for these pieces to dramatize a poet's attempt to represent life. In order to appreciate how this is done, and how the same words can be uttered similtaneously by different voices, we must recognize from the outset that their meaning depends upon the employment of polysemous language running through the entire poem, which is evinced in such elements as wordplay, syntax and various kinds of allusion.

The dominant persona resembles a practical moral philosopher in the style of Montaigne and Erasmus, whose role is to guide us in our reflections on how to live and evaluate the things that are important to life. Erasmus' writings include ideas that are very close to those of Shakespeare's persona, who assumes the place of a mentor in relation to the poet's young patron (see 'Epistle to persuade a young man to marriage'). It is significant also that Shakespeare's humanist mentor represents a modern attitude to his vocation; the important elements of his thinking are not connected to each other in accordance with an established philosophical (or theological) system, but

are put together experimentally and rely as much upon poetic sensitivity as upon strictly logical argument. His inclination to use this method in order to establish the value of things can be seen in the opening quatrain of the first sonnet, where eternal values of beauty are tied into a scientific conception of inherited characteristics and the processes of nature. Hence, what we desire from 'fairest creatures' is regarded by this persona as being a true reflection of relations between our experience of life and the natural world to which our lives belong. Thus he sees the continuation of our species as dependent upon the further generation of beauty by those who are most beautiful. This experimental line of thought is powerfully developed in line 4, where the phrase 'might bear his memory' is highly suggestive in relation to our experience of life. Along with the primary sense that an heir might possess the features of a parent, the phrase incorporates the idea that memory itself is transferred from one generation to the next, and that, therefore, the capacity to sustain a life that is valued and the continuation of beauty are intimately connected. In other words, civilization depends upon the preservation of memory, and this depends upon the regeneration of beauty.

Turning, in the second quatrain, from general reflection to the individual whose character he wishes to reform, the mentor persona indicates the precise nature of his critical purpose. The young man is 'contracted' to his own bright eyes in behaving according to the natural laws that govern our emotional development, but also, self-defeatingly, because his vision is narrowly and narcissistically centred upon himself. Preoccupation with his own beauty leads him away from its true purpose and into a distracted self-aggrandisement (line 6). In the voice of the mentor these lines intend to make the young man aware of the larger world to which his qualities also belong, and to which he has a serious moral responsibility. This argument is reinforced, in lines 7 and 8, by uniting the idea of a procreative famine with that of unconsciously harming oneself, in the sense that failure to take an appropriate sexual interest in others is a form of moral failure that rebounds upon the person concerned. Thus the octave sketches out a general argument and indicates the ways in which it can be applied to the situation of the young man, while preserving an air of balance and authority in the mentor himself.

In the sestet, where the mentor seeks more directly and personally to exert his authority, the sense of balance is rather less secure, as the more he attempts to make his influence felt the more aware he becomes of the intractability of his pupil. This is already betrayed in lines 9 and 10, where the eulogy reflected in 'fairest creatures', 'beauty's rose', 'thine own bright eyes' and 'thy sweet self' is suddenly qualified by 'fresh ornament' and 'gaudy spring'. Here the beauty

and vitality of nature are tarnished by suggestions of artifice and ostentation, and the young man's narcissism appears to be something less innocent than a natural expression of adolescent development. The tone is increasingly severe in lines 11 and 12, in which self-absorbed eroticism is seen as interfering with the fruition of natural processes. Burying one's 'content' unites the ideas of personal happiness and genetic material, as being withheld in opposition to the budding of the person and regeneration of the community. In line 12, where 'tender churl' suggests a resistance to reason and authority that is familiar in the young and 'niggarding' stands out as an uncharacteristic choice of words for the humanist mentor, this persona becomes decidedly insecure. From his initial stance as a generous and speculative mind at the beginning of the poem he has dwindled into an irascible schoolmaster, the word 'niggarding' uniting meanness with a playground expression for playing with oneself. The closing couplet is fittingly blunt and aphoristic, summarizing the ideas that have been developed in the preceding lines. In this light 'Pity the world' is a way of exhorting the young man to attend to the world and consider his responsibility to it. The word 'glutton' expands upon the sexual meaning implied in 'niggarding', while the closing phrase associates line 11 with the grave, in the sense that not having children is to join with death in the obliteration of a personal contribution to life.

The other persona is much less obvious, and might be described as an antagonist to the mentor's protagonist, making his presence felt only in the play of language and allusion that has already been mentioned. This is the figure of the court jester, or fool, whose shadowy existence in the poem is in keeping with his nebulous character, nebula being a name for him that indicated his lack of social standing and power. However, the dependence of the fool upon a monarch or wealthy noble often meant that he shared with his master a license to use the language without regard for decorum. Thus the nebulous character of the fool and his freedom of speech are central to the poem's opposition of personae, as the humanist mentor is quietly mocked in his own words. The fool does this by imposing a crudely physical construction upon language that tends to be abstract and metaphorical, and this is evident in the opening line. When considered in isolation 'increase' appears to be quite innocent, but acquires a further meaning in the context of the octave as a whole. The physical construction that can be put upon lines 5 and 6 is not very difficult to detect. As 'thou' may refer both to the person and his penis, the opposition of 'contracted' and 'self-substantial' suggests the physical process of erection, while 'thine own bright eyes' denotes not only beauty but also desire. Line 7 indicates the outcome of this desire (making a famine

where abundance lies is 'th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame'), and 'to thy sweet self too cruel' is an elaborate way of saying self-abuse. In terms of these puns and allusive shifts of meaning, we do desire increase from the fairest creatures, in the sense that without proper basic functioning the organism cannot reproduce, or obtain sexual pleasure. However, in proximity to the lofty speculations of the humanist mentor, these ideas are perilously comic, and threaten the dignity of his purpose.

In relation to the fool's shadowy reinterpretation of his opposite in the poem, the transition from octave to sestet employs a skilful displacement that is closely associated with the change of tone already observed in the language of the humanist mentor. Where, in the octave, the latter is concerned with matters of spirit, and is constrained by common sense to acknowledge the body in the second part of the sonnet, the fool begins by taking a full-blooded interest in the body, which in the sestet becomes exaggerated and grotesque. We have seen that 'fresh ornament' and 'gaudy spring' denote for the mentor persona an unwelcome interest in artifice and display. For the fool, this narcissism is subjected to wordplay that is more forthrightly pathological. This depends upon punning on a key word, for 'bud' can refer not only to the growing point of a plant but also to a small, rounded part in human anatomy, as in taste bud. The fool combines these two senses to allude to the anus, which can be seen as a botanical bud in reverse, being associated not with growth but with waste. This wordplay, of course, reinterprets the narcissism of the young man, as both a fantasy of physical self-love and a metaphor for wasting his essence within himself; 'niggarding' is now given the wider conotation of any sexual activity that is diverted from its natural purpose. Moreover, excess is more brutally implied in the fool's use of 'tender churl', which can be referred to the condition of the 'self' in question when it has been continually abused. To complete this pattern of reinterpretation, the fool also gives another sense to the couplet, for the phrase 'by the grave and thee' can be read as meaning alongside the grave and thee. In other words, the fantasy of physical self-love is lying with oneself and death at the same time, which is a decidedly harsher interpretation of the young man's narcissism than that of the mentor persona's admonition.

In order to interpret with appropriate care the significance of Shakespeare's use of opposing personae, we should ward off the temptation to see the fool too simply, as nothing more than a device for the ironical disposal of all that the humanist mentor has to offer. In the first place it is the mentor who presents the argument while the fool merely reframes that argument for his own purpose, and, in addition to this, the difference between the two is not

very great, and does not amount to a deep disagreement. Rather, the fool's reinterpretation is more akin to a distorted echo that provides, with unerring consistency, a kind of psychological realism to the optimistic aspirations of the mentor. This opposition of personae dramatizes the poet's attempt to represent life, as the ridicule is aimed at the effect of personal inclination upon the mentor's thought. Both as a moral guide and as a philosopher he pursues a sensitive and imaginative line of thought that is at once fruitful and biased by his own values, especially with respect to moral and intellectual development. Like any other moral guidance of this kind, the mentor's thought obscures certain possibilities and assumes immunity from dissent. It merely acknowledges the threat of what can be known from everyday experience (in this case, for example, that young men are excessively given to sexual activity in private). Thus the psychological realism of the fool, whose perception is also affected by personal inclination, exposes the humanist mentor to what may be obscured. In this respect, he also mocks what the mentor imagines himself to be doing for the young man.

A fundamental difference of attitude between the two personae can be found in what might be regarded as the strongest and most distinctive insight in each. We have already noted the suggestive way in which line 4, in the voice of the humanist mentor, associates procreation with the regenerative mechanisms of civilization, and this idea is integrated with the conception of intellectual growth and freedom in his argument as a whole. The antagonistic response argues that the essence of civilization cannot be divorced from the use that we make of beauty for our own ends, regardless of its regenerative value. The significance of the fool's inclination to turn youthful narcissism into grotesque and fantastic forms lies in his powerful sense of what is obscured by the mentor's strongest fear, namely that human qualities can often be debased by the irresistible need to make use of them for our own benefit. Just as the mentor's thought is carried through to the end of the sonnet, so the fool completes his opposition to the 'enlightened' conception of the life to which they belong in the severity of his reinterpretation of the closing phrase.

However, we can also see that behind this contrast there is some degree of unanimity in the attitudes of these personae. This is clear in the aspects of the poem which, to a large extent unavoidably, they share. For example, there are strikingly different uses of internal rhyme in lines 4 and 12: the use of sounds and how they are spaced, in the former, creating a strong feeling of freedom and forward movement ('heir might bear'), while in line 12 the sounds are squashed together in keeping with the spiritual constriction they describe ('mak'st waste'). The connection between these lines is signalled

by their different employment of the word 'tender': 'tender heir' uses this word to suggest the sense of renewal and the physically and psychologically sensitive growth of the organism, while 'tender churl' refers – in one case sympathetically and in the other dispassionately – to the coarse immaturity of youth. Similarly, the phrases in the couplet fall decisively into place, in contrast with the subtly varied flow of the quatrains and their shaded responsiveness. In these phrases the fool does not challenge the mentor's speech, but develops it in keeping with his own character.

Therefore, in exposing the thought of the mentor to the subtle distortions of his adversary, this sonnet throws light upon the nature of self-knowledge and our understanding of human experience. Shakespeare's use of an antagonism concealed within the very words that are employed by the humanist mentor can be seen as the dramatization of a poet's attempt to enlighten and inform, and thereby to assume a socially important role in his society. There is a clear affinity between the analytical thought employed here and Sophocles' use of opposing genres in *Oedipus*. In both cases a genre is challenged from within the work, in a way that enables the reader to see into the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding.

Before turning to Sonnet 3, I should comment on the controversial nature of this interpretation of the sonnets in relation to what we know of their composition. It may seem unlikely that such a potentially offensive work should be written and presented to an aristocratic patron in the setting of a shared circle of friends and acquaintances. Since very little is known about the circumstances of its original presentation we can only guess at the degree to which the vigorous exercise of wit might have strayed into playful aggression, and at how much of the subtleties of the sonnets could be grasped by their audience. However, far more significant is the fact that the sequence as a whole was published long after the poems were first conceived, in the case of Sonnets 1 and 3 some fourteen years later. This means that they could have been rewritten and extensively revised, as their complexity strongly suggests they were, and that the published work might bear only a partial resemblance to what was presented by the poet to his patron and their circle. Moreover, it is possible that, in the process of developing the poems in accordance with his serious purposes, Shakespeare found it necessary to remove any signs of his patron's identity; this would help to explain why a number of sonnets that immortalize the young man leave us in the dark as to who is being immortalized.

Sonnet 3

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest
Now is the time that face should form another,
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.
For where is she so fair whose uneared womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond will be the tomb
Of his self-love to stop posterity?
Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime;
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
    But if thou live remembered not to be,
    Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

The emergence of these lines from the opening sonnet is suggested, at the outset, by their appearing to respond to the line, 'But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes'. The opening quatrain of Sonnet 3 turns the imagery and instrument of the young man's obsession against him, by challenging him to use the mirror as an aid to moral self-examination. Here, the speculative argument that he should change his life by marriage and procreation has become an injunction that is justified by an explicit appeal to moral responsibility (lines 3–4). Also, the greater directness conveyed in these lines is accompanied by a greater sense of intimacy, particularly in the use of 'beguile' which combines censure with awareness of the young man's natural charm and its power. The censure, in Sonnet 1, that to ignore the world is to 'eat the world's due' is here extended by implying that the young man uses his personal qualities in order to deceive; these qualities possess their value by virtue of the part they play in our common existence, and to use them purely for oneself is to enhance what is 'self-substantial' by denying them to others. This mixture of deepening censure with recognition of physical attraction is intensified in the following quatrain, where both the assumption of moral seriousness and the nobility of the human subject are characterized in elevated language. Thus, in making the connection between narcissism and deception, the mentor is careful to moderate his tone by means of flattery, and this enables him to complete the first section of the poem by declaring a dramatic alternative for the young man, between conformity to the laws of nature and society and a barren end to his involvement in life.

The sense of intimacy is increased in the sestet, where the abstract argument of the octave is translated into terms of personal experience. The quatrain assumes that the young man will respond to the advice he is given and follow in the pattern of behaviour and feeling established for him by his mother, and the couplet delivers a sharp warning of what will ensue if he ignores this advice. The flattering rhetoric of the sestet gives a lyrical quality to the intimacy of the third quatrain, in which the natural cycles of renewal are related to personal experience in a way that is consolingly benign. The imagery of 'lovely April of her prime' and 'this thy golden time' create, within the rhythm of this quatrain, a swell of optimistic feeling in the face of natural decline, in which physical regeneration is presented as an experience of spiritual renewal. Conversely, the couplet abruptly reverts to the minimal truth of our physical reality, by equating a single life with the mere annihilation of 'thine image'. What appears in 'thy glass' is reduced to an image that is stripped of the humanity that lies within it, the humanity that is called upon, in the octave, to respond to the demand for moral self-examination.

Within the rhetorical sophistication of the mentor's argument there are indications of another conflict that is taking place in this sonnet. For, in contrast with Sonnet 1, where the voice of the fool makes itself heard as a distorting echo of which the dominant persona is unaware, here there seems to be a deliberate effort to escape from the intervention, as though the mentor had, on reflection, become conscious of the subversive echo and resolved to exclude it. Such a dramatic possibility is suggested by the different ways in which the fool enters these poems: in Sonnet 1 he insinuates himself most purposefully at those moments when the dominant persona is himself most critical of the young man, and this softens the conflict between these personae (as in the second quatrain and in lines 11–12). In Sonnet 3, the mentor persona adopts a strategy to exclude the fool and therefore the latter is constrained to act against the flow of the writing in order to make his presence known. For this reason his appearance is less predictable and more ingenious. Thus, the elevated language of the octave, in particular the images of 'uneared womb' and 'tillage of thy husbandry', appears both as ingratiating to the young man and as a form of diction that is safe from the intervention of the fool. It is an expression of wit in the poem, and of the ingenuity of the fool, that this strategy itself becomes implicated in the target of satire in the lines that follow. Recalling the ambiguous imagery in Sonnet 1, the fool again transforms self-love into physical self-love, by the use of 'stop' to turn posterity into posterior, alluding to the sense in which a bottle is stopped by a cork. The effect of this is even more subversive because it disarms the mentor while directing

a more personal attack upon his obsequious mode of address. According to this reading 'tomb' in line 7 is anal, in opposition to 'womb', implying a contrast between being joined with life and being joined with death, while 'fond' acquires a sense that is closer than usual to madness.

The dramatic subtlety of this conflict within the language of Sonnet 3 can also be seen as a development of Shakespeare's use of the antagonist to dramatize the humanist mentor's understanding of life. For the latter is represented as assuming a greater intimacy in his address to the young man, and, correspondingly, the fool is more bitingly personal in his ridicule of ideas and attitudes that are created by personal inclination. Moreover, it is an important element in his satire that he should be forced to bend and twist the language in order to counter the strategy of his wary opponent. In conformity with his play upon 'posterity', he forces the grammar in 'self-love to stop', both in the use of the verb (love to stop instead of love of stopping) and in the ellipsis of 'self-love', which conflates love to stop with self-oriented love. It is the essence of this dramatic interaction that, in response to being excluded, the fool should take possession of his freedom with the language. However, having wrestled his way into the poem, he is able to assert himself more easily in the sestet, where language and idea play into the fool's alternative view. Contrary to the optimistic association of the young man's future with his mother's experience of life, the fool assumes that the mentor's advice will be ignored. Thus, 'windows of thine age' is understood not simply as an opening through which the past can be seen, but also as a barrier to that past; and 'Despite of wrinkles' alludes to the anguish of age as it looks back on the 'golden time' of youth.

The fool's nihilistic perception of the young man's narcissism implies that refusal to share one's youth carries with it a bitter sense of loss and isolation when youth has passed. This tendency is expressed with even greater emphasis in the closing line of the sonnet, where the idea of deviation from what is sexually natural is united again with the idea of spiritual death. Here the fool is making a familiar Elizabethan pun on 'die', while 'thine image' echoes the opening phrase of the poem, and therefore envisages the young man engaged in the fantasy of lines 7–8 before a mirror. The phrase 'thine image dies with thee' implies that his orgasm is enjoyed with a bodiless reflection of himself, as opposed to a woman who 'dies' with him, and its spiritual emptiness is intensified by another way in which the line can be read. Because 'with' is reversible, 'thine image' can die when 'thee' dies, or 'thee' can die when 'thine image' dies. So, when we interpret the line to mean that the young man will himself die when his image (appearance) dies, the fool is saying that when

the beauty of Narcissus fades so too will the sole object of his love. Hence his capacity for feeling will also wither away as his appearance changes, and he will die inwardly.

When we compare the opposition between the mentor and the fool in Sonnets 1 and 3 there is an undeniable widening of the difference in tone and attitude in the latter poem. The foregoing analysis shows that the difference is created dramatically; the mentor's attempt to shake off the fool by assuming an elevated language is thwarted by feats of verbal ingenuity. This conflict within the language of Sonnet 3 is not merely a clever way of varying the approach to similar material on Shakespeare's part, for the dramatic interaction which it serves is a significant development of the underlying dramatization of the poet's attempt to represent the life to which he belongs. Where, in the first sonnet, the innocent mentor is shadowed by unseen mockery, his strategy for defending himself, in Sonnet 3, provokes the fool into exaggerating the difference between them. We can feel a much greater severity in the satirical treatment of the humanist persona, and in the fool's bleak characterization of the young man. This develops the dramatization of judgement and understanding by showing the influence upon our thinking of social status not only in the mentor but also in the fool. As a figure of indefinite status (a 'nebula'), the fool is hypersensitive to exclusion, especially as a victim of social aspiration in others, and so the attitude of the mentor awakens a hostile reaction. And since the fool's involvement in the poem has been initiated in this way, his characterization of the young man is no less qualified by personal inclination than that of the mentor.

Those sonnets which dramatize the poet's attempt to represent the world, and to understand the life to which he belongs, do not conform to one pattern of dramatic relations. The possibilities that have already been created by the opposition of mentor and fool are exploited in yet another way in Sonnet 5. Here the mentor's address to the young man is supported by a third persona, an aesthetician, and they form an alliance in order to silence the fool.

Sonnet 5

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,
Will play the tyrants to the very same,
And that un-fair which fairly doth excel:
For never-resting Time leads summer on
To hideous winter, and confounds him there,
Sap checked with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,
Beauty o'ersnow'd and bareness everywhere:

Then, were not summer's distillation left
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.
    But flowers distilled, though they with winter meet,
    Lose but their show; their substance still lives sweet.

This allegory of time could hardly be more different from Sonnet 3, both in its deceptively simple structure and in the impersonality of its address. As a means of disarming the fool it is highly effective, for not only does it remove the tone of intimacy that exposes the mentor to ridicule, but its brief suggestion of personal approval is so non-specific that it can be taken as a generalization, referring to the gaze of any lovely person. Its connection with the young man to whom the sequence is addressed is not properly made until we reach the following sonnet (6), which expresses further thoughts upon the themes of marriage and procreation. And so, apart from its evasion of the fool, the place of Sonnet 5 in the sequence lies in its abstract reflection upon the senses in which beauty's rose might never die. In this respect the sonnet dramatizes the purpose of the humanist mentor, as he tries to establish an intellectual grounding for his advice to the young man.

Hence the language of this sonnet should not be seen as simply metaphorical; here such literary devices as allegory and personification, as well as allusion and metaphor, are used analytically in order to represent such phenomena as time, physical change, permanence and art. Also, it is essential to its purpose that this sonnet does not present a self-sufficient theory concerning these phenomena, but a dramatization of the attempt to understand them, and therefore, in keeping with the sequence as a whole, portrays reflective life in action. In this context it is the nature of the phenomena that makes the mentor's use of literary language appropriate. For it is clear that he is not engaged in a purely scientific enquiry, and so does not make use of concepts that are intended for the analysis of physical relations which exist independently of human experience. The question of how beauty can be seen to exist and survive is not simply a matter of understanding physical relations, but also involves the nature of our response to the world – to its value and significance.

In order to clarify the relations between figurative language and analytical reflection in this poem, we can begin by analysing the contrast of language between the octave and sestet. The former begins with an allegory in which time is personified at first as hours that frame with 'gentle work' an object

of delicate beauty, and then as tyrants that undo this work and reduce it to 'bareness everywhere'; while the seasons represent youth and decline. The sestet takes the idea of summer as the representation of youth, and develops it, through the idea of perfume that is distilled from the petals of flowers, into an analogy for the biological process by means of which human characteristics – and therefore personal beauty – are perpetuated and recalled. Woven into this allegory, in lines 10 and 14, is an allusion to art as another means by which beauty is recovered and sustained in opposition to natural processes.

This outline of the poetic language implies an interaction between figurative and analytical elements in the poem. Because time is seen to reveal its essence in our experience of it the personification is more than simply figurative, rather this acts as a means for the analysis of time itself. Our sense of its working with painstaking subtlety within the growth of a beautiful individual is one way in which time can be grasped, and this is continuous with a sense of our confusion and incomprehension when the moment of perfection is torn away and time assumes another 'person'. In this respect, time is even represented as morally ambiguous, as 'un-fair' and 'fairly' (line 4) place the ideas of blemish and injustice against those of beauty and worthiness. The possibility that time can be unjust is then reflected upon in lines 5–6, where 'leads' means both deception (as in leading us on) and blindness, suggesting that we are unable to evaluate the purposes of time since we do not see it in action. Being absorbed in our purposes, we can only observe its effect. Both senses are also present in 'confounds', and this word can also be linked with the sestet in so far as the confounding provokes an intellectual response. This provocation of thought by the evanescence of what we value, touching upon the moral purpose of the mentor, belongs to the dramatization of his attempt to understand and interpret life. Despite the inevitable uncertainty of this task, his intellectual energy, driven by poetic language, places him beyond the resources of the fool.

In the sestet, the idea of distillation implies more than a metaphorical association between the production of perfume from flowers and the biological transmission of personal characteristics. For while it is obvious that the theory is highly speculative, this imagery continues the analytical examination in the octave, developing the analysis of time in relation to a conception of the world in which beauty perishes and is renewed. Moreover, just as the limitations upon his vision are acknowledged in the octave, so in the sestet the image of a 'liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass' suggests that in essence the object of his speculation is hidden impenetrably within a medium that is resistant to our intuitions and imagination. In this respect 'pent in walls

of glass' exposes the idea of distillation as a means of transmitting biological characteristics, without affecting the sense of analytical purpose to which it gives expression. However, this tension within the texture of the sonnet is characteristic of its purpose, as the urgency reflects intellectual difficulty. This is made more relevant by his strong conclusion, in the couplet, where 'show' refers to the action of showing, as in the moment in which flowers bloom, and, referring to the underlying biological substance, 'still' plays on the idea of distillation.

The collaborative persona in Sonnet 5 can be identified with an aesthetician, as the mentor's thought is enriched by a Neo-Platonic pattern of ideas which create an alternative but complementary conception of how, in the life of a civilization, beauty is sustained and preserved in spite of the operations of 'never-resting' time. This alternative reading is not a re-reading of the poem but a matter of allusive touches, intended to harmonize the thinking of the two personae. Thus, the second line can be read so that the phrase 'where every eye doth dwell', which refers to the universal attraction of the lovely gaze, in the sense that our eyes dwell upon a beautiful object, also implies a Platonic conception of how every eye might dwell within the lovely gaze. The universal attraction of the gaze is caused by the relationship of every eye to an Idea, to which the 'lovely gaze' is the closest approximation in our experience. In this sense 'every eye' is a synecdoche for personal beauty, and dwells within the 'lovely gaze' by being further away from the ideal Form of Beauty. In line 4, it is even clearer that this allusion extends the argument of the mentor, for the phrase 'which fairly doth excel' acquires added force from the association of personal beauty with transcendental forms. Because the lovely gaze excels in fairness by expressing the Form of Beauty itself, its being 'un-faired' seems all the more unjust.

The pattern into which this Neo-Platonic thinking occurs, as an expression of the ideas of an aesthetician, is given focus by an allusion in line 10, which can be grasped with the help of a little reconstruction that appears to be invited by the words. In this connection 'pent' can be taken as 'paint', for the word 'glass' also means 'glaze', and therefore 'a liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass' can be read as 'a liquid prisoner, paint in walls of glaze': in other words, a painted image confined and preserved within coats of varnish. Here, of course, it is the lovely gaze, so delicate and evanescent in life, which is captured and given some permanence by the skill and imagination of the artist; this could be considered the effect, for example, of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* or Rembrandt's *A Girl at a Window* (1645). Again we can appreciate how the ideas of the aesthetician augment those of the mentor, for, without the painter, the

distinctive expression of physical beauty in the individual cannot withstand the effects of change, and so the image he creates is a visible counterpart of the hidden process of regeneration. Finally, the painter's 'distillation' of beauty from appearances is associated with Neo-Platonism in the closing line, where the phrase 'their substance still lives sweet' unites the transient beauty of the individual with the underlying Form of Beauty. This implies that the resistance of the still image to time is both a means of enabling us to keep the transient beauty alive, and a means of penetrating appearances to glimpse the Idea that sustains them. Here, 'substance' means both the essential nature of the thing and the reality that lies behind appearance.

As an enquiry into ideas that might form the basis for the mentor's guidance, Sonnet 5 is a powerful representation of the union of abstract ideas concerning time, art and the processes of nature. As the dramatization of intellectual activity this depends upon the poem's use of a richly figurative language that works as a form of descriptive analysis. Thus, in an essay unaffected by the element of dramatization, figurative language would not have the same functional purpose, even though it may contribute to the author's rhetorical intentions, in terms of style and ornament, and feeling. In order to appreciate the necessity for Shakespeare's richly figurative language in Sonnet 5, and in the sequence as a whole, we should recognize his dependence upon such language for the double meaning by which he can represent reflective life in action.

For example, when simply considering the mentor, the double meaning noticed in lines 5–6, which contrasts the ideas of deceptively leading someone on and of leading the blind, conveys different ideas which may both be in the mind of the speaker; this dramatizes the mentor's attempt to see into the hidden powers of nature that determine changes in time. Dramatization of this kind, where the alternatives arise half-consciously, can only be expressed in a language that is figurative in character. Similarly, the transition from octave to sestet turns on the image of summer's distillation, which shifts our attention from the allegory of time in the former to the image of perfume as a counterpart to the biology of reproduction. This imagery shows us the mentor using language to create significant connections.

A similar double meaning is expressed by the aesthetician in this poem, and is also present in the relationship between the two personae. The latter is evident in the opening line, which clearly describes the process of growth in language that could easily be related to the artist's attentive care for his work in framing the image. Here the double meaning can be seen as inviting the aesthetician into the creation of the poem, for the next line reveals him as fully present, in the Neo-Platonic allusion that represents his essential ideas.

His appearance in line 10, which evokes painting as the visible counterpart of the humanist's idea of regeneration, is a further example in which thought is suggested by the possibilities of figurative language. The science of human biology does not immediately suggest how beauty's rose might never die, and therefore the aesthetician seizes the language of line 10 and gives it his own Neo-Platonic slant. While this sympathy between the two personae may also be seen as a way of excluding the fool, Sonnet 5 is both abstract in relation to the young man who is at the heart of the sequence and highly speculative in its philosophical conjecture. The fool is victorious, at least, in making it very difficult for the mentor to assume the directness and intimacy that are sought in Sonnets 1 and 3. Clearly, the Neo-Platonic theory is not stated by the poem, and therefore does not express the ideas of Shakespeare, the author of the sequence. Rather the theory belongs to a dramatized collaboration between the personae concerned and this provides another way in which reflective life is powerfully represented in accordance with its form.

The opening seventeen sonnets give the humanist mentor ample opportunity to pursue his purpose in advising the young man in relation to his future, and this purpose is largely unimpeded by other personae. However, it is in the sonnets shaped by the opposition and interplay of personae that the sequence is richest in its dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent life. In this connection the second phase, particularly in Sonnets 18 and 20, reintroduces the opposition with which we are concerned.

Sonnet 18
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
    So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

In this poem we meet a more familiar persona, that of the love poet immortalizing his subject in 'eternal lines to time'. So we can ascribe these lines to the 'poet' in another persona, who is addressing the same young man of the earlier sonnets, and giving another character to their relationship as poet and patron. Moreover, unlike the antagonistic opposition created by the fool in Sonnets 1 and 3, here the opposition between the love poet and his antagonist is muted and subtle, for though the second persona bears some resemblance to the fool, the personae in Sonnet 18 are much more akin to two contrasted 'voices' within the same divided individual. The transformation from humanist mentor, whose concern is avowedly disinterested and intellectually detached, to love poet impelled by his own artistic ambition and the fascination of his subject, can itself be seen as an aspect of the dramatization. Above all it draws our attention to the fragility of the personae that represent the 'poet' who attempts to interpret and understand his life. Thus, we can distinguish, in Sonnet 18, between the love poet, who frames his material in accordance with well-known conventions, and a sceptic who is able to reorganize the meaning of the poem from within, and satirize its deference to convention and the general instability of its conception.

The opposition of personae in this poem is established by means of a double meaning in the opening line. For 'compare' means both to measure one thing against another and to liken one thing to another; this contrast makes it possible for the poem to be read in one way as expressed by the love poet, and in another as expressed by the sceptic. Initially, the poem lures us into reading it simply in accordance with the intentions of the former, by making the comparison a matter of measuring one thing against another; and emphasizes the employment of a conventional trope by expressing it in the form of question and answer. The logic of this reading is continued in a series of images that qualify the beauty of a summer's day, and thereby enhance the sense in which the subject of the poem is more lovely and more temperate. Though a summer's day can be lovely and temperate it is preceded by the rough winds of May, and overshadowed by our awareness of its brevity; the heat of summer can be oppressive and its skies are often overcast and gloomy.

At this point, in line 7, the speaker appears to lose control of his argument, and the initial intention is oddly compromised. For 'every fair from fair sometime declines' deserts the logic of the love poet's comparison between the subject and a summer's day and simply observes that all beautiful things must lose their beauty in time. Needless to say this applies equally to the young man. The reason for this loss of footing lies in an unresolved complication in the thinking of the speaker; for at the turning of the poem there is a change of

tack from the simple comparison of the octave to a different kind of measure in the sestet, and lines 7 and 8 prepare the reader for this change. By sleight of hand we move from the idea that the young man is superior in ordinary (temporal) qualities to the idea of a superiority that is created by means of poetic language. In doing this, the love poet elevates his subject in two quite different ways, both of which are necessary to his purpose, but do not really fit together. For the ordinary qualities that give the young man his 'virtue' remain subject to decay, and the 'eternal summer' of its celebration in the poem can only be a recollection of this virtue. The point is made obliquely in the couplet, in which the affirmation of the closing line is implicitly contradicted by the sense, in line 13, in which the poet is unable to give life to his subject (once he is dead nothing will enable him to breathe or see).

A more general sense in which the speaker appears to be having it both ways is suggested in the play of irony of which these details are an expression. For the lyrical opening and its overt intention to celebrate the worthiness of its subject prepare the reader for an extended eulogy upon the virtues of the young man, only for it to digress almost immediately into a reflection upon the flaws in a summer's day. Then the shift of emphasis, from the qualities of the subject to the virtues of the poet by whom the subject is immortalized, plays mischievously with the convention upon which the poem depends for its meaning. This ambivalence in the purpose of the love poet gives him some affinity to the sceptic, and can be seen as drawing him in, in order to enrich and develop the subversive intention.

An elucidation of this aspect of the poem, for which 'compare' means to liken one thing to another, proceeds from an alternative reading of the second line: namely, thou art (like the summer) more lovely and more temperate than in the past (your turbulent spring), and in the future (your wintry decline); this interpretation being inferred in lines 3 and 4. In this reading of the poem, the imagery announced in the opening line is not intended as a contrast, but as an extended metaphor showing different ways in which the phenomena can be likened to one another. Accordingly the second quatrain, which is unstable in the love poet's address and betrays a lack of control over the material, acquires both concentration and solidity, and restores a sense of purpose to the structure of the octave. In lines 5 and 6 the young man is likened to the sun, both in the sense that he is a centre of attraction to the many satellites that orbit around him, and in the sense that he may be seen as a source of light to them. The imagery (eye of heaven) also suggests that he is god-like, and therefore that a spiritual significance is given to his value as a source of light. However, the sceptic makes this resemblance only in order

to convey dissent, for the qualified praise of the opening is now followed by more critical observations.

Our grasp of the meaning of the poem as a whole makes it clear that the subject of the poem is 'sometime too hot' in a sexual sense, and therefore that his 'gold complexion' is often 'dimmed' by careless promiscuity, the word complexion referring not only to his appearance but also to his nature. The logic of this reading is confirmed in lines 7 and 8; 'every fair from fair' alludes to the line of descent that is a familiar theme of the sequence, beauty being passed from one generation to the next. Significantly, however, there is occasionally a failure in the process of transmission, by accident or by natural causes – such as an inappropriate pairing ('nature's changing course'). The form of beauty in which the young man is seen to fail is that of character, the euphemism 'sometime too hot' being sardonically echoed in 'every fair from fair sometime declines', and this is accentuated by the rhyme (shines/declines). The sceptic insinuates that those who are favoured by beauty 'sometime' decline to *be* fair to others, and explain their moral failure by the force of a sudden attraction ('chance') or a change in one's natural affections ('nature's changing course'). Hence the sceptic suggests that the love poet deliberately overlooks an important aspect of the young man's character, and at the same time casts doubt on the idealism of love poetry as a genre.

In the sestet, a reorientation of the central metaphor, from 'summer's day' to 'thy eternal summer', continues the sceptic's alternative perception of the subject by effectively reversing the intentions of the love poet. For 'eternal summer' can mean simply the recollection of your person in this enduring verse, while 'that fair thou ow'st' can refer both to physical beauty that is passing and to the scant moral beauty that is more lastingly engrained in your character. Lines 11 and 12, moreover, refer to the excesses alluded to in the octave, the image of enfeebled dependence, wandering in death's shade (shadow), being 'overcome' by a sexual vitality ('thou grow'st') that is ironically 'shadowed' in the poem's 'eternal lines to time' (the vitality of youth living on only in the sense that it is recorded by the poem).

Thus, when the comparison between the young man and a summer's day is interpreted as an extended metaphor, the idea that he is immortalized is replaced by the idea that this unflattering portrayal, which owes its vitality to the genius of the poet, will long outlast its subject. Accordingly, 'this gives life to thee', in the couplet, means not immortality but verisimilitude, as when a painter brings his subject to life. Also, the love poet simply adds one thing to another, as a rhetorical embellishment, 'so long as men can breathe' being extended poetically by 'eyes can see', and 'or' fits this purpose as well

as the obvious alternative. But the sceptic uses the first idea only to correct and refine his intention, 'or' being used in the sense of providing a better alternative, one that expresses more precisely what he has in mind. For this reading, the life of the poem, in terms of both vitality and survival, depends upon the vision of its readers; in putting it so, the sceptic challenges us to look into the poem for its true meaning.

Therefore, Sonnet 18 employs an opposition of personae in which a familiar genre of love poetry, that of immortalizing the beloved, is the basis for a complex play of ideas. We cannot regard the love poet as conventionally sentimental since his own tendency to manipulate the conventions of the genre gives an unresolved ambivalence to his purpose, and his lack of decisiveness and control allows for the more cogent interventions of the sceptic. It is significant that the poem begins with a deception, by leading us to read 'compare' as simply to measure one thing against another, and ends by urging us to look into the poem and discover its meaning. Thus the poem is resolved by a double transformation of its genre, and its use of genre as an instrument of analytical thought is realized by means of a polysemous language which is masked by the initial deception. When we consider this complexity in relation to what has been expressed in the earlier sonnets in the sequence, it is clear that dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent life has been given a new direction. Not only is this the point at which the venture is led by a poet, it is also one at which the subject is not a passive recipient of advice but rather an active moral agent who expresses his freedom in unsettling ways.

This creates a tension which is betrayed both in the love poet's uncertainty and in the intense lyricism that has made this a popular sonnet. We can appreciate this intensity by observing how, in both the octave and the sestet, a clear and incisive opening gradually gives way to a feeling of complication and obscurity. Thus in lines 8 and 11–12 the syntax is complicated and slows down the verse, and a sense of freedom follows these when, in line 9 and in the couplet, there is a return to simplicity. This element in the structure of the poem reflects a web of psychological complexity involving both personae. The dependence of lyricism upon this kind of complexity also serves to emphasize the importance of the venture to the 'poet', since intoxication with his own immortalizing power cannot be divorced from the uneasiness of his attachment to its flawed subject matter.

It is against this interdependence of the love poet's mission and his emotional attachment to the subject that the sceptic delineates his alternative picture of the young man, and it is evident that this latter persona includes

some characteristics of the fool and of a disillusioned humanist mentor. The fool can be seen, for example, in the reflex transformation of nobility into obscenity in line 12 (see Sonnet 1, line 6), while a disillusioned humanist mentor is obviously present in the complication of thought that closes the octave (lines 7–8). Therefore, as in the other examples, we cannot view the opposition between personae as simply the demolition of one by the other. For all his vulnerability to the sceptic, the love poet makes a genuine attempt to respond to the demands of his métier. Correspondingly, while the detachment of the sceptic gives him a greater freedom to see the subject as he 'really' is, his viewpoint is also affected by personal inclination. His resistance to the acquiescent passion of the love poet betrays a fear of humiliation ('Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines'). As conflicting expressions of the same personality, these personae represent a sustained opposition rather than the casual overthrow of a conventional genre and its characteristic attitudes.

In Sonnet 20 the complexity of 18 is augmented in keeping with a concentrated dramatization of the poet's attempt to represent life, the most penetrating expression of this tendency in the sequence so far.

Sonnet 20
A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change as is false women's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
    But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,
    Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

Following on from 18, this sonnet possesses a degree of complication similar to that of the developments we have noted in Sonnets 1, 3 and 5. For now it emerges that the love poet assumes ideas and attitudes which were implied, in Sonnet 18, in the attitudes of the sceptic. Sonnet 20 is fundamentally concerned with the focal relationship of the sequence and its conspicuously

unconventional nature – involving as it does the composition of love poetry by one man to another – and the sceptic's thought is immediately present in the forthright portrayal of the young man as a glowing and god-like sun at the centre of their social world. In this respect the divergent and unorthodox power of the subject is celebrated by the love poet as an assertive reaction to the cool severity of the sceptic in the previous poem. We feel this in the declaration that opens the poem, and then in a cumulative expression of adulation through the octave. Hence, 'with nature's own hand painted' silences in advance any suggestion of unnaturalness in the subject, or his beauty, and this is intended to protect the love poet's interest in him. As the 'master mistress of my passion', the young man is represented in a way that is intended to remove any sense of anomaly from this term. Compared with the self-elated flight upon immortality in Sonnet 18, this eulogy is more psychologically penetrating and more serious in its artistic purpose. The subject is a mistress in the sense that he assumes the role of a mistress in poems of this genre, and the octave makes his role compatible with his being the same sex as the poet.

In Sonnet 20 the octave is distinguished by an extraordinary growth of ideas from the first to the second quatrain. Lines 3 and 4 present the young man as possessing an unusual psychological integrity, as he combines the gentleness of a woman with the stability and steadfastness that is conventionally attributed to men. This leads in the second quatrain to imagery that echoes the 'eye of heaven' in Sonnet 18; here the gentleness and stability are conflated in 'an eye more bright than theirs' that is steady like the sun and radiates light so that its object is silently and effortlessly gilded. In this way the love poet reinterprets the use of imagery made by his adversary in Sonnet 18, and the unselfconscious power that emanates from the subject is conveyed in the idea of spontaneous pleasure reflected in the faces of those upon whom he gazes (the gilded object is human). This sense of a motionless and gentle action which spellbindingly influences all of those around him is further developed in lines 7 and 8, where 'a man in hue' identifies the subject as an embodiment of form and grace, and 'all hues in his controlling' refers both inwardly to the self-mastery that enables him to govern his own expression and appearance, and outwardly to the ways in which this enables him to control the response of others. With this development another degree of complexity is suggested: he makes men feel uneasy by 'stealing' their eyes from a more appropriate embodiment of feminine beauty. But in addition to this there is a subtle psychological suggestion in 'women's souls amazeth'. This is the imagined effect upon women of a man who possesses the kind of beauty to which they

themselves might aspire, which means that the attraction of his masculine qualities as a man of hue, implying position as well as grace, is augmented by arousal of an intimate feeling about the form that is taken by beauty itself.

Thus the love poet has set in motion a complicated web of ideas over which it is increasingly difficult to sustain the simple union of gentleness and stability from which he began. The implied image of the sun is ambiguously placed between lines 5–6, where it suggests the idea of light being gently reflected by the object, and lines 7–8, in which the idea of self-possession concealing a potentially chaotic energy emerges out of an extended metaphor. The unconscious descent into instability can be seen as a preparation for the change that occurs in the sestet, where the character of the subject is given an allegorical interpretation that is derived from Ovid's story of Pygmalion.

Here the feeling of instability has spread to the mode in which the poem is conceived, and we can appreciate this all the more by contrasting the experimental investigation of Sonnet 5 with the much freer imaginings of the love poet in the sestet of this poem. By conceiving nature as a sculptor who becomes entranced by his creation and so makes an accidental addition to its form, this persona employs the resources of a poet to suggest an inexhaustible field of possibilities in the processes of creation. Just as Pygmalion cannot foresee the power that his own work will have over him, so nature generates forms in a world that is unfathomably rich, and the mistake that has been made in this case is discovered in a masculine character that is uniquely rich in feminine beauty. From the gentleness and stability of the opening quatrain the subject is now placed in a world that is psychologically turbulent and unpredictable, as a consequence of what is said and the way that it is said. This is particularly so in the necessity to represent the subject as a woman to whom a masculine feature has been added and not the other way round. In this respect the change of tense in the sestet, which continues the apologia for the gender of the 'mistress' of this love poetry, provides an explanation that only deepens the incongruity of the relationship.

For the love poet, the couplet is an exercise in verbal magic that is intended to untie the knot that his argument has created. He responds to his own concession that he has been defeated by the addition of male parts by wittily devising a separation of love into its spiritual and physical components. The phrase 'Mine be thy love' can be read so as to doubly bind the young man and the 'poet', for it means both let your love be mine, and let my love be the one that you recognize. This emphasis has the effect both of strengthening the bond that is an emotional resource for his poetry, and of distinguishing him from the 'loves' whose transient involvement in the young man's hedonistic life

is simply created by his appearance. Thus the attempt to present a measured appraisal of the subject in the octave is completed in this conception of their relationship as an ideal bond that is unspoiled by the fleeting nature of beauty and desire.

The magic is enhanced when the possessive apostrophe is removed from 'Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure'. As there is no use of the possessive apostrophe throughout the whole of Q, we cannot draw any conclusions from the original imprint. All that can be claimed is that the standard version has the effect of weakening the poem. For example, 'thy loves use their treasure' fits into the rhythmic pattern that is created throughout the verse by the addition of a feminine ending to each line. The gently rocking movement is subtly transformed by a combination of stress and the prolonged, liquid sound of 'use' (in a verbal sense) to suggest coitus, at that point where the poem refers to it. In the standard version the sound of 'use' (in a substantive sense) is sharpened and shortened, and this destroys a rhythmic effect to which the structure of the poem as a whole is leading. Removing the apostrophe, of course, also changes the meaning of 'loves' which now refers to the myriad admirers who circle around the young man.

The opposition of the sceptic to this apologia, which occupies a central place in the overall purpose of the sequence, has all of the severity of the fool's attack upon the mentor in Sonnets 1 and 3. We have seen how the unfolding of the poem, at least from the second quatrain, draws the principal ideas into a vortex of contradiction and uncertainty, which exposes them to an unsympathetic reading. As it happens, the sceptic begins his assault in the opening quatrain, and his strategy is one of reframing the love poet's language so as to devalue its underlying purpose. Hence in line 3 'acquainted' contains a crude piece of Elizabethan slang for the vagina, while 'shifting change' is a fashion for promiscuous women, whose behaviour affects the frequency with which they change their undergarments. It is significant that in one sense this reframing of the language is less cynical than the love poet's reference to women in general, for behind his seamy imagery the sceptic refers to a particular kind of woman, and he does so in order to make finer moral distinctions. The point of this change in meaning is to diminish the claims that have been made for the subject; it clearly does little for his character to say that he is more steadfast than the loosest of women. Rather, it ridicules the very notion of his being constant; it is like the praise much faster than a tortoise.

In the second quatrain, the love poet equates the subject with the sun, following the imagery that is suggested in Sonnet 18 by the sceptic, but

avoiding the unfortunate association with heat. However, 'An eye more bright than theirs' recalls 'contracted to thine own bright eyes' in Sonnet 1, where the fool means bright with desire, and this meaning is borrowed by the sceptic and expanded in line 6. Anticipating the love poet's imaginative use of the story of Pygmalion in the sestet, the sceptic alludes to the story of Danaë, who is gazed upon by the bright eye of Zeus and then visited by him in a shower of gold coins. This, of course, gives a quite different meaning to 'gilding the object whereupon it gazeth', and in doing so it also develops the identification of the sun as a god-like 'eye of heaven' in Sonnet 18. In this development, moreover, the sceptic's reframing of his adversary's thought can be seen to be testing its strength by introducing the idea of metamorphosis as a pervasive influence upon all that the love poet wishes to affirm. For example, the light that is radiated by the subject might be transformed into an expression of sexual self-assertion, and this contradicts the notion that he possesses a woman's gentle heart. Confusion in this matter becomes a dominant interest for the remaining lines of the octave. If the subject is 'A man in hue', it could reasonably be suggested that his self-mastery is not so much a matter of integrity and honour as one of skilfully adapting his tone and image in order to control the reactions and behaviour of those who are attracted to him. The eye that is 'less false in rolling' might be more subtly false, and so more effective for being more calculatingly employed. In this respect the possibility of metamorphosis is not only a problem in itself for the protagonist, it becomes a problem by being a psychological resource of the subject, and is therefore an expression of morally disturbing tendencies. In the closing line of the octave (line 8) the sceptic invokes a labyrinthine web of impulse and feeling that threatens our understanding; 'steals men's eyes' can be read as steals their vision, and so deprives them of judgement, while 'amazeth' contains the word 'maze', and so becomes an image of the inner confusion created by erotic excitement.

In the sestet, the change of tack in the love poet's apologia prompts the sceptic to turn from the character of the subject to the attitudes of the speaker. With its concentration upon the idea that the subject embodies a sexual metamorphosis, the sestet is alive with puns referring to the sex organs. The thought to which these puns make an essential contribution is dominated by an assumption that, in keeping with the possession of a woman's gentle heart, the psychology of the subject is basically passive, and therefore can be seen as serving the dignified (and active) purposes of the love poet himself. Hence, the addition of 'one thing' (a penis) 'to my purpose nothing' defeats him, as it negates the physical characteristics that naturally go with his

purpose – a vagina being the 'nothing', or 'no thing', that is to his purpose, because it conforms to the 'passion' of his love poetry, which is conventionally addressed to a mistress. In this reading of the line, 'purpose' is also used as an adjective, as in 'purpose-built'. Adding a penis to his 'purpose nothing' is therefore redundant. The couplet represents a recovery from this setback, in which the separation of spiritual and physical love stresses the passivity of the subject in line 13, where he is seen as being pricked out 'for women's pleasure', and in line 14, where the proposal of spiritual love is made by the love poet and the subject is used by his female admirers, 'their treasure' implying their use both of their own and of his sex organs. In this it is not difficult to see much that might excite the critical scrutiny of the sceptic. The apologia for an unorthodox choice of subject for love poetry has ended with a lofty resolution at the expense of an essentially passive spirit and his 'loves', who are active only in the sense that they are driven by feelings over which they have no control.

In relation to this lofty resolution, the possibilities of metamorphosis are further exploited by the sceptic, as the polysemous language multiplies the implications of the sonnet. In *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, Stephen Orgel has observed that 'pricked thee out for women's pleasure' can be understood in both ways, to mean given a male organ for the pleasure of women, and designed to be a woman (as stated in line 9) and therefore to experience a woman's pleasure. This complicates the meaning of the couplet itself, for if the subject is designed equally for the pleasure of men and women then such versatility blurs the opposition that is intended in the closing line. It is no longer so easy to distinguish between a (male) spiritual love that is exclusive to the love poet and his subject, and the 'loves' that are merely the irrational agents of their feelings; 'treasure' takes on its sense of overflowing abundance which lures us in, including the love poet himself. This also turns the tables on him because it removes any assurance of passivity in the subject, as his/her will now assumes the kind of independence that is implied in the judgement of the sceptic.

A more specific confirmation of this reversal can be seen in the use of 'treasure' to echo the sceptic's allusion to Danaë, when her sexual pleasure takes the form of Zeus falling in a shower of gold coins. Poems on the immortality of their subject have no meaning when they are dedicated to gods, and so the association of the young man with Zeus tends to deprive the love poet of his rationale, while insinuating that, to his subject, he is probably no more significant than the other 'loves' that fall within his orbit for a time and then are lightly cast aside. The speaker is, perhaps, himself a man who has fallen under the spell and let his judgement escape.

If we consider Sonnets 18 and 20 as dramatizing the poet's attempt to represent life then we can see a significant development from the opposition of personae in Sonnets 1 and 3. In these earlier poems the fool's critique is brutally satirical and freely employs whatever is available to ridicule the presumptuous attitudes of the mentor. By contrast the sceptic subtly exploits weaknesses in the logic of his adversary, and this is related to a greater richness and depth in these poems, in particular in Sonnet 20. Thus, the dramatization is one in which the love poet's conception of the subject is represented so that we can see, much more clearly than in the humanist mentor, how it is determined by his ambitions and by his conception of himself. Moreover, the resources employed by the sceptic, especially in his play upon ideas associated with metamorphosis, combine a penetrating disorientation of the other's point of view with concession to the insecurity of his own position. For, unlike the grotesque images of the fool in Sonnets 1 and 3, the metaphorical allusions of the sceptic take their cue more strictly from ideas which are latent in the words of the love poet, and so generate a critical perspective which can also be applied to himself. The uncertainty, which is highlighted by repeated allusion to metamorphosis, denies the possibility of making either position definitive. Thus a limit is achieved in the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent reflective life, for the sense of Sonnet 20 is balanced on inferences that are created by personal inclination. In this way the genre of love poetry is subjected to an analytical examination of considerable subtlety and power, as the opposing personae come more and more to resemble conflicting voices within the same individual.

While these sonnets represent a limit for the sequence, in the possibilities that are offered by the opposition of personae, they also belong to a group of poems (17–21) which suggest that the poet is concerned with something more than simply the employment of a particular genre. It is clear from the discussion of Sonnets 18 and 20 that these poems can be read as love poetry, each with its own orientation and technical resources. However, they come to life with unusual cogency and inner coherence when they are understood as the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent life, and this depends upon the analysis of genre and its psychology in the love poet.

Sonnet 17 resembles 18 in so far as it presents an uncomplicated train of thought, in the language of love poetry, which is receptive to two conflicting readings. But while it may be fitting to see these conflicting points of view as coming from the love poet and his sceptic, Sonnet 17 makes far less of weaknesses in the thinking of the former. However, in one respect the more obscure voice in this sonnet is fundamentally sceptical, as it questions the

possibility of artistic truth in the circumstances of the love poet's project. Thus Sonnet 17 can be read in two parallel ways, and they correspond to the opposition between the protagonist and his sceptic in Sonnets 18 and 20, but without the subtle dissension that we have seen in those poems.

The remaining poems in this later group (19 and 21) fit into the pattern as different ways in which the sceptic assumes the voice of the love poet in order to satirize his project. In Sonnet 19, for example, a 'poet's rage' is mimicked in order to parody the excesses of courtly love poetry; its heightened exhortation to 'devouring time' is exposed as the hollow enthusiasm of the 'poet's' own 'antic' pen (see Colin Burrow's note on line 10), and the facile reversal of the couplet gives the impression of a mind that is propelled simply by the exigencies of its task rather than by serious interest in the life with which it should be concerned. Sonnet 21 can be seen as a comic counterpart to this, as the sceptic now represents the 'poet' in an alternative guise, that of a plain lover of truth who has no use for the artifice of a corrupted genre. The joke is evident in the mocking confidentiality of the opening lines, with its 'disarming' avowal of an attitude that diverges from all that the love poet has been striving for in the preceding poems, including the elaborate apologia of Sonnet 20 and the self-affirmation of Sonnet 18. Crowning all of this, the couplet attempts to divorce the project from its association with reward, which alludes to the protagonist's conception of his purpose in Sonnet 17.

Even at this point in the sequence it is clear that interpretation of the purpose of the Sonnets 1–126 is dependent upon an absolute distinction between the intentions of the poet, Shakespeare, and those of the authorial personae through whom the poems are spoken. Whatever the personal basis for the sequence, relating to his actual circumstances and how they might be reflected in the poems, the complex use of personae analysed here makes it clear that their purpose is not autobiographical. Rather, they are constructed in a way that is intended to dramatize a poet's attempt to represent the life to which he or she belongs. All that is known about the genesis of the poems is that they were written for the benefit of a private circle of friends, and even the idea that a specific patron was responsible for their commission is not corroborated by evidence from outside the sequence itself. It is possible, even though it seems unlikely, that Shakespeare composed the sonnets for this circle with the intention of entertaining them by satirically representing the practice of creating poetry for a patron, and used the ideas of the humanist mentor and the love poet, whose métier is to immortalize the subject. It is also possible, and more probable, that Shakespeare draws upon his own experience in order to create the many different situations in the poems, in much the same

way as Dickens draws upon his own experience in order to create *David Copperfield*. However, in testing the sonnets for references to the life of the artist it is difficult to say anything that is precise and illuminating. But since the sonnets are not intended to be autobiographical the loss involved here is mainly a loss in relation to our curiosity about the poet, and does not greatly affect our capacity to understand the poems and Shakespeare's purpose in creating the sequence.

Shakespeare's dramatization takes an important turn in the development of the sequence after the group of Sonnets 17–21. For, in so far as a direct attempt is made by the love poet to immortalize his subject, this project is no sooner introduced than it is superseded by concern about his own circumstances in relation to the subject. This indicates a new orientation for the sequence, for while the project remains at the heart of the protagonist's interest in the subject, the poems are now a dramatization of his experience as he strives to execute the project. In this connection, it is significant that there is no sonnet in the sequence which unequivocally immortalizes the subject. Apart from the poems that have been considered so far, the most promising candidate might be Sonnet 55, and for this reason close attention should be given to the couplet in this poem. The forthright assertion of the power of rhyme to outlive all of the monuments that are handed down to posterity makes this sonnet the most direct and self-aggrandizing poem in the sequence. But it is relevant that this grandiloquent expression of poetic virtue follows a much more delicate and muted conception of the poet's vocation, in Sonnet 54. Here the imagery of distillation is invoked once again, recalling Sonnet 5, and its purpose is to make a distinction between show and truth ('by verse distils your truth'). On first acquaintance Sonnet 55 appears to take no particular interest in truth, but the couplet in this poem is susceptible to another, less obvious, reading. The phrase 'till the judgment that yourself arise' follows logically from line 12, and refers to the Last Judgement, in which case the verb is naturally connected to 'yourself'. However, the verb can also be connected to 'judgment', and so, by inserting inverted commas around 'that yourself' we can make it an utterance that judges the young man. Hence the phrase can mean, until the judgement arises that reveals your true nature. Not only can the primitive grammar be seen as an ironic diminution of the language of the poem (in the name of truth, which strikes back at being overlooked), the completion of the couplet consigns the poem to realms of delusion and fantasy ('and dwell in lovers' eyes'). Moreover, unlike the Last Judgement, the judgement 'that yourself' can arise to any time: for example, now in the mind of the speaker.

Dramatization of the love poet's project and of his relationship with the subject are interwoven in the greater part of the sequence: this is a basic element in the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent life. As changes take place in their relationship so new ideas arise, which alter his understanding of the project. Thus, in the group of Sonnets 33–35, an important development in the relationship affects the use of genre as an instrument of analytical thought. The first of these makes an interesting progression from the poems that have been mentioned so far.

Sonnet 33
Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth:
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

Remarkable for its intricate concentration of figurative language, the structure of this poem combines a fluent forward movement with a particular kind of retrospective enrichment of meaning as we move from the octave to the sestet. Thus in outline the progression from one to the other is perfectly lucid: the octave presents a general observation of the world, one that has a metaphorical purpose, and in the sestet this observation, with its figurative sense, refers to a particular experience of the speaker. However, this means that it is not until we have come to the sestet that the metaphorical purpose of the octave can be understood. From the outset we can appreciate that light is the underlying phenomenon to which various images, in their different ways, allude. So 'glorious morning' is both a descriptive term in the poem's narrative and a trope for light itself, while 'sovereign eye' and 'golden face' are images for its source, the sun. This idea is extended in the second quatrain, in 'celestial face' and 'his visage', 'his' referring to 'glorious morning' and therefore

to light, and 'heavenly alchemy' is an image for the magical effect of sunlight on certain of its objects. Within the terms of this initial reading of the octave, the verbs 'flatter', 'kissing' and 'gilding' are examples of poetic embellishment which serve to heighten the descriptive atmosphere of the lines; the same can be said of other examples of personification in the octave, such as 'ugly rack on his celestial face', 'the forlorn world his visage hide' and 'Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace'.

The progression beyond this emotional response to meteorological change, which revises our reading of the octave, is registered in 'my sun one early morn did shine', and continued in the ideas that follow it. For light we can now read power and authority, 'my sun' being the source of these for the 'poet', in the subject. The imagery of the poem now indicates that it arises out of his rejection by the friend, in favour of others whom they might both consider to be inferior ('the basest clouds'). This interpretation of the imagery associated with light is confirmed in lines 9–10, where 'triumphant splendour on my brow' evokes the idea of honour that is bestowed expressly upon the 'poet'. Moreover, this means that we can now see a new set of ideas in the figurative language of the poem: for example, the personification in 'flatter', 'kissing' and 'gilding' can be seen as suggesting an elaborate game of deception and manipulation practised by a noble whose 'light' gives definition to the social ranks that stand in varying degrees beneath him. This is especially strong in line 4, which both employs the description 'heavenly alchemy' and echoes the same idea in Sonnet 20 ('gildeth the object whereupon it gazeth'). The intimation of an unsettling change having taken place between that sonnet and 33 is reflected not only in a feeling of disillusionment, but also in a decisive formal development in the poem. For the double meaning we have seen at work in previous poems has been organized by means of an opposition between (mainly) conflicting personae, which depends upon the 'innocence' of one persona or another (the mentor or the love poet). Here a similar double meaning can be ascribed to the poem, but now belongs solely to the 'poet', whose disillusionment has led to a crisis in his representation of the subject. The polysemous language now reflects a new sense of uncertainty, a loss of confidence from the optimism of the apologia in Sonnet 20.

The use of double meaning to suggest uncertainty, rather than to assert another attitude or opinion, is implied in line 12, where the cloud has 'masked him from me now'. In being masked, the true nature of the subject has been concealed, and the circumstances behind the event are unexplained. They could be explained by youthful weakness and gullibility, and this is implied in the idea that the 'region cloud' has masked him, which balances line 5.

But this moment of hopeful leniency is dissolved in the couplet, in which the pain of rejection generates a further line of speculation, which resonates back through the language of the poem and puts a construction upon the relationship that is more general and unsettling.

In the first place the couplet can be understood as an expression of forgiving acceptance, perhaps as something that is imposed upon the 'poet' by his desire to continue with the love poet's project. According to this reading he does not withdraw his love for the young man, for as a sun of the world his stain must be accepted as we must accept a comparable stain in a heavenly sun. Thus the poem appears to be resolved on a note of civilized irony, the laws pertaining to human relations are harmonized with the laws of nature and the mood of hopeful leniency is preserved. In the alternative reading 'my love' refers not to his feelings but to the person who is loved, and the line can be rearranged as, 'Yet my love no whit disdaineth him(self) for this'. This introduces the suspicion that the subject is unconcerned about the effect of his behaviour upon his friend, and it makes the closing line an expression of indifference to the claims of fellow feeling and morality.

In order to interpret the closing line in this way it is necessary to examine the double meanings of the poem from another angle. The octave is charged with imagery suggesting an order beyond the world of aristocrats and the ranks of those who are dependent upon them, and this is felt immediately in the luminosity of the opening quatrain. The 'heavenly alchemy' of these lines evokes the possibility of a world that is transmuted by light, and light has a metaphysical significance that is increasingly relevant as the poem unfolds. In this respect, the image of light has two distinct meanings, one which is ascribed to the social world which radiates from the authority of kings and nobles, and one which is transcendental and gives beauty and animation to the objects of this world – in connection with the latter the opening quatrain alludes to a prelapsarian Eden. Thus, the obscuring of light in the second quatrain has a Christian significance, 'forlorn world' (line 7) is very close to 'fallen world', and in the next line 'disgrace' can be read as 'dis-grace', meaning to remove the possibility of God's grace. Since this meaning of the word 'grace' refers to our hope, as fallen creatures, of an undeserved redemption, the disgrace to which the poem refers condemns us to a world that is irredeemably fallen, and it is in relation to this idea that the closing line of the poem can be understood. When it is ascribed to the young man, 'suns of the world' refers to those who, like himself, possess merely temporal power, whereas 'heaven's sun' is transcendental. In the context this suggests heaven's son, as Christ is the greatest expression of God's grace. So, the subject's imagined disowning

of his stain, by indicating the stain on heaven's sun, is a denial of redemption, a shrug which says, 'since we are fallen I behave accordingly'.

Our understanding of the language of this poem depends upon a clear recognition of the sense with which meaning is implied, and how it can be related to the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent life. The work would lose its subtle definition if the alternative readings were intended with equal conviction, and therefore it is necessary to make some psychological distinction between them. This suggests that the secondary reading bears the sense not of an overt assertion, but rather that of a feeling of uneasiness that encroaches upon the speaker's deliberate intentions and deepens his disillusionment into a more general fear and uncertainty. The 'poet' does not have proof that his patron and subject will disregard the claims of morality when it suits him, or that he is cynically degenerate, but there is a structural sense in which the language and ideas in the poem subtly edge it from an experience of personal disappointment to a more fundamental and pervasive anxiety. This is particularly evident in the way in which figurative language is used, for unlike the earlier sonnets, which oppose different personae, Sonnet 33 uses puns and allusions that imply much slighter shifts in meaning. For example, the imagery from nature in the opening quatrain is applied harmoniously to the tenor of a world of aristocratic patronage, and then to a prelapsarian Eden, in a similar manner; while the suggestion of fallen world in 'forlorn world' and dis-grace in 'disgrace' do not involve great leaps in meaning and significance. Also, the retrospective reading of the sonnet, which leads us from the sestet back to the octave, suggests more than a feeling of uneasiness about just one individual. For the double meaning of the couplet is only understood when we see that the poem resonates with the idea of a world that is threatened by chaotic impulse and self-interest. What occurred 'one early morn' has been observed by the speaker on 'Full many a glorious morning', and so we cannot take the victim's disappointment and shock about a particular event as an isolated cause for anxiety; such an experience could well be typical of the world to which he belongs.

Thus it is clear that the language in this sonnet is related to a crisis in the project which enriches the psychological characterization of the 'poet', and that it does so by giving a new orientation to the sequence. In place of the opposition of different personae, we now have the drama of conflicting ideas and feelings within a persona that fuses the love poet and the sceptic. This creates another framework for the dramatization, and this framework possesses a complex psychology of probing enquiry and uncertainty.

The next poem in the sequence is coupled with 33, and goes more deeply into the psychological significance of the situation, subtly exploring its uncertainties for the speaker.

Sonnet 34
Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
Hiding thy brav'ry in their rotten smoke?
'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace;
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief:
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.
Th'offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's cross.
    Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
    And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

From our first acquaintance with this poem we are given the sense of a psychologically sensitive experience that has the speaker in its grip. Not only does the opening quatrain take up the crucial events of the previous sonnet, and elaborate upon them by means of the same images with the same basic intention, there is also a feeling of relentless insistence in the structure of the poem, in its reiteration of the injury and refusal to be consoled, and even in the repetition of particular words (clouds/cloud and offender's/offence's). Moreover, echoes of Sonnet 33 can be discerned in the use of poetic diction in the opening line, for 'beauteous day' responds to the heightened language of 33, and so recalls the ideas of light and the sun, and their association with purity. Similarly, 'rotten smoke' is more than irate exception to the interference between the speaker and his source of illumination, as it recalls the 'ugly rack' which implies the wrack of the fallen world, 'rotten' meaning morally corrupt.

But the opening quatrain of Sonnet 34 also creates a feeling of moral uncertainty that is characteristic of these poems. Preoccupation with the intentions of the subject is therefore evident in the double meaning of certain words and forms of construction. So 'promise' implies that the illumined prospect ('beauteous day') for the speaker is merely an optimistic impulse

that has not been created by a formal agreement, or that a fully intended promise has been understood, and consequently the subject will faithfully respect the interests of his servant. According to the latter sense 'make me travel forth' implies a psychological compulsion, in that 'make' can mean simply to cause, or it can mean to induce the other person to comply with your will. In this connection, 'cloak' is highly suggestive, for the 'poet' has travelled forth without making adequate psychological preparations. The failure to cloak his own feelings has left him exposed, and so this failure may be, in some degree, the cause of his uncertainty. This is sustained in the structure of the sentence (which makes up the quatrain), by allowing 'hiding thy brav'ry' to be a function of both 'thou' and 'base clouds'. If, therefore, the beauteous day has been promised only in the sense that the speaker has felt the promise, and he has been made to travel forth without his cloak only by virtue of his own judgement, then the subject has 'let' only in so far as his actions have resulted in the speaker's estrangement from him. Alternatively, however, the sentence implies that 'to let' is compatible with deliberately allowing the base clouds to cut off the speaker, and in this case he is victim to a cruel game of deception.

The uncertainty of this opening can be seen as a strict dramatization of the 'poet's' attempt to clarify his situation, in which there is no clear indication of which view of the subject is true, or indeed if either is true. This conforms ideally to the purpose of dramatizing the poet's attempt to represent life. In keeping with this, the second quatrain spreads the double meaning, so that the uncertainty expressed about the subject is cast over the speaker. As there is more than one sense in which the 'poet' travels forth without his cloak, giving voice to his reactions and ideas exposes him to the reader and in ways of which he may be unconscious. So the wounded response to being comforted, in lines 5–6, leads into an aphoristic judgement on the reparation that is due to him for his injured self-esteem. There is, after all, more than one sense in which he has been assaulted, an obvious one in which he suffers a breach of ordinary decency, and a less obvious one in which the offence is a 'disgrace', recalling the dis-grace of Sonnet 33. In terms of the latter, which the friend has 'let' happen, the 'poet' suffers a crisis in the kinship that has meant so much to him. Thus, 'For no man well of such a salve can speak' is an elaborate way of complaining that wiping away my tears is not enough. This makes use of inversion, where the more natural order is 'no man can speak well of such a salve'. However, the inversion creates another way of reading the line, for the construction 'no man well' can be understood as no man who is well, or, more specifically, no man who is morally sound. In other words, the 'poet'

is using the inversion to suggest that any morally sensitive person should know that 'such a salve' is inadequate in this case. But the double meaning is inadvertently spread, as 'no man' refers equally to the subject and to himself, where the line is taken to mean 'I cannot speak well of such a salve' (in this line 8 is the consequent of 'such a salve' instead of 'no man'). This reading raises doubts about the speaker, and the implications of his wounded pride. When applied to the subject, 'no man well of such a salve can speak' implies that no sound man can justify or defend such a salve, and when applied to the 'poet' the same words imply that no sound man can dispute such a salve (the seriousness of the disgrace being grossly exaggerated). His own aphorism, and how it works in the poem, creates a psychological conflict about what is sensitive in this case.

An awareness of what can be accepted as morally sensitive becomes an important issue for this poem. It is significant that the third quatrain imitates the structure of the second, in that two lines of description are succeeded by an aphoristic judgement upon the actions of the friend. And the same structure occurs in diminished form in the couplet, the penultimate line being descriptive and the closing line epigrammatic. Its sententious character betrays an uncertainty concerning the moral ground of the poem. For though the friend is in shadow throughout the sequence, and we see him only through the eyes of the speaker, we could feel that the 'poet's' enterprise is suffocating to his subject. In this sonnet, the spirit of the humanist mentor returns, with an unwelcome addition of biblical authority.

Sonnets 33 and 34 are obviously composed in response to a slight caused by the subject's preference for supposedly less worthy acquaintances. But the tone of these poems suggests that the interference of the 'poet' in his friend's affairs may be excessively intrusive and presumptuous. We are drawn into feeling that the speaker's own arrogance is partly responsible for 'the disgrace', and this justifies the dual reference that has been attached to 'no man well'. Whatever doubts there may be about the moral soundness of the subject there is also some uncertainty about the 'poet', and this is tied to his self-affirming project in pursuit of an artistic vocation (his passion), by writing love poetry intended to immortalize his friend. Conjecture of this kind may be supported by the attitudes in the apologia of Sonnet 20, where, as we have seen, the closing line makes a distinction between the claims of the 'poet' upon his subject and the kind of recognition that is due to his 'loves'. The base clouds of Sonnet 34 could be comprised of a selection of these 'loves'.

Special force is given to the speaker's tone in this poem by the shift in attitude that is implied in the progression from octave to sestet, and this is

intensified by a psychological complexity in the couplet. The god-like stature of the subject, bestowed on him, in particular, by imagery that associates him with light and with its source, is implicitly questioned in lines 7–8 by the negative use of 'salve' and 'disgrace'. The biblical resonance of these words can be seen as anticipating a reversal in the sestet, in which an expressly moral authority is transferred from the subject to the 'poet', as he seeks an appropriate form of repentance from his wayward friend. Thus, in line 12, the speaker equates himself with Christ, the God who suffers and is reviled, and thereby assumes the authority of the misrepresented. A sense of unjustified pleading is accentuated by the conflict between a self-attributed moral endurance ('bears the strong offence's cross') and the 'poet's' aggrieved and fragile introspection. However, in spite of his transparency, we should also be aware of the dense texture of overlapping speculations and uncertainties from which the couplet emerges. This gives the couplet both a sense of dramatic reversal that is literally intended, and further meanings that respond to the density of the preceding lines.

At first reading of the couplet, a recognition of the young man's repentance appears to reverse the growing severity of the 'poet', completing a contrary movement from solicitude in line 5 and regret in line 9. Tears are 'pearl' because they can be seen as a true expression of penitence and the expression of love. In this respect, the penitential attitude restores the 'poet's' place in the heart of the subject. The idea of spiritual wealth that is contained in true repentance is confirmed by its power to redeem us from our sins, and this appears to invest the penitential tears of the subject with life-affirming significance. However, this spiritually charged restoration implies a recognition of the 'poet's' authority, since it is from him that forgiveness is supposedly being sought, and there is room for doubt concerning both his authority and its acceptance by the subject.

In Shakespeare's language a wish can be expressed as a statement, so the penultimate line can be read as a regretful wish, embellished at the beginning by an 'ah' not of recognition but of loss. Even more subversively, 'thy love sheds' can mean both weeping and a complete abandonment of feeling. In the sense that the friend's love might be so attenuated that he disowns the tears that would reconcile them, the 'poet' revives the uncertainties of the situation as they are expressed in the opening quatrain. Thus the appearance of tears would be suspect since there is no guarantee that they are genuine. In this connection 'they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds' can also mean that social position permits the friend to use any means that suit him to 'salve' his offensive behaviour. Furthermore, the 'poet's' compromised grasp of things is

suggested by an internal play between the alternate readings of the couplet. For his disillusioned response to the possibility of true repentance, in this case, can be seen as intensifying the desire to believe in that possibility.

These comments show that developments in the relationship between the 'poet' and his subject are accompanied in the sequence by subtle changes in the ways in which genre is used as an instrument of analytical thought. In the earlier sonnets Shakespeare makes use of extended double meaning by creating personae in opposition, in order to expose the mentor's or love poet's assumptions to an alternative view of the situation. This all changes with the disillusionment of the 'poet', as the subject increasingly strays from the image that is desired of him. So, in Sonnets 33 and 34, the double meaning is applied not to opposing personae but to opposing trains of thought in the 'poet', who now 'controls' the poem as a single persona. In place of the consistent formulation of certain related attitudes, in earlier sonnets, we now have a highly dramatic representation of a mind thrown into turmoil and beset by uncertainty.

Thus, the need of a person to understand the life to which he or she belongs is represented in action with an intimacy and vitality that may possibly only be found in this sequence of poems. Moreover, because they subvert the expectation that poetry will present us with perfectly resolved representations of human character and behaviour, these poems re-orient our reading, and encourage us to see into our reflective life in its true complexity. The effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding has become a vortex from within which the substance of the poetry is created. And in the midst of this we can appreciate that the genres that make these representations possible, such as that of love poetry with its refinements of diction and imagery, and its emotionally inflected syntax and formal music, are worked and transfigured in order to explore our reflective life anew.

Since the sequence of sonnets to the young man consists of 126 poems, and the disillusionment of the 'poet' with his initial purpose is evident in Sonnets 33 and 34, we must conclude that some change of direction has been forced upon the 'poet' by the effect of their relationship upon his project. The purpose is no longer simply, or even primarily, to immortalize the subject, for increasingly the illusions of his poetic genre become an interest of the fictional poet himself. In the sequence as a whole, there are many ways in which the relationship between the significance of love poetry as a literary genre and the reality of interpersonal experience is explored, and this relationship is always implicit, whatever the immediate concern of a particular sonnet. Therefore,

the ‘poet’s’ concern with this relationship leads to a further development in the use of extended double meaning, in the series of Sonnets 71–74. An interpretation of these poems brings to a conclusion this illustration of my theory, and, for reasons that will be explained, I begin with Sonnet 73.

Sonnet 73
That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

Here the ‘poet’s’ interest in the illusions created from within a poetic genre, such as that of love poetry or moral instruction, and his sensitivity to psychological realism are evident in the way in which he now turns against his earlier impersonation as a humanist mentor. This sonnet is remarkable in the first place for its multiple satire, as the ‘poet’ mockingly assumes the voice of the mentor, in order both to ‘instruct’ and to ridicule the attitudes of the subject. The satirical dimension of this voice, as distinct from a simple reappearance of the mentor, is signalled by the mock gravity of the opening line of each of the quatrains; its repeated phrases (in quatrains 2 and 4) and rhythmic shape give an impression of the speaker raising himself to his full height in order to deliver his pronouncements upon the distorted perceptions of youth. In addition to this, the poem assumes a pedagogical structure in its demonstration of the attitudes of the subject by producing a thematically related series of images, arranged in order to intensify both the meaning that is attributed to him and the exaggeration that makes him look absurd. The rhetorical effect of this progression from the change of seasons through the decline of day into night, and then the brief concentration of a funeral pyre that is dying down, is completed in the couplet, in the schoolmasterly ‘This

thou perceiv'st', followed by a gnomic and unconvincing moral. Presenting the mentor as a caricature exposes the conventionality of his thinking, which is merely a token of his training, and the conclusion that he draws from his observations does not form a coherent insight into the subject. For if the distorted perceptions of youth appear as little more than the casual disposal of a life which has lost its vitality, then there is nothing that 'makes thy love more strong', and the lesson of the mentor is consumed by his own irony. The argument of the couplet, that love is greater when it is for something that will soon pass, loses its conviction if the imminence of this passing is of no interest to the person who is being addressed.

Within this framework, the densely textured exposition of Sonnet 73 employs an extended double meaning which is threefold in purpose. Hence, we are able to see how the structure and language in this sonnet are related to the psychology of the subject who is being mocked and instructed by his mentor, to that of the mentor who is being parodied by the 'poet', and to that of the 'poet' himself, for whom this complex satire with its resonant images is also an elegy for the loss of a dream. The opening lines of the poem already contain this threefold double meaning, as the gravity of the first line leads into a schoolmaster's scrupulous attention to the number of leaves, and at the same time this hesitation mimics the young man's cruel and sardonic weighing of the scant life that he allows to be left to his friend. Then, while continuing these tendencies in the mentor and the young man, the succeeding two lines take up the autumnal image of falling leaves and transform them into an intimate expression of exposure and transience. The 'Bare ruined choirs' suggest more than the passing of youthful energy and its fullness of life; the nature of the poem and the circumstances of the 'poet' give this image a ghostly sense of estrangement, which our knowledge of the sequence can help us to interpret. By association with the seasons, these lines evoke an enervated light, and this imagery increases in intensity throughout the main body of the sonnet. Recalling the light imagery of earlier sonnets, such as 20, 33 and 34, this pattern has a clearly defined resonance. In Sonnet 33, in particular, the young man is equated with the light of the sun, as the source of spiritual vitality to his circle, which includes the 'poet' himself. Thus, we can see that such loss plays its part in the 'Bare ruined choirs', which stand in bleak fragments, now reduced to a skeleton and deprived of the birds' sweet song.

The second quatrain is more directly concerned with the idea of light, as its imagery is governed by the transition from day into night. Here the mentor is parodied in his pedagogical insistence, in which the same thought is reframed in different ways, as though to drive the point home: lines 5, 6

and 7 all describe the same process of quenching light, and line 8 concludes the description with a proverbial expression for the ensuing darkness. However, within his regimented thinking there is some room for irony, and the proverbial tendency may be directed against the subject, as it follows hard upon the storybook language of the previous line ('by and by black night doth take away'). In this we can sense the 'poet' similtaneously playing games with his persona and expressing his feelings of disenchantment. But allusion to the childishness of the subject in this way does nothing to diminish another tendency in the imagery and music of these lines, which deepens the elegiac aspect of the poem. For the images of transition into night do not simply reiterate the same idea in slightly different ways, they also register changes in psychological perspective, as the idea of life fading in line 6 is reinterpreted as a kind of robbery in line 7, and then as an immutable law of nature in line 8. Similarly, the transformation in language from simple descriptive reference to the time of day in line 5, through the visual imagery of 'after sunset fadeth in the west' and the fable of line 7, to the proverbial expression that ends this quatrain, uses modulated rhythm, sound and image to close, one by one, the possibilities of escape for the 'poet'. Thus, the multiple satire of mentor and subject is a vehicle for the 'poet's' elegy, which uses the idea of approaching death as a metaphor for the now irreversible collapse of his high ambitions and the end of his optimism for their friendship. The irony with which he turns upon the wisdom of his earlier persona is integrated with a forcefully satirical view of the subject, to convey the disappointment of being ultimately no more to him than the other 'loves' of Sonnet 20.

Sonnet 73 is not divided, as so many of the sonnets are, into octave and sestet; rather the third quatrain continues the trend of creating a metaphor for decline by means of imagery suggested by a central idea. Here, therefore, the mentor is allowed to conclude the main body of his sardonic instruction so that his image of personal extinction combines that satirical exaggeration with the invulnerable wisdom of philosophical resignation. The light imagery which has figured in the previous lines is intensified in effect to a dying glow, and in this there is an inward movement, so that the light is more specifically related to spirit as the very essence of the person is gradually extinguished. To the mentor's generalizing cast of mind, 'Consumed with that which it was nourished by' means simply that spirit is consumed by the experience of life that sustains and enriches it. Such reflective detachment enables him to rise above the youthful distortions of the subject. But for the 'poet', who is creating this parody, the line has a more precise and a more acid intention that includes the mentor as its target. Now that his dream has been stolen from him, the 'poet'

sees that his spirit has been consumed by the illusions that have nourished it; at the root of his elegy is a sense that his obssession and its destruction have deprived him of an essential inner strength. In its enactment the project which was assumed with some self-assurance has been turned against the 'poet' in a profoundly disturbing manner. This means that the couplet can be read in a way that subverts the ironic complacency of the mentor, in a much harsher judgement upon the moral insensitivity of the subject.

When it is taken at face value the couplet reads as a moral lesson to the subject, exhorting him to develop his feeling for others by caring with due attention to a friend, who should be all the more cherished for being on the point of leaving him. But these lines can be read in another way, which is consistent with a syntactical freedom that is characteristic of Shakespeare. First, the order of subject and verb can be inverted in the phrase 'which makes thy love more strong', and this leads to changes in the meaning of the words. Inversion of this kind, one that is more complex than 'says he', for example, can be seen in 'take Antony / Octavia to his wife' (*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act 2, scene ii, lines 132–133). Thus, the couplet can be saying 'thy love more strong (or your undisciplined sexual appetite, as opposed to love that can be equated with moral feeling) makes (in the sense of pretending, as in making tough or making innocent) this perception of me as ebbing away in feeble decline'. In accordance with this reading, the closing line should be repunctuated as, 'To love that, well, which thou must leave ere long' ('well' being an ironic gesture feigning weary resignation). This kind of gestural speech is typical of the series of Sonnets 71–74, occurring twice in both 71 and 72 (again using 'well', in 72). Contrary to the sense that he gives to the mentor, therefore, the 'poet' is saying, 'Your kind of love makes up the character of its object, which in this case is of no importance anyway, since it has so little time left to it'.

In the earlier sonnets conflicting intentions between opposing personae are usually created by some exaggeration or 'correction' on the part of the fool or sceptic. The double meaning is such that one sense of the lines contradicts the other, and this plays an essential part in the development of the sequence. In the series of Sonnets 71–74 (as in 33 and 34) the 'poet' is in control of the voices that appear; so his parody of the mentor and allusion to the attitudes of the young man are calculated so that the verse says what he wishes to say in exactly the way that he wishes it to be said. We have seen, for example, that the use of the mentor in Sonnet 73 is an attack by the 'poet' on his earlier more innocent persona, and this can be understood in relation to what has happened to the tie between the love poet and his subject. However, the contradiction that is employed in the couplet, as part of the 'poet's' satire

upon the mentor, makes us wonder why the ‘poet’ does not communicate more directly, by simply giving unambiguous expression to his feelings about the subject. The drawback with such openness is that it can result in nothing more satisfying than open denial, and this is just what the contradictory double meaning of the couplet is able to avoid. By combining an obvious reading which is lacking conviction, and can be ascribed to a persona who is being parodied, with a more obscure sense which preys upon the moral insecurity of the subject to whom the lines are addressed, the ‘poet’ lures the young man by means of his inquisitive sense of involvement in what the poem is actually saying. In this there is no escape from the severity of the lines, for on one hand the poem now strips the subject of the moral and personal distinction that has been a fundamental concern of the sequence, and on the other it incriminates him by means of the uneasy fascination with which he will discover the ‘poet’s’ hidden intention.

Superficially, the series of Sonnets 71–74 is thematically connected by their interest in the death of the ‘poet’, and how this is regarded, or should be regarded, by the subject. However, this thematic connection is only a conceit in the mock-dramatization that is designed to reveal the experience and feelings of the two men, and how these are related to the composition of the sequence. This deeper purpose can be seen in the links that tie each of these poems to the next in the series, and from the nature of these links we are able to make a reasonable guess at the order in which they should be read.

Once they have all been studied and understood it is clear from the unfolding revelation what their order should be, but which has been misrepresented by established editorial practices. Sonnet 73 precedes 71, as the latter turns from the idea that the poet is approaching death to that of mourning, and the wishes of the poet for his young friend in relation to this ritual. The opening line of 71 is ambiguously constructed, as we discover when we have finished the sentence, but initially it evokes the couplet of 73, by responding to the mentor’s conception of a love that is intensified by the imminence of death. In this respect 71 redefines this expression of love as mourning which is already enacted, and makes the demand that mourning should end ‘when I am dead’. The link between 71 and 72 is not very difficult, as there is an overt connection between ‘Lest the wise world should look into your moan’ and ‘O, lest the world should task you to recite / What merit lived in me that you should love’. Sonnets 72 and 74 are linked by an association of shame and guilt; the clear insinuation of something morally unworthy is made in the couplet of 72, and then picked up in the allusion to death as justice in action, at the beginning of 74 (‘when that fell arrest / Without all

bail shall carry me away'). In conformity with the sequence 73, 71, 72 and 74 an explanatory background, revealing significant details about the experience of the 'poet' and his friend, is provided for the elegy of Sonnet 73; and at the same time this sequence takes us more and more deeply into the crisis that is created for the 'poet' and his project. Thus, we can only understand these poems properly if this order is followed since it creates a carefully organized structure of meaning.

Sonnet 71
No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it, for I love you so
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O, if, (I say) you look upon this verse
When I (perhaps) compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
But let your love even with my life decay,
    Lest the wise world should look into your moan
    And mock you with me after I am gone.

This poem represents a transition from parody of the mentor's ironic persuasion to the 'poet's' self-parody, especially concerning the attitudes that have sustained his relations with the subject. Whereas in Sonnet 73 the extended double meaning creates a tension between satire and elegy, implying the collapse of their relationship and the 'poet's' enterprise, Sonnet 71 uses death as a conceit for certain delusions which lie within his project. This is suggested in the affectation of sensitivity and delicacy of feeling between the 'poet' and his subject, both in the attitudes assumed by the 'poet' and in how they are expressed. A telling change of tone is therefore created in the movement from the couplet of 73 to the self-abnegation, 'No longer mourn for me when I am dead'. Of course, the tone changes again when we complete the quatrain, but the shift in feeling created by 'this vile world' does not efface the impression of selfless concern. Rather, the succeeding quatrains both sustain and expand the sense of solicitude, and also intimate a shared sensitivity that sets them apart from the world (the expression of this concern being completed in the couplet).

So, in line 3, the 'poet' ironically suggests that the bell announcing his death gives 'warning to the world', pretending that the loss of a poet is a momentous event. This idea of loss is elaborated in the line that follows, and with particular emphasis in the double meaning of 'with vilest worms to dwell'. Its immediate effect, as a commonplace, ridicules the 'poet's' superiority to the world, his assumption that the world should grieve as he is transported from this vile world to that of vile worms under the ground. However, 'with vilest worms to dwell' can also function with 'this vile world', meaning (that I am fled from) 'this vile world, dwelling with the vilest worms' which subversively defends his position by conceding its melancholy 'truth'. If this world belongs to the 'vilest worms', then the poet who seeks to defend its value is estranged and without purpose, which justifies his desire to be forgotten.

At the beginning of the second quatrain the 'poet's' address moves into an ambiguous mood, and remains in this mood until the end of the sonnet. Superficially, this change is related to the delicacy of feeling that is (ironically) assumed to exist between them, and which may be thought to set them apart from the 'vile' world. So, the 'poet' tactfully submits himself to the possibility that 'this line' *might* be read, and his tact is complemented by a preference for being forgotten over causing the pain of loss by being remembered. The tortuous perversity of this sentiment would only be lost on a reader without a sense of humour. A normal response to loss of this kind is not to forget but to remember, even though the memory is painful; and, following Sonnet 73, this poem combines satire upon the 'poet' with a sardonic view of the subject. Thus, while 'this line' is appropriate to the expression of tact, it is equally appropriate to the expression of doubt. In this case there is doubt if the subject would be affected in any way by the death of his friend, and so the 'poet' can be seen as decorously neutralizing this indifference in advance, by forbidding mourning. It should also be observed that the octave follows the pattern established in the opening line, in that line 8 represents a false ending, as the idea to which it belongs is not fully realized until the completion of the poem as a whole. In this respect, the deceptive play of attitudes upon which the meaning of the poem is constructed depends upon a suspension of its primary sense.

Bearing in mind the use that is made of this kind of ambiguity in the structure of Sonnet 71, the sestet takes the form of a single, unbroken utterance that ties itself to the octave by reiteration of the main idea, and resolves it by disclosing the reason behind this idea. In the complex irony with which it uses mood, delicacy of feeling is allowed to descend into artifice, in the gestural '(I say)' and '(perhaps)' of lines 9 and 10 (in the former, removing

the brackets exposes the pretence that characterizes the speaker's stance in the poem as a whole), while the metrical variation of line 12 draws our attention to a further syntactical double meaning. The immediate sense of this line directs the young man to allow his love to fade at the very moment the poet dies, but 'your love even with my life' can also be read, in accordance with the speaker's ironic posture, as 'your sensitivity which is even-handed in passing judgement upon me (my life)'.

In keeping with this posture, an attitude of self-abnegation in the couplet accompanies the reason for this command. Here 'the wise world' is a variant of 'this vile world' and its 'vilest worms', and is constituted by their knowing circle of acquaintances, who may find something to ridicule in the subject's grief for his friend. This revises the sense of 'give warning to the world', in so far as the 'poet' now represents himself as a sacrifice to what is worthy in their relationship, and, in the same spirit, revises the sense of line 8, as it is not only grief that should 'make you woe' but also public humiliation. That the 'poet' is making this sacrifice as a matter of moral necessity is suggested in his reference to 'my poor name' (line 11); there can be no greater imperative than the need for his noble friend to be rescued from ignominy. By the end, however, the nobility of the subject has been turned inside out. The privilege dictated by social convention is allowed to surface from within the elaborate representation of character and sensibility which gives the sonnet its subversive tone.

The ultimate reason for the 'poet's' constraint upon his friend, forbidding mourning, is only clearly revealed in the sonnet that follows in the series (72), but this reason is indicated allusively in the couplet, and it is essential in holding together the meaning of this sonnet. Hence, a source of the ridicule from which the poet must protect his friend is suggested in the use of the 'moan'. Words like moan and groan can allude to sexual pleasure in Shakespeare, and so the couplet can be read as, 'those who are in the know about us will hear the sound of love-making in your moan of grief, and laugh at its absurdity'. This meaning is confirmed in the phrase 'mock you with me' which can be taken as 'you with me' in a physical sense, while 'mock' can mean both to make fun of somebody and to mimic their actions, in this case their sexual activity.

There is also a sense to the closing line that can only be fully substantiated by our reading of Sonnet 72. However, some intimation of it can be found in a satirical exaggeration of the 'poet's' nearness to death, both in this poem and in Sonnet 73. For the sexual implication in 'after I am gone' makes it appear that the participation of the 'poet' is somewhat too brief for his friend's

liking, so 'mock you with me after I have gone' can be read as, 'act out your annoyance with me at the moment when I have had my pleasure and lost interest'. In this, the idea of mocking 'you with me' acquires an even richer comic potential, while the idea that the poet is too old for it becomes a key to the young man's attitudes to ageing in these four sonnets. This reading of the couplet revises some of the fundamental images. Now we can see the 'vilest worms' as including the young man himself for subjecting the 'poet' to ridicule, especially by making too much of his age. This is implied in the way that everything hinges, in 'this vile world', upon how things are made to appear. We also feel more vividly the irony that is intended in lines 7–8, and in 'your love even with my life' in line 12. The affectation of noble self-sacrifice turns out to be an elaborate exposure of the young man's betrayal of the 'poet' and his high ideals.

The 'poet's' self-parody in Sonnet 71 exposes his poetic enterprise in a way that is central to the unfolding of the sequence as a whole. Against the elevated purpose of immortalizing the nobility of the subject, actual experience of the person has transformed the poetry into a tortured exploration of the relations that play beneath the surface of this convention and its illusions of spiritual grandeur. This replaces the uncertainties conveyed by the opposition of personae in earlier poems in the sequence. Hence the parody of the humanist mentor, in Sonnet 73, can be seen as a preparation for the concentration of insight upon these matters in 71.

What we have learned about the relationship between the two men in Sonnet 71 is reflected immediately in the sardonic swing with which the next poem opens.

Sonnet 72
O, lest the world should task you to recite
What merit lived in me that you should love
After my death (dear love) forget me quite,
For you in me can nothing worthy prove;
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
To do more for me than mine own desert,
And hang more praise upon deceasèd I
Than niggard truth would willingly impart.
O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me, nor you.

> For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,
> And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

Though the humanist mentor and love poet are recalled in the attitudes and language of this sonnet, they are not parodied, as in Sonnets 73 and 71. Rather they appear as a muted echo of their original purposes, now serving a violently transfigured passion in the disillusioned 'poet's' irony, which is now of labyrinthine complexity. This poem is clearly divided so that the mentor's voice is predominant in the octave and the voice of the idealistic love poet is predominant in the sestet; this accords with the structure of the verse, in which the basic thought is turned over in the former, leading to a decision based on underlying feeling in the latter. Thus, in the opening lines, an echo of the mentor as schoolmaster is present in the words that are chosen for how the world might question the subject about his attachment to the 'poet'. But here it is the world that uses the language of the classroom, 'merit' being suited to its assimilative purposes, while 'recite' describes the mechanical reproduction of ideas that have already been thought out. In its self-assured, imperious way, the 'world' has already decided what interest the subject takes in the 'poet', and its tasking the young man in this connection can only be seen as a way of 'mocking' him.

A sense of moral inadequacy, also reflecting the 'poet's' disappointment, is accentuated in the syntactical double meaning of 'you should love', which can be applied both to the merit and to 'me', the latter sense suggesting that you should love but do not. The chiming of 'dear love', in line 3, against 'me that you should love' only serves to amplify the expression of loss, before a deceptive equilibrium is produced in line 4. Here the mentor is present in the language of mathematical equation ('you in me can nothing worthy prove') and suggests an attitude of resignation. But considering the 'poet's' feigned deference to the judgement of his friend, the line changes in meaning from 'there is nothing worthy to be found in me' to 'you, specifically, find nothing worthy in me'. In accepting this view of himself, the 'poet' also indicates more explicitly what it is that the 'wise world' will mock, for there is a coarse physical intention in the phrase 'you in me'. Therefore, saying that this 'can nothing worthy prove' implies that you should 'forget me quite' because, in your view, this is my only merit. The point is made all the more forcefully if we rectify the inversion and register the line as also saying you in me proves nothing to be worthy, implying that the value of this behaviour is less than nothing (or morally unworthy).

The spirit of the mentor continues to be felt in the second quatrain, where the opening statement is qualified by the facetious proposal of a psuedo-scientific reinterpretation of their behaviour. In its direct and obvious sense this completion of the sentence presents the 'poet' as seeing himself at his friend's estimation, and suggesting that his name might be rescued by an invention ('some virtuous lie') which, while being false, would be a 'virtuous' gesture of magnanimity. However, this meaning is no more than a thin superficial layer for a dense interplay of ideas, in which the dramatic circumstances behind the poem are interwoven with a subtle enquiry into their moral significance. Thus, the air of scientific experiment is invoked in the secondary meaning of 'virtuous lie', for in the context of this work 'lie' inevitably suggests a sexual embrace, the morally impossible challenge, therefore, being to represent their embrace in such a way as to make it seem virtuous. The contradiction in this whimsical idea is even plainer when we read 'virtuous lie' not simply as a lie that is virtuous, but also as a lie about virtue, and what can be considered virtuous. Behind this obsequious plea, the 'poet' insinuates that the subject is given to bending and distorting our sense of what is virtuous to serve his own ends.

Vigorous developments upon this line of thought emerge in lines 7–8, where the virtuous lie in question is comically portrayed as heroic action. The expression 'niggard truth' recalls the mentor's use of 'niggarding', in Sonnet 1, as a schoolyard term for masturbation, and other forms of sexual pleasure, and so 'niggard truth' refers to the values that apply to behaviour of this kind. Hence, in line 7, the 'poet' 'imagines' himself as a hero of sexual enterprise, exhausted to the point of death by his endeavours and honoured with wreaths, the pathos of his sacrifice being accentuated by a minor tampering with the grammar ('upon deceased I'). Moreover, in these two lines the noble sentiment is lightly compromised by three allusions to the male part, in 'hang more praise' and 'willingly impart' (hang, will and part). In the guise of mentor, the 'poet' conforms to the attitudes and behaviour of the subject while satirizing their situation.

In the sestet the guise of love poet acts as an instrument for satire. So, in its immediate sense, the sonnet continues by feigning, in the eloquent language of love poetry, a withdrawal of the optimistic qualification in the second quatrain. Here the affectation of care and sensitivity is quite transparent, and this is in keeping with the facetious employment of the mentor's voice in the octave. Hence 'your true love may seem false in this', where 'true love' refers both to the 'poet' as the object of love and to the young man's feeling for him, is unduly fastidious – the response of the world to this 'virtuous lie'

is known in advance and leaves no room for uncertainty. Similarly, in line 10, the artificial syntax which makes 'untrue' describe both the subject's defence of the 'poet' and the 'poet' himself ('me') ties the unworthiness of the latter to the magnanimity of the subject, and this quatrain responds by returning the favour. Therefore, the complete oblivion of the 'poet' would protect the subject from humiliation, or 'shame', which might ensue from their association.

As in the use of the mentor's voice, this use of love poetry is not intended simply as parody, it reveals the distortion and betrayal of values upon which their relationship has been established. So, as in the octave, the language of care and solicitude contains another perspective, and this is where the 'poet' says what is intended. Accordingly, 'your true love may seem false in this' echoes the secondary meaning that has been traced for the octave, with particular emphasis in the second quatrain. The interpretation of virtue to serve one's own ends can here be taken as an illustration of the debasement of 'true love'. Moreover, the elevated tone of line 10 is subverted when we read 'for love' not as 'out of love', but 'for the love of it' (synonymously with 'for the fun of it'), and 'well' as gestural, following Sonnet 73. Thus, the line can be read, 'That you for love speak, well, of me untrue', and mean, 'frankly, you make up stories about me, just for the fun of it'. Here 'well' at once feigns cautious hesitancy, knowingness and weary resignation. This is a clear echo of the suggestion already noted in the discussion of Sonnet 71, that the 'poet' is a victim of rumour and gossip at the hands of his subject. In response to this, the next line resonates with particular severity, for 'my name be buried where my body is' implies 'my name' as opposed to 'your penis'. Behind the shame of public disgrace is the defilement of higher values like mutual respect and honour, and this is a sufficient reason to welcome oblivion.

The same extended double meaning can be seen in the couplet. On the surface, the 'poet' admits to being shamed by the confession of his own worthlessness, and casts the same shadow over the subject by charging him with the shame of loving someone who is worthless. This can be seen as acquiescing to the world's perception of them, and is related to other meanings in this sonnet. In connection, therefore, with the theme of deviant sexuality, 'that which I bring forth' alludes to the 'nothing' that issues from sexual behaviour which is disconnected from its natural purpose, and the last line admonishes the subject for loving a form of behaviour that is seen as worthless. However, more profoundly for the aims of the sequence as a whole, the 'poet' is shamed by this confession, in which he concedes defeat. The defilement of mutual respect and honour in these circumstances can only represent the annihilation of his dream. Hence the phrase 'that which I bring forth' refers

not simply to his confession in this particular poem, but also to the sequence itself, which has been constructed on illusory foundations. It may be seen, moreover, as an impulsive reaction to this moment of awareness, that 'to love things nothing worth' implicitly ascribes to the subject a desire to wreck and destroy things which are of genuine value, perhaps as a consequence of his immersion in what is worthless.

Sonnet 74
But be contented when that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away;
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee.
The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me.
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead,
The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be rememberèd.
The worth of that, is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.

Here the artifice and play-acting of the other sonnets in this series are replaced by a plain and devotional language which is both penitential and consolatory. The measured character of the verse, with its rhythmic stability and balancing of phrases and sentences, gives an air of candour to the speech, and complements its progression from one considered judgement to the next. And the couplet mimics a biblical play upon abstract nouns so as to reflect the authority and finality of such language, and so relaxes the tense gravity of its preceding lines.

However, as we respond to the language of the poem we are soon aware of characteristic ambiguities. In the opening quatrain the 'poet' contradicts his own note of censure at the close of Sonnet 72, and the plea in that poem for an oblivion in which he is no longer of any significance to the subject. At the same time the reassuring tone is qualified by a feeling of dissonance in 'fell arrest' and 'without all bail', which might suggest a hidden purpose. It has already been noted that this sonnet is linked to 72 by images of punishment, and we can see why he might have strong reason to feel that these images are

appropriate. Hence, the idea of the fall is suggested by 'fell', while 'bail' invokes 'bale' and implies that he is happy to part with 'this vile world'. In line 3, 'this line' refers both to the sonnet which he is writing, a source of consolation to the friend, and to the 'line of thought' that runs through this series of poems and through the sequence as a whole. There is therefore a connection to the ideas of death and remembrance in Sonnets 73, 71 and 72 which creates a sense of internal contradiction between the consoling 'memorial' and the desire to be forgotten. We can also see the second quatrain as a change of perspective in which this contradiction is intensified by a conventional contrast between body and spirit. By giving emphasis to what he bequeaths to his friend, the 'poet' magnifies the sense of what has been exposed to harm, and this is enhanced by the use of 'consecrate' and 'spirit'.

In so far as the speaker, in Sonnet 74, expresses his devotion to the subject, unguardedly placing his own spirit at the heart of his address, the element of self-exposure is not merely incidental, it is deliberately implicit in the attitude that he assumes. Thus the sestet, in expanding upon the proverbial reflection in lines 7–8, completes his argument in the third quatrain by denigrating the body in order to affirm the spirit in the couplet, and the spirit is magnanimously identified with 'this' (the sonnets, which are nominally composed in honour of the friend). Here the plainness and gravity of the address give expression to a fragile sincerity in which the 'poet' is almost pathetically exposed to the risk of being scorned and rejected. Familiar religious language is continued in the imagery and symbolism of line 11, evoking the figure of death and his scythe ('a wretch's knife' being akin to 'his scythe and crookèd knife' in the couplet of Sonnet 100). Thus 'coward conquest' both reflects the poet's denigration of the body and extends this attitude to death itself, as its conquest is only a triumph over the body. This language, combined with repetitive phrases, is abruptly relieved in the couplet, where the witty play of sound with abstract nouns and rhyming verbs has the effect of suddenly reversing the tone of the preceding lines, and suggests that there may be a sense in which the 'poet' is rather more robust.

When, therefore, we see how extended double meaning works in this poem we are able to appreciate the irony within its devotional tone. In this sonnet, the 'poet' conveys his reaction to the catastrophe that has been brought upon his deepest aspirations by the actions of his friend, and it is violently dramatized by an inner contradiction between the religious genre of the poem and what is concealed in its language. Appropriately, the violence is reflected even in the polysemous language, as we can see in the play on 'contented' and 'fell arrest' in the first line. In the former, behind its consolatory intention, the

‘poet’ invites the subject to have the ‘content’ of his actions revealed by the poems in this series, and especially in this poem (this is clear in a reading of the opening quatrain as a continuous unfolding of the ‘poet’s’ thought), while behind the legal sense of arrest, ‘fell arrest’ alludes to the fall, to represent death as the ultimate point of rest in the ‘poet’s’ own fall from grace, and evokes the idea of divine retribution.

The collapse of his noble project is implicit in his fall, as the greater his ambition to achieve something of lasting spiritual value the more devastating his ‘fell arrest’. This makes it clear why ‘bale’ is concealed within ‘bail’ in the second line, since the end of his life can only be seen as a consoling end to the anguish of disillusionment and moral failure. A desire, moreover, to retaliate against the subject is pursued in the effect of ‘in this line’ (referring now to the content of his actions) upon ‘memorial still with thee shall stay’. While a memorial is obviously an object or monument by which somebody is remembered, it can also be understood, more literally, as an aid to the memory, and echoes of ‘fell arrest’ in ‘still’ create the sense of a memory that is fixed and immutable. So, whenever the subject returns to this memorial he will be faced by the same portrayal of his actions and its moral significance.

The nakedness of the second quatrain is now the exposure of an open wound. In the repetition of ‘review’ the ‘poet’ betrays his anxiety that this poem should be read and re-read by the friend until its ‘message’ is fully absorbed. Another repetition, that of ‘part’, is equally significant, for line 6 identifies the spirit of the poet with his dedicated toil in creating the work ‘that was consecrate to thee’, and the reiteration of this thought in line 8 (‘My spirit is thine’) is disowned in the succeeding phrase by a play on ‘part’. Behind the surface reading of ‘the better part of me’ the ‘poet’ is making a characteristically flexible use of the preposition and saying, it is better that you part from me. This alludes to his damaged spirit, as something that is no longer worth keeping, and the sestet now becomes an elaborate clarification of this closing line in the octave. Contrary to its primary sense, the ‘dregs of life’ refers to the ‘poet’s’ ruined spirit, and lines 10–11 make the most telling reference in the series to the events that have caused its ruin.

In this connection, the clause and phrases of the third quatrain unfold the truth in a measured process of disclosure, at the end of which the intention of the images becomes clear. The double meaning in ‘prey of worms’ employs a conventional phallic allusion that can be found elsewhere in Shakespeare, and this affects the meaning of the phrase ‘my body being dead’. Such a reading is justified by the different senses that can be given to ‘coward conquest’ and ‘wretch’s knife’, for the latter can be seen as a further reference to the penis,

a 'weapon' that any wretch can own, in contrast with the expensive dagger which would also be possessed by the subject. This image gives him the air of a well-born cut-throat, and in doing so unites the ideas of sexual and coward conquest; while 'coward' also describes the behaviour of the victim, who, by acting as a lifeless and uninvolved body ('my body being dead'), has allowed himself to be the prey of 'vilest worms'. This analysis also provides us with an explication of the initial sense of these lines. Death's conquest is cowardly, and therefore morally wretched, because he kills without taking any personal risk. Furthermore, his scythe is a 'wretch's knife' in being blunt and inefficient, like the knives of the poor, when compared with the knife that is used by the living upon the living.

In the closing line of the third quatrain, 'too base of thee' refers not only to the 'poet's' body (and to his spirit) but also to the 'coward conquest', implying, with some irony, that this action is too negligible to be remembered. This is extended in the double meaning of 'base', for while this conquest is not too base for the subject to perform, it is too base to be included in a memorial to him, and must therefore be regarded as too insignificant to be remembered. The line bitterly alludes to a general disposition in 'this vile world' in favour of the socially distinguished, which condones their vile behaviour. The bitterness is made all the more acute for the 'poet' by the fact that this sonnet belongs to a project which exemplifies the general disposition in question, having evolved into a sequence of love poems intended to immortalize an unworthy subject. So, in the couplet, the important underlying ideas of the poem coalesce in the form of a conclusion to both this sonnet and the series of Sonnets 71–74. 'The worth of that' refers both to the body, which is of value only in so far as it contains the spirit, and to the 'coward conquest', which has value strictly in accordance with the moral content of an action, and not as determined by social convention. In saying so, the 'poet' implicitly disengages himself from the purpose of the sequence as it has been understood, and the closing line ('that is this') refers both to the damaged spirit of the 'poet' and the moral worth of the young man as it is revealed by the poem. The significance of the whole sequence lies not in the immortalization of the subject, but in 'what it contains', namely the insight into life that has emerged from its failures. In a poem in which reiteration is used to impress its thought upon the recipient, 'this with thee remains' acts as a transfigured repetition of the opening quatrain. It is a memorial in the sense of 'that yourself' (Sonnet 55), and the sceptic's 'this gives life to thee' in the couplet of Sonnet 18.

Finally, I should make an important qualification to this discussion of Sonnet 74. For the psychological portrayal of the 'poet' would be grossly

simplified if we were to read this work as an exercise in irony, in which the preliminary sense of the verse were no more than a simulation embodying a darker truth. This poem is not a parody of a memorial, which simply invites the reader to see through its surface to a deeper intention. Rather, the strength of the lines in their preliminary sense conveys the strength of the 'poet's' dedication to his 'passion', even when the project is collapsing around him. This is essential to Shakespeare's dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent his experience. Here, the 'poet's' elegy for his loss in Sonnet 73 has become a complex lament, his poetic ambition being penetrated, in the polysemous language of the writing, by allusion to the act of penetration that finally leaves his project in ruins.

In this respect our analysis reveals more clearly the nature of this sequence of four sonnets. The first in the sequence, 73, mockingly attributes to the young man a view of the 'poet' as old to the point of extinction, and makes this an elegy for the loss of an impassioned relationship. In 71, the conceit of death's imminence for the 'poet' is developed by a reflection upon the effect of his demise upon his friend, which leads, via the couplet, into a reflection, in 72, upon its effect upon the world to which they belong. Thus, it is not difficult to see a logical development in the sequence for which the severity of 74, a crowning memorial to the young man, represents an ultimate expression of disillusionment. For here the 'poet' allows the language of his poetry, and its internal violence, to reflect the violence that has been done to his love for its subject, and to the project in which each plays a part.

In this chapter I have shown how Shakespeare's poetry can be seen as a profound representation of reflective life in action. By analysing sonnets from four different phases in the sequence 1–126, I have been able to indicate the development of his thought in the dramatization of a poet's attempt to represent experience. Whereas Sophocles uses an opposition of the genres of tragedy and the riddle in *Oedipus*, and this opposition determines the central characterization and how it is related to the action, Shakespeare relies upon the invention of multiple personae, or 'voices' and trains of thought within a persona, and a variety of genres that are directly related to the creation of personae. Because these genres are life-defining forms through which we acquire an understanding of ourselves they constitute the raw material of the work. They are given expression and meaning by the use of polysemous language, so that the writing itself, and not simply what it describes, generates the substance of this portrayal of life.

Chapter 3

The portrayal of reflective life in action in music: Bach's Prelude and Fugue in B flat minor *(The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1)* and Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor, opus 132

Before I discuss the examples which show how a composer can portray reflective life in action, I must establish the correct terms of reference for an exposition of this matter. Uncertainty over the relationship between music and the creation of resemblances, above all in the large body of important compositions that have no connection with the voice or with explicit description, has led to the use of such terms as 'abstract' and 'metaphorical', which refer only allusively to what they describe. Therefore, I will examine the one that is more commonly applied, in order to distinguish as precisely as possible between the representation of life in poetry and its representation in music.

In this connection, it is not appropriate to call an art form abstract because it does not explicitly depend upon resemblance, either to physical objects or to inner experience such as sensations, moods and emotions. In one sense, 'abstract' means to derive, or extract, or to draw out, or alternatively to summarize, and so is applied generally to acts of understanding, such as in the derivation of underlying patterns of meaning and significance from a mass of phenomena. The more familiar meaning of 'abstract', to denote a general idea that is not connected to any particular, such as the idea of freedom, implies the opposite of 'concrete' (for example, the blueness of the sky or a person's feeling of elation). This opposition of 'abstract' and 'concrete' can be deeply misleading when we are discussing works of art, because the absence

of obvious resemblance in music, and in some forms of visual art, cannot be equated with avoidance of the concrete. There are essential ways in which music can be tied to concrete experience even though this tie may not be dependent upon the creation of a resemblance which is easily identified.

We can only resolve this conflict when we have established how the concepts in question can be applied to works of art in general. To begin with, the idea of representation itself implies abstraction, in the sense that the creation of a dramatic situation and the characters who constitute the world of the play, or sequence of poems, are derived from the flux of reflective life that is available to the dramatist or poet; thus meaning is given to patterns of life and experience from within a relatively formless mass of phenomena. In this connection both senses of the word abstract are associated with art. The artist both derives his or her material from the life and experience of a given world, and reflects upon this analytically in order to define the meaning and significance of life in that world. Thus, the particular ways in which human life is presented, in the features of a particular society and in the moral and personal qualities of the individual, involve a process of abstraction in the creative thought of the literary artist, which has its counterparts in the creativity of the composer, painter and sculptor.

This means that further refinements in the representation of reflective life, as we have seen in both Sophocles and Shakespeare, are refinements in the artist's employment of abstract thought. We have also seen that this development is dependent upon technical resources that are realized in the use of concrete imagery, which is fundamental to characterization and the creation of dramatic situations. For example, Shakespeare's use of polysemous language in the sonnets requires a fusion of abstract thought and concrete dramatization. Thus, 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' dramatizes a poet's attempt to represent life by contrasting the expression of an impulse, as a concrete immediate experience, in two characters, the love poet and sceptic. What makes the fusion necessary is the artist's desire to represent reflective life in action. In this we can see that the resources of dramatic structure and the seemingly inexhaustible linguistic richness of the sonnets serve his abstract thought, and that the interconnection between them is fundamental to Shakespeare's representation of reflective life in accordance with *its* form.

When we set the opening line of Sonnet 18 against, for example, the fugue subject of the first movement of Beethoven's String Quartet, opus 131, we are confronted by both obvious similarities and obvious differences. For though there is no reason to doubt that both expressions of artistic intention are the

representation of reflective life in action, and therefore that the fusion of abstract thought and concrete imagery is present in both, we cannot expect from pure music the transparency of reference that we find in poetry. Even when shaped by extreme subtlety and sophistication, language has, by its nature, a directness and clarity of meaning which is impossible for an art form that is constructed out of intricate patterns of sound. While great richness of expression and imagination can be achieved by qualities such as melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre, and the ways in which these are articulated in combination with each other, this richness of expression and imagination cannot easily be translated into the communication of ideas. Hence it is not possible for Beethoven's fugue to be grasped by us immediately as a resemblance in the way that language can be grasped in the sonnets. We must, if we are to consider this music as the representation of reflective life in action, discover how a fusion of abstract thought and concrete imagery can be achieved in the relative absence of clearly defined resemblances.

The non-specific elements of music

The crux of this distinction lies in the fact that patterns of sound are unlike language in being purely sensuous, and therefore comparatively non-specific in their reference to our experience of life. A rhythmic pattern, for example, can simultaneously suggest certain physical movements such as skipping or dancing, the beating of the sun or the beating of waves, and the mechanical action of machines, as well as the psychological states of desire, anticipation and anxiety. Because the raw materials of music are intrinsically non-specific, its concrete imagery is created primarily not by clearly defined resemblances, but by the arousal of feelings, sensations and moods by sensuous effect or atmosphere, which works as much by association as by resemblance and can be related to experience in many ways. This means that grasping the point when we are listening to pure music does not require us to assign a specific reference or set of references to the patterns of sound, even though there may be many occasions on which a 'reading' of them is appropriate. The essential preliminary response in our understanding of a purely sensuous art form is to experience an intelligible continuity in the parts of the work as it unfolds; this intelligibility is not dependent upon our being able to attach a specific meaning to each of its details.

The non-specific and associative character of music has a further dimension which is relevant to the difference between music and poetry in their representation of human experience. Formal patterning plays a much greater part in the former, and this is related to the ways in which it

is able to represent the general character of experience in a reflective being. This patterning can take the form of repetition, both in the reiteration of phrases and short sequences, and in larger sections and in the recapitulation of material for a whole movement. It is also evident in variant forms of a theme, such as inversion and retrograde, and in the placing of changing or developing material over a repeated melodic, rhythmic or harmonic progression. In these and many other ways formal organization in music may appear to be an abstract and mathematical exercise that has little to do with our experience of life.

But taking this view overlooks the fundamental importance of such things as repetition, change and development, variation and contrast in our experience. For example, our immediate sensory experience of people and places we know well possesses a psychological density created by our past experience, and in this density repetition, change and development, variation and contrast have played an essential part. A moment's reflection will remind us that patterns of repetition underlie all of the changing experience of a reflective being. Without them we could never acquire any mastery over ourselves or our lives; we could never learn anything or form an understanding of things, acquire the sympathetic awareness of others which is essential to a common life, or provide the nurture required for that common life.

Thus, the combination of non-specific reference with a high degree of formal patterning suggests that there is a close association between music and the form of subjective experience for a reflective being. In evoking a sense of psychological density that is true to the nature of our ordinary experience, music can illuminate that experience in unexpected ways. Normally we are quite unaware of the density of our psychological states, and even if we tried could never analyse the experiential history that lies behind a particular response to, say, a friend's appearance. This is because we are not concerned with the form that is taken by our subjective experience, its psychological density and experiential history, but rather with its content. When I am listening to what somebody is saying or trying to do something that demands concentration my attention is unlikely to be directed towards the form of my subjective experience. Without the distraction of explicitly presenting a resemblance, music can evoke an essential aspect of the form of human experience which is otherwise revealed to us only in rare moments of insight.

However, though the sensuous nature of the medium, together with its formal patterning, makes it possible for us to make sense of music in a way that is governed more by inner experience than by analysis, any significant

work of art is dependent for its coherence upon more than a multiplicity of vague resemblances and associations. In this respect, there are different ways in which music is understood, quite apart from the analysis of its grammar and syntax often seen as an appreciation of its intellectual virtues. Our ability to see the significance of this alternative design is dependent in the first place upon the recognition of other strengths that may lie within its non-specific imagery. For being non-specifically concrete makes it possible to effect a subtle transfiguration of genre, and this is often done in music by the interpenetration of genres, so that the conventional associations of either or both are revised. It also becomes possible to connect with greater freedom of movement different aspects of reflective life. The less specific the reference to particular objects the greater the plasticity of the form in simultaneously representing different aspects of subjective experience.

In relation to the first of these, we should distinguish between the transfiguration of genre in music and the opposition of genres that has been discussed at some length in connection with drama and poetry; when two genres are interfused in a piece of music we respond to a unified aesthetic impression. The interpenetration of genres in music should not be compared, therefore, with the opposition of tragedy and the riddle in *Oedipus* or with Shakespeare's multiple personae in the sonnets, both of which are understood only by means of deliberate analysis. This links the two possibilities with which we are concerned. For the sensuous grasp of complex meaning, created by interpenetrating musical genres, is a primary means by which this art form is able to relate different aspects of reflective life and represent them simultaneously.

We have seen that repetition is one important aspect of subjective experience, and being pervasive it must be simultaneous with many of the other aspects of our experience. However, there are numerous other possibilities. For example, sensory perception is an aspect of subjective experience, and this can be represented as simultaneous with memory, as we will see in the following consideration of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, in which the sense of spatial depth evokes a sense of depth in time. The aspects of sensory perception and memory may be simultaneous with the impulse to construct or anxiety that things will disintegrate. Memory and delusory aspiration may be simultaneous with the social impulses which represent another aspect of subjective experience.

In order to clarify these ideas I will begin by examining music in which sense and meaning are directly affected by the interpenetration of different genres. Here, our response to the unified aesthetic impression of purely

sensuous elements is essential to the ability of the work to relate different aspects of subjective experience and represent them simultaneously. A comparatively straightforward example may be found in the first movement of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, where the purpose of the music, as we are informed by the composer, is not to depict the landscape using the colours and resources of the orchestra, but to create the feeling of being in the countryside. Thus, the first subject evokes the countryside by making use of a genre that will appear in a simpler form later in the piece, in the third movement. The spirit of a country dance creates by association the feeling of being in the countryside, and this is combined with the sense of space created by the orchestration, particularly in the spatial depth that is suggested by an isolated oboe sound. At the same time the vocal line of the oboe is like an aria, expressing reflection and memory, and so interweaving the sense of an inner space with the spatial resonance which is suggested by rhythms of a dance being heard from a distance.

This subtle interpenetration of aria and dance, each conveying its own significance and enriching the other, exemplifies the way in which a sensuous medium is able to transform genre in order to relate different aspects of experience. Its freedom to do this is clearly owed to its being non-specifically concrete, for the essential simultaneity of effect is due to the plasticity of its allusion to different aspects of experience. When a genre is being employed to create detailed resemblances there is much less room for the invasion of another genre which illuminates life from another point of view: the intermingling of physical space and inner space, for example, could not be so powerfully sustained. Beethoven's thought is abstract in drawing certain relations from the flux of reflective life, while in its adherence to the elements of musical form it is relatively non-specific. Its meaning is crystallized for us not in the delineation of clear resemblances, but in a suggestive interplay of genres, which evoke experience by means of association.

Bach's Prelude and Fugue in B flat minor

In order to give a more extensive example of the use of genre as an instrument of abstract thought in great music, I wish to consider a Prelude and Fugue from Book 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, number 22 in B flat minor. At first hearing the Prelude might be experienced as a sombre and heart-rending funeral march, and certainly this genre is present and so is the expression of grief. However, the rhythmic complexity of this music is the clue to a greater complexity in its use of genre, which affects the meaning of both the Prelude and the work as a whole. For the Prelude is dominated by three rhythmic

patterns, and each of these patterns is organized in such a way as to make the sensuous effect more specifically concrete and thereby enhance the musical articulation of meaning. Thus, above the slow, common-time beat which conveys the mood of a funeral march, the opening bars establish a gentle wave-like figure whose step-by-step ascent creates an effect which suggests another genre. In particular, the repetition of quavers at the crest of the wave, with the strong beat falling on the third quaver, enables this melody to evoke, with some precision, the feeling of a lullaby. Suspension on a given pitch that ends with a stress on that pitch imitates the rest of a cradle at the top of its return to the hand that rocks it, and the imitation of a cradle in motion is continued in this way throughout the Prelude.

The third pattern is created by the motive to which this repetition of quavers belongs, since the structure of the piece is primarily determined by variants of this motive, with its quaver, semiquavers, quaver, quaver shape ascending and descending to give the music its sense. So, in relation to the lullaby melody, the basic motive makes a slight ascent in the opening five bars and then makes its descent in the seven bars that follow, and this pattern is repeated almost exactly in the second half of the Prelude. The actual movement of the motive in this brief ascent followed by a longer descent is disturbing; the phrase drifts indecisively downwards, in a manner which might recall a line from Sonnet 18, 'Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade'. When we take into account the ways in which these three rhythmic patterns combine to create a sensuous effect and its associations, it becomes clear that this is the music of an everted lullaby, for a child who is deceased, imagined by the composer as wandering downwards in the shadow of death.

This conception of the Prelude as a funereal lullaby is supported by a number of expressive elements in the development of its main ideas. For example, the subdued and sombrely coloured opening bars lead into a passage in which a vault-like harmony is created in bar 3, and sustained in bars 4 and 5 by expanding the space between the upper voices and the bass. Thereafter this effect gradually tapers off through bars 6–12, but is echoed in the second part, and thus weaves the idea of a catacomb into the piece as a whole, so corrupting even further the impression of a tender lullaby. This idea also coincides, in both parts, with the beginning of a slow, uncertain descent of the basic motive, and thus indicates the intention that lies behind this descent. Correspondingly, and again in both parts, at the foot of this descent the voices are compressed, creating a harsher texture, and evoking an airless and gloomy atmosphere in which movement is even slower and less assured. In the first exposition of the theme this descent increases in

difficulty until the music reaches an ultimate point of rest (bars 10–12), and the motive returns to the pitch from which it started at the opening of the piece. Here another turn is taken in the anguished feeling of the music, as a return to the beginning now works upon the confusion and suffering with which the lullaby rhythm is weighted, by thinning the texture to a few notes and conveying a sense of emptiness and desolation.

This structure in the Prelude, touching upon psychological states that lie behind the music, is clearly not intended to refer to the unfolding of experience in the way that we would expect in drama; rather the nature of a particular kind of anguish is illuminated from several points of view in accordance with the musical structure. Hence, the return of the motive to its ultimate point of rest in the second part is more severe and heavily chordal, in keeping with the desolation from which it emerges. Repetition and the plasticity of an expressive form based upon relatively non-specific elements make it possible to achieve this kind of representation.

This music also echoes another genre which is close to the feeling of moral failure that might well be connected with the experience that is represented in this piece. An insistent rhythmic pattern in the bass is employed elsewhere by Bach (for example, in the opening section of his Cantata 54) to suggest a mood of moral uneasiness and vulnerability. In this Prelude there is an affinity with such penitential church music, as the rhythmic pattern in the bass imitates the dominant motive as it moves between the upper voices. Moreover, Bach gives this rhythmic imitation a melodic shape that is an attenuated reflection of the ascending and descending line of the theme. Consequently, the bass line acts as both the intimation of a funeral march and as a voice that implies the estrangement of life from its proper realization and fulfilment. Thus the penitential mood is extended in the severity of the last line with its dissonance, and the compression of its descent in the closing bars.

The Fugue can be seen as a response to the Prelude, in which the music dramatizes the need of the composer to free himself from moral and emotional torment. Hence, we can feel in this music the visionary impulse of a redeeming ascension in which the soul of the lost child is recovered in heaven. This is represented in a subtle and delicate intermingling of the subject of the Fugue with a secondary theme, the fragility and disappearance of which are pivotal to the structure of this piece. Accordingly, the overall structure is organized in three equal sections: the character of each is determined by the ways in which relations between the subject and secondary theme are gradually transformed in the unfolding of the music in order to imply a disintegration of the original impulse. In this way the Fugue dramatizes the failure to sustain

an imaginative hope, a hope which is conveyed in the successive entries of the subject in the opening section. This brief three-bar theme consists of a descending fourth followed, after a beat rest, by the leap of a minor ninth and a short scalar descent and rise, which suggests the trough of a wave. Preparation in the opening bar gives the procession of crotchets the feeling of a triumphal march, set in motion by the preceding intervals; and, at the same time, a leap of desire is conveyed in the sharp ascent. When it is heard at the beginning, the subject is felt to follow two paths simultaneously, in that the second entry in the alto is accompanied by a continuation of the subject into the secondary theme in the soprano. This theme is given an effortlessly floating quality by two characteristic rhythmic features: one is that of quavers on the weak beats succeeding and preceding longer notes (crotchets and dotted minims), and the other is the tie of these longer notes over the bar line so as to suppress the first beat in the bar. (These features are all the more effective due to the use of small intervals covering a limited range of pitch.) Moreover, the feeling of transcendence is heightened by the use of accidentals which give a glowing colour to the line, and by the sympathetic intermingling of the alto line, so that it shares both the rhythmic and harmonic character of the secondary theme. Thus the Fugue commences with a triumphal march flowing immediately into a visionary impression of transcendence which is a response to the Prelude.

Following the pattern established in the first and second entries, the third and fourth, in tenor and bass, are in stretto; and while at this point there is a marked separation of the subject from the transcendental theme, we continue to feel that the latter is being supported by the former. As in the opening, the rapid re-entry of the triumphal march intensifies the sense of agile and effortless motion in the soprano, and this feeling is sustained until the gradual disintegration of the transcendental theme begins in bar 15. At this point the Fugue defies our expectations, for we might expect the transcendental theme to assert itself as a counter-subject and flourish in the style of similar themes in other fugues of this type (namely those with an affinity to church music, such as numbers 4, 14 and 24 of Book 1). Instead, only fragments of the characteristic rhythms of the transcendental theme appear between bars 15 and 24, and the vitality of the opening is dissipated in a passage of gradual descent measured in a succession of scalar crotchets which belong to the language of the subject. Hence, the treatment of the Fugue imitates that of the Prelude; an everted lullaby in the former is answered by a calculated deviation from the conventional form of the fugue as an uplifting expression of growth or spiritual self-assertion.

The unfolding of this design in the second section begins at bar 25, with a re-entry of the subject which expresses a desire to recover the visionary optimism with which the Fugue began. This is conveyed in an even greater leap, of a minor tenth, to the triumphal march music, combined with the same continuation of the march into the transcendental theme. However, this time the second entry of the subject no longer supports this theme, and the section as a whole is characterized by the sense of a conflict in which all attempts to restore the theme are stifled by an increasingly assertive and densely textured reiteration of the subject. Towards the end of this section, the voice of the transcendental theme is reduced to turbulent confusion, as the use of quavers, which had given it an exclusive refinement and delicacy, is less discriminating, occurring in bars 46–49 with impetuous momentum on all beats of the bar. This subdual of the transcendental theme is completed with a trill at the close of bar 49, the evocation of a drum roll, and the military reference changes the meaning that has been given to the subject. Whereas, in the opening of the Fugue, the triumphal march is woven into the transcendental theme as an expression of visionary hope, now, in the music of the third and final section the military aggression of the subject alludes to a significant function of triumphal ceremony, which is to veil the loss and unrealized fulfilment of life that is inevitable in war.

Thus the closing section of the Fugue replaces the fragile optimism of the opening with a bitter evocation of marching armies, and from bar 50, where the subject re-enters using the same high C flat as at bars 25–27, the leap of desire is expunged in a long descent heavy with richly textured and dissonant chords. The martial character of the music is emphasized in an extended version of the subject doubling the voices in thirds at bars 55–60; this passes from soprano to bass in a sharp movement downwards, and leads into a spiralling descent, which is also conveyed by the harmony, in the following bars. By this time only vestiges of the transcendental theme appear. Like the triumphal march, its character has been transformed as it now serves to drive the march forward – and so reverses the intermingling and mutual enhancement of these musical ideas at the beginning of the Fugue. This transformation is especially forceful in the closing line, where the quavers which have been so important in defining the character of the transcendental theme now appear at the beginning of the bar (71 in the alto) with a convulsive emphasis. At this point the subject, or part of it, is reiterated in rapid succession no less than five times, to create a massive chordal effect in which the dissonance of the ending of the Prelude is echoed with an intensity that conveys, with uncompromising finality, the composer's verdict upon his dream of consolation.

The structural affinities between the two parts of the work confirm this analysis. We have seen that the Prelude is composed of equal halves while the Fugue is composed of equal thirds, and in each of these sections there is a brief ascent followed by a long descent. Furthermore, there is a structural relationship between the two parts, in that the Fugue represents a hopeful response to the emotional and moral complexity of the Prelude, and gradually loses faith in itself and so descends into anguish and moral disquiet. This dramatization of the composer's attempt to contend with the loss of a child implies that there is no consolation for the loss; only the fulfilment of its life would serve that purpose. In the psychological subtlety and depth of its representation of reflective life in action this music, like *Oedipus* and the sonnets, uses the opposition of genres as a means of exploring human experience.

What is distinctive to musical form, and distinguishes it from literature, is its logic as a sensuous form; this enables a composer to manipulate with great freedom the various genres and expressive resources at his or her disposal. In this prelude and fugue repetition, variation and formal development reflect the sense of continuity, development and change in our experience of life. At the same time, the fluidity of reflective life, with its unpredictable interpenetration of different aspects of experience, is reflected in a plasticity which makes it possible to combine opposing forms of expression in the same moment, so that they are felt simultaneously. Taken together these elements enable the composer to suggest the form of our subjective experience; this music, therefore, is true both to our introspective knowledge of our feelings and emotions, and to the more obscure 'inner life' of our cognitive experience. Illumination of the latter has its main source in the structure and meaning of the piece as a whole, and is evident in the unpredictable transformation of musical impulses mentioned above. Thus, Bach's opposition of the lullaby and funeral march in the Prelude, and of other genres in the Fugue, unites feeling and emotion with a sense of the psychological changes that are concealed within our response to what happens in our lives. This is possible because, rather than being a description of feeling and emotion, this music is an expression of cognitive experience in action, and shows its different aspects in relation to each other.

Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor, opus 132

The late quartets of Beethoven contain a sequence of pieces that may be compared with the sonnets of Shakespeare in their scope and depth, and it is most likely that a similarly coherent development of thought can be traced

through them, in accordance with the order in which they were composed. This appears to be especially true of the sequence that begins with number 15 in A minor, continues with number 13 in B flat major and concludes with number 14 in C sharp minor. The possibility that a musical self-portrait may lie behind the sequence is suggested in the title given by the composer to the third movement of 15: 'Sacred song of thanksgiving of a man restored to health to the divinity, in the Lydian mode'. Thus, the following discussion of 15 is presented with this conception of its relation to the other pieces in mind.

Movement one

Like the Sixth Symphony, the Quartet in A minor begins with a sense of awakening, but an awakening of a different kind. Where the former evokes a sense of lively engagement with the external world, the introduction to this quartet is more complex and perhaps even paradoxical. Here the awakening is evoked by the alternation of wide intervals, such as the octave and sixths, with ascending and descending semitones, which, together with a quiet slow tempo, create a feeling of tentativeness and disquiet. Contrary to the opening of the symphony, there is a strong feeling of enclosure, which suggests an awakening that is inward and disconcerting rather than joyously welcomed. This awakening to a sense of disorientation is intensified by a harmonic progression which grows in dissonance as the experience reaches its climax in bars 5 and 6, and by a corresponding drift downwards in the cello, reaching its lowest note in bar 7, which separates the voices. Bar 7 is also the beginning of a sudden recovery of focus, as the quietness is broken in bar 9, which is marked f, and momentum is created by descending semiquavers followed by an ascending arpeggio to introduce the principal motive. Already, this abrupt change of expression announces the character of the movement, and of the sequence of pieces as a whole.

The dynamism of the music takes us into the world of the composer as we know it from his other works, the world of a Promethean visionary whose revolutionary approach to form is a means to illuminate and transform the mind of the listener (see Appendix). Moreover, in this case the dynamism is also an expression of the composer's response to the mood with which the piece has begun. Thus, in bars 9 and 10 he asserts his creative energy over the disquiet of his awakening and launches the music into a vigorous dance-like transformation of its basic character. At this point, leading into bar 11, the volume returns to p and a concise development of the principal motive into a short theme leads into another crescendo, which abruptly changes the

direction of the music by means of a variant of the asymmetrical V-shaped passage in bars 9 and 10.

The turbulent form in this music is an expression of the psychological richness at its heart. This is especially evident in the sudden changes of mood in which one state of mind is carried over into another. Hence, the principal motive and its thematic development retain some trace of disorientation in the introduction; the visionary power of a renewed awakening in the music seems to rest upon a recognition of its psychological origins in the opening. This continuous exchange of contrasting expression is achieved partly by a recollection of the melodic shape of bars 5–8 in the principal motive, especially in the ascending and descending semitone at its peak. In addition to this subtle fusion of antithetical feeling in the melody, the energy and momentum created by rapid changes of mood blend the disruptive force of Promethean revelation with the psychological disturbance and uncertainty from which the music emerges. Furthermore, the perfect integration of these contrasting tendencies in the opening statement of the movement suggests immediately that the relationship between them is fundamental to the meaning of the piece. Emphasis is given to this suggestion by the concise reiteration of this sequence before the introduction of a second subject, which suggests that meaning is being wrested from musical thought as it is being created. In this respect, the significance of a principal motive and theme, which is dance-like in character but coloured harmonically with a feeling of estrangement, tends to overturn the associations of dance, and replaces connotations of social involvement with a sense of their absence. Thus, in the principal theme there is a fusion of Promethean vitality with an allusion to dance which subverts its conventional meaning.

In this we see a complexity akin to the opposition of voices that has been examined in Shakespeare's sonnets. As an expression of Promethean will, this music can be seen to dramatize the origins of artistic revelation in the disorder and failures of personal life. Such a conflict within the music justifies the claim that meaning is wrested from musical thought as it is realized. Like the 'poet', whose project is threatened by his actual relations with the subject of the sonnets, Beethoven tests the visionary truth of his music against the failure of his life, and, in doing so, recognizes that his 'vision' owes its value to the common life to which he belongs. In both cases an unwillingness to engage fully with the conflict results in a betrayal; we have seen the devices by which this law is enforced in the sonnets, and evasion of this kind in the quartets would be a betrayal of the composer's Promethean identity.

Besides the effects of sudden contrast in rhythm, tempo and volume, and the frequent use of crescendo, momentum is also created by abbreviation. At bar 30 the principal motive cuts across the V-shaped passage at its lowest point, and the forceful manner of this interruption complements the replacement of semitonal intervals by whole tones. Preparing the way for a positive surge in the third section of the exposition, this helps to create a vigorous dance-like movement, culminating in a rhythmically lively alternation of semiquavers and staccato quavers and crotchets in bars 38–41. Small modifications to the disquieting instability sustain a reassuring transformation. However, such expressions of the composer's will are subject to the fundamental constraints mentioned above. So the surge of Promethean self-assertion quickly exhausts itself and is left hanging in its high staccato notes. Its flourish of evanescent energy is quietly mocked by the staccato crotchets that follow at a twelfth lower, although change of pitch and volume at this point also create momentum for an ascending chromatic scale in dotted rhythms, which initiates the lyrical second subject.

There is a characteristic ambiguity in the repetition in bars 40–42, which hints at irony while carrying the music forward as part of a constantly changing and reinvigorated pattern of sound. A tendency for the music to look forwards and backwards simultaneously is anticipated in the introduction of the piece, which both dwells introspectively within itself and prepares us for the violently contrasting semiquaver passage that launches the principal motive. Without this ambiguity it would not be possible to create a Promethean music that explores the relationship between its own vision and the life from which it emanates. Visionary freedom is necessarily qualified in this work by the complex life it examines.

The second subject begins with an expression of elated relief in the upper voices, reflecting a triumph of will over the disquiet which is at the heart of the music. A serene transformation of the principal subject is established by its modulation into F major, augmented versions of the dotted rhythms of the main theme (bars 49 and 51 in the second violin, and bars 53 and 55 in the first violin), and an inversion of the same, in crotchets and quavers, in bars 50 and 54. But at the same time the viola and cello create a skipping rhythm that is ironically light-hearted. Since any aspiration to settle upon a reassuring feeling or mood is thwarted by the conflict at the heart of the music, a lyrical dissolution of the underlying tension is opposed by short contrasting passages which disrupt the composer's struggle to create a sense of stability. Thus, at bar 55, the music returns to the energetic fluidity of the chromatic semiquavers in bar 37, and this leads into a further variant

upon the Promethean V-shaped upheaval – from bars 61–63 a vigorous zig-zag is introduced in chordal semiquavers. The whole development of this sequence gives the lyrical 'triumph' of the second subject its true place in the mercurial and headlong momentum of the piece. Then, removing the chords and leaving the gliding semiquavers and enhancing the change by means of extreme dynamic contrasts allows the underlying fluidity to reappear (bars 62–65), and this leads into a concluding reiteration of the V-shaped motive at bars 68–69.

It can be seen from this analysis that the exposition is given its character by a rapid interplay of contrasting motives and themes, and by the dramatic tension and momentum created by this interplay. Following the introductory awakening to a feeling of disorientation, the music alternates in emphasis between Promethean self-assertion and the sense of estrangement that is associated with a life that is unfulfilled. The former emerges with particular force in the various forms of V-shaped motive, and in the fluid semiquaver passages which convey the sense of a continuous underlying spirit. The latter is felt most strongly in the transfigured dance imagery of the principal subject and its ironical transformation in the second subject. We can see how every development attempts to resolve the conflict, both in the abrupt contrasts that reflect a Promethean struggle with the material, and in the impulsive revelation and concealment of a unifying spirit. Thus, we find the fluid semiquavers first at bar 36, where they function as an attempt to elevate the principal theme; then, at bar 56 they emerge energetically from the lyrical second subject only to lead into a disruption of the zig-zag variant of the V-shaped motive, before returning in bars 62–66 in a concentration of Promethean self-assertion at the close of this section of the movement. However, it is the nature of this music that the true representation of inner conflict depends upon a resistance to the composer's desires, and that this should be a source of both aesthetic excitement and depth of insight.

In the development section of the movement, this resistance is given its most powerful expression. From bar 75 the fundamental elements of inner conflict are opposed to each other in a manner that is highly concentrated and succinct. Long notes in the lower voices, using the characteristic semitone intervals, recall the introduction which is now interwoven with the principal theme. An elusive feeling of estrangement, resistant to the forceful Promethean impulse, is intensified by the otherworldly feeling that is given to the principal motive by its softness and widely spaced intervals. Thus, an intensification of the introduction gives rise to an impulsive reassertion of the Promethean will, as the interwoven elements are starkly transformed

into aggressive staccato crotchets, between bars 80 and 90. To polarize the fundamental elements of the music in this way dramatizes their resistance within the original conception itself, accentuated by its greater intensity. Seemingly in response to this difficulty, a fresh approach is made at bar 92, which quickly develops into an abridged version of the earlier expression of unifying spirit, leading into the second subject (bars 30–48). However, this, too, is abruptly transformed into the staccato crotchet motive, which is heard in such a way that the change of key, from F major back to A minor, gives emphasis to the underlying resistance, the first appearance of the staccato crotchets (at bar 91) being still within the listener's memory. We can feel the urgency of the composer's desire to find a solution to his problem in the tonal change of direction.

The ensuing semibreve sequence of four bars (bars 103–106) gives anguished emphasis to the semitonal intervals which play a prominent part in the movement as a whole. Here we can sense the shadow of a tortured Prometheus tearing against his fetters, in the composer's reaction to his failure to bring the elements of the piece into harmony. Moreover, this painful conflict only leads into a further interweaving of introduction and principal motive, in a form that reflects its melancholy character. This is particularly evident in the appearance of this motive in the upper voice, in bar 107, and is given a muted expression in the lower voices in the following bars (111–113), beneath a preparation for the return of the staccato crotchets. Significantly, this preparation is extended in bars 114–117, so that a reassertion of Promethean energy launches the recapitulation with subtle agility; this effect is completed in the brief crescendo which characterizes the reappearance of these crotchets. Thus the development section is consistent with what we have found in the introduction and exposition. Once again the music acquires its cogency and depth from its response to the revelatory momentum created at the beginning of the movement.

The change of key into E minor (at bar 111) which leads into the recapitulation enables the composer to initiate a 'Promethean' reshaping of the exposition and development section. Now the principal theme returns in a reflective and muted form, as though suggesting that the sense of disorientation and estrangement have been absorbed and can therefore be examined more calmly. Hence the change of mood is extended to the structure of the music, for it omits the unfolding of the principal thematic material and the turbulent opposition of its contrasting motives. Rather, momentum is sustained by an expression of strength in the use of dynamics, where the principal motive appears in bars 141 and 143. This is accompanied by a

return to the home key (at bar 138), and the modulation creates a feeling of sympathetic engagement.

The significance of this tonal development lies in its placement, as the Promethean gesture, together with a renewed sense of involvement, leads into a reiteration of the liberated dance-like passage which connects the first and second subjects and gives the Promethean impulse its strongest unfettered expression (bars 141–154). A further modulation (into C major) heightens the lyricism of the second subject itself, though we have already seen that both this and the connecting passage are presented with some irony. However, our immediate concern is with a reshaping of the exposition, which subdues the violent opposition between the basic elements of the music and, correspondingly, intensifies the expression of its promise of a hopeful resolution. The changes that are wrought in the recapitulation are consistent with a further consideration of the material by the composer, as he looks for ways to harmonize its conflicting elements without falsifying the conflict.

The purpose of this reshaping is only fully revealed when the whole of the first part of the movement can be compared with the whole of the second part. Therefore, the significance of the recapitulation is understood when its treatment of the musical ideas is seen in relation to how these ideas are developed in the coda. In this connection, the bridging passage of discrete, probing quavers and crotchets (bars 188–191) is an extended and more relaxed and exploratory version of the bridge between the exposition and development section, and it leads into a calmer interweaving of the introductory thematic material with the principal motive. Whereas the development section begins with the disorientation of the introduction interfused with the estrangement of the principal motive in order to generate a sense of psychological oppression (at bar 84), here the texture is more transparent, and the feeling is closer to an arresting echo than an envelopment. The transitory nature of this experience is accentuated by its flowing immediately into another echo, a modified version of the evocation of Prometheus struggling with his torment at bars 103–106. In place of two widely separated rising semitone intervals, there is a descending semitone followed more closely by a rising semitone, while the heavy chords of the earlier bars are replaced by an accompaniment based on the principal theme. This further echo of the original musical idea alludes both to the psychological conflict behind the composition and to the difficulty of resolving this conflict in the creative transformation that is sought in composing the work.

These reformulations in the music belong to a synoptic reiteration of the basic sequence of ideas in the movement, with the significant omission of

what is overtly Promethean, angular motives and phrases such as the V-shaped passage. In this, the revelatory momentum takes a different form, in keeping with and extending the turn of the music that has been observed in the recapitulation. The second part of the movement achieves its momentum by drawing out, with increasing fluidity, a release of the tension which has reached its pitch in the climax of the development section, and this has uncompromisingly contrasted the basic elements of the music. Thus the coda moves smoothly and rapidly through the phases which give the music its outline, combining the introduction with the principal theme, and then, by way of an augmented version of its primary rhythmic idea (bars 210–211) and alternating semiquavers, alludes to the dance-like passage connecting the principal theme with the second subject. The second subject itself is no sooner stated and recognized than it flows into the augmented version (slightly modified), and then into a mounting reiteration of the principal theme. The climax towards which this synoptic treatment of the outline has been leading is merged with the music of the Promethean will and the music of estrangement, thereby uniting with extraordinary musical conviction the basic elements of the piece, which for so long have appeared to be irreconcilable.

This act of conflation can be identified in particular in bars 236 and 237, where the Promethean music at its most liberated is exhilaratingly interpolated into the principal theme, and this initiates a wave-like series of climactic developments which end the movement. Along with forms that are characteristic of the coda, such as the alternating semiquavers and the augmented version of a basic rhythmic idea, these developments include a further allusion to the motive which has invoked the suffering Prometheus (bars 104–107). At bars 247 and 248, the echo of this motive, at the beginning of the coda (bars 203–204), is given a triumphant inflection by its eminent position in the melodic line, and in particular by the fluent descent in the bars that follow (249–254). The exact reiteration of a semitone from F to E is a clear affirmation of the Promethean spirit in the act of composition, as the mastery it exemplifies in bringing together the opposing elements within the music is a confirmation of its importance.

It is obvious that this music does not represent life by means of objective judgements, or by creating resemblances to an object that is assumed to exist independently of the artist's attempt to represent it. Even in the introduction, we are aware of the composer's struggle to define an experience that is both elusive and difficult to comprehend. Exploration of its meaning develops into the dramatization of conflict within the understanding that he has of himself, especially in relation to the conception of his music as a kind of

Promethean vision. A tension is therefore created between the Promethean impulse to illuminate and the moral risk that he takes by examining the relationship of this impulse to his life as a whole. For this reason his mastery of the inner conflict within the piece cannot be regarded as an unclouded victory in which failures in life are explained away as the concomitant of a Promethean sacrifice.

Rather, the struggle for mastery over the psychology behind the music is an essential part of what is dramatized. This is implied in the subverting of dance-like music to express the sense of estrangement; in the constantly repeated principal theme; and in the feeling of irony that accompanies expressions of liberation, both in the connecting passage between the theme and second subject, and in the second subject itself. Thus the climactic fusion of the opposing elements of the music in the coda is not free from this subversive feeling, and the expression of triumph cannot be divorced from traces of anguish that are still present in the very substance of the music, its rhythms and intervals. Even within the exhilaration of its climactic ending the music is suffused with a feeling of declamatory insistence, and concludes with a violent abruptness that recalls the unsettling and turbulent character of its exposition.

Movement two

In ways that contrast the rich invention of the artist with the uncontroversial life of its subject matter, the scherzo resourcefully makes fun of a society that seems to both exclude and obstruct the renewal of vision with which the composer so clearly identifies himself. Employing a form which is obviously dance-like and may suggest an elegant minuet for the entertainment of a sophisticated elite, this music extends the idea of mechanical repetition conveyed by its form, in the reiteration and variation of its basic motive. Thus, after a sweeping, graceful four-bar introduction, establishing the mood of a dance, the motive is imitated in the first violin and viola (bars 5–10); the second bar of the motive is imitated twice in the first violin (bars 11 and 12); and then further, denser repetitions of the motive, involving the three top voices (bars 13–18), lead into a more complicated elaboration of the rhythm of the second bar of the motive. This thickly textured pattern of reiteration creates a conversation that is the very opposite of the energetic Promethean reflection of the opening movement; not only do the succeeding voices repeat what has just been said, in some there is nothing more than mindless repetition. Moreover, the whole exchange ends with an influx of jostling sound lacking a sense of purpose (bars 19–23).

In place of the intense opposition which pervades the attempt to represent life in the first movement, we have polite society and its innocuous chatter. The minor key (in this movement the home key is F sharp minor) gives a melancholy edge to the composer's satirical play, which alludes to social exclusion, and the barrier presented to his Promethean art by an unresponsive social order. At the same time, however, his enterprise is alive in the composer's resourceful elaboration of the musical material. Almost the whole of this movement, excluding the trio section, is constituted by the rhythms set out in the introductory four bars and the motive, using different versions of them in different positions or different keys, in order to give a new slant to the representation of a basically repetitive subject matter. Thus, in addition to the examples already mentioned, the elaboration of bar 6 in bars 19–23 is itself elaborated in bars 41–44, where the sevenths and sixths and syncopated rhythms suggest both an inane moment of discontinuity in the dance and a thought-free nodding movement to accompany the tireless conversational reiteration. When the motive appears in its lowest register, it mocks authority at its most vacuous (bars 65–68), while in its highest, it mocks the sympathetic concurring of minds which are otherwise in a state of rest (bars 86–91). The repetition of sections of the music, especially the large central section at both the beginning and the end of the movement, only strengthens the satirical point by suggesting a world in which the same ideas turn over endlessly without ever changing.

The satire takes another direction in the trio section, which consists of strict patterns of crotchets in the first violin and dancing quavers in the second violin surrounding a sustained A, which is held in the first violin throughout and also in the viola and cello. This is inspired by the hurdy-gurdy music of the streets, and leads into a *Ländler*, before re-emerging briefly to end this section and allow the main theme to resume. The strict patterning of the hurdy-gurdy music has an obvious significance for a movement concerned with empty repetition, and its connection with the world in question is heightened by the ways in which Beethoven creates the impression of an iridescent body spinning weightlessly, while clearly reflecting the banality of its musical inspiration. As a contrast with the unchanging and glittering sensation to which this music alludes, the inclusion of the *Ländler* takes music from the street in another direction; the more primitive dance form in this section of the movement suggests that a life from which renewal of vision is excluded is not merely static, it is also regressive. In particular, Beethoven employs the crude stress on every beat to emphasize the musical degeneration which is represented by this form, and comically releases himself from it

with a brutality that is ironically opposed to the voice of authority in bars 86–91. Thus, we can see how the second movement is a development of the composer's self-portrait in this work. From the uncertain exploration of his life and the art that gives it direction, he turns to the world to which his life belongs and this, too, is fraught with uncertainty. Here the satirical energy of his invention in portraying this world represents a defence of his Promethean sense of purpose.

Movement three

The third movement takes the form of a double variation, in which there are two variations of the first section and one variation of the second. The dominant ideas in this movement are established in the first section itself, and these ideas are indicated in the heading, 'Sacred song of thanksgiving to the divinity of a man restored to health, in the Lydian mode', which is usually taken to mean a 'hymn of thanksgiving'. However, Beethoven made a study of Palestrina's music in preparation for the composition of these quartets, and the form in this section is influenced by the mass. As the mass itself is a celebration of the divinity the two things are connected, and thanksgiving is one meaning of 'eucharist'. Hence, the idea of thanksgiving to the divinity is implied in the use of a church mode to compose this music from forms that are derived from the penitential opening part of the mass. This can be seen in an imitation, note for syllable, of the words 'Kyrie eleison' up to the very last bar of the section, when the music is altered to anticipate the second section. The exposition of this idea is highly patterned, setting a motive of eight crotchets and following it with a rhythmic augmentation of eight minims; this procedure occurs five times in all. One melisma is added to the words, making the notes 'form' Kyrie ele-e-ison. The metre, rhythm and harmonic progression of the music imitate the accents and expressive shape of the words, observing the separation between them, and this is repeated through all ten versions.

However, Beethoven is not writing a mass for string quartet, and some things that might be expected of a mass are included while others are not, and one, in particular, is strikingly absent. We can sense the difference from an actual mass in the very slow and veiled character of the music, which is suggestive less of a celebratory rite than of its recollection by the composer, in keeping with his personal background as a Catholic (Thayer 1967). Thus the lightly harmonized crotchets evoke the voice of the celebrant heard from a distance, while the response of the people is evoked in the heavier and more

resonant minims. The contemplative inwardness recalls the sense of uneasy awakening which began the opening movement.

In the first and second movements we have seen a dramatization of the composer's attempt to reconcile the Promethean impulse of his art and his sense of personal failure, followed by a satire on the society which is unresponsive to his art. In this light the mood of penitential contemplation is consonant with this moment in the piece and its sense of moral uneasiness. But the memory of being at one with the people, and of sharing its vision, can also be seen in a less orthodox way. For there is an air of paradox hovering over the music, and its patterning includes a development within this movement which intensifies the sense of inwardness and runs counter to the ritual significance of the mass. Progression through the statement of its dual theme and four variants imposes a definite shape upon this section of the movement. We experience this in the descent that is suggested by changes of harmony and expression between the theme and its second and third versions, followed by a sense of re-emergence in the fourth and fifth versions. Though this music is modal there is still the sense of a tonal centre, which, however it is construed, affects the harmonic structure. This is felt in the darker and relatively dissonant chord progression of the third version, in which intensification of the penitential mood is also created by pitch and dynamic expressiveness. (In relation to harmony: if, for example, F is taken to be the fundamental note then the harmonic progression in the first, second, fourth and fifth versions are heavily influenced by inclusion of the tonic chord, while it is absent from the third.)

The structure of the first section conveys an experience of memory turning into a mood of penitence and moral uncertainty, from which there is a recovery, and this leads immediately into imagery of ascension in the second section. Thus, while it is heartfelt, this is not an expression of moral surrender, and therefore lacks the sense of true penitence intended by the Kyrie eleison, and is a psychological preparation for thanksgiving in the Gloria and other parts of the mass. Beethoven's purpose, in making this detailed allusion to the mass, is not to participate in this ritual, but to establish it as a basis for the transformation to be wrought upon it in the variations that follow. Behind the outward expression of thanksgiving to the divinity, the music is organized in accordance with a subversive design.

This design is already suggested in the abrupt contrast created by the statement of the second section, which is in the key of D major. Given the description 'Feeling new strength' and much livelier in tempo and rhythm, this section is antithetical to the first. In place of the inward contemplation

we have just seen, the feeling of new strength takes the form of highly animated and rapidly changing music that is arranged in the manner of a freely varied andante movement with a complicated trio section at its centre. The significance of this violent contrast is immediately implied in accents (the music is now in 3/8) combined with widely spaced intervals (bars 31–35 and 39–43) which lead into high, rapidly ascending runs (bars 36 and 44) followed by a poised soaring (bars 37 and 38, and 45 and 46). This suggestion of ascension indicates the nature of the transformation with which the movement is concerned.

A parallel for this can be found in Palestrina's motet for the Feast of the Ascension, *Viri Galilaei*, especially in its second part, which uses a similar diction and structure. And when this is related to the meaning of the quartet as a whole we can see how Beethoven adapts the idea of the mass to his own purposes. There is no tradition or authority which endorses the notion of an ascending Prometheus, and a wry awareness of the provocation in this self-portrait is suggested by the trill in the first violin which mutes the offending gesture (bars 2–4) and shields it from the heavens. This awareness acquires a blend of defiant exposure and self-mockery in the drumming rhythms of the following section (bars 51–64), in which the *Ländler*-like accent on every beat echoes the trio section of the second movement. In that case the primitive character of the music expressed a satirical attitude to the life of society portrayed in that movement, and so, in its portrayal of the rebellious composer's appropriation of the mass, an element of satire is implied. In the midst of this, the music achieves a momentary release of inner freedom, in an exhilarating and liberated strain of folk dance (bars 55–61), before returning to its drumming rhythm. The section closes with a return to the soaring theme, but in its running down, as the energy of this self-assertion fuelled by new strength expires under the weight of its own audacity.

In the first variation of the first section the idea of transformation is immediately suggested by two changes that give a new character to the music. The initial theme retains the general shape that is given by its intervals, but the rhythm is altered by the introduction of quavers and dotted crotchets in order to create a rhetorical and poetic gesture, such as we might associate with the artist himself. Correspondingly, the continuation of this theme in minims is repeated exactly but an octave higher, and it is significant to the unfolding of this variation that each of the versions of the basic material follows the harmonic progression of its original. Together these changes imply a transposition of another kind, for it is clear that, as a development of the opening rhetorical gesture, the minims now suggest something more than

the voice of the people in the Kyrie. In keeping with the imagery of ascension in the second section, the change in pitch conveys a feeling of transcendence, and so the shift from celebrant to artist that is implied in the initial theme is accompanied by a development in our understanding of the minim theme.

This change, however, is not a matter of simply stripping away one meaning and replacing it with another, and it is important to this development that much of the shape and form of the original is still intact in the variation. For not only is the penitential significance of the music still present, but ideas that are related to it in the work as a whole are incorporated into the unfolding of this part of the movement. In its dramatization of the composer's portrayal of himself the accompanying voices make use of the initial theme in contrasting ways that reflect the tension between Promethean transcendence and moral self-questioning which is at the heart of the piece.

Thus, beneath the reiterations of the Kyrie eleison (which now expresses a sense of transcendence) in the first violin, dotted rhythms, together with leaping intervals in the cello, transform the initial theme into a pulse-like expression of breathing and self-renewing life, such as we might associate with the spirit of Prometheus. But, at the same time, these dotted rhythms play a part in the accompanying voices that recalls certain passages in the first movement of the work. In that movement, in bars 135–140 and 196–205, the alternation and counterpoint of crotchets and minims with dotted rhythms are used to create the impression of a distancing veil, and this feature is present here beneath the minim theme in its different versions. In this way the texture contributes to the underlying tension between transcendence and the expression of penitence.

The execution of these ideas in this variation enables us to acquire a much clearer sense of this movement as a dramatization of the composer's desire to resolve the psychological conflict at the heart of this music. By taking the radical course of revising the meaning of the liturgy, so that the penitential part of the mass is turned into a self-portrait exploring the relationship between transcendence and personal failure, Beethoven dramatizes himself in a bold act of transformation. For not only does this affront to tradition tend to subordinate the people to the will of an individual, but the very language of this tradition has become an instrument of individual vision. Just as the original statement of the Kyrie withholds the essential act of surrender which gives true meaning to the penitential thanksgiving of the people, so the transcendence promised by this ritual observance is given a different meaning by the music. The virtues of Prometheus are ungodly and human, and his transcendence cannot be related to the promise of eternity and the rewards

of life after death. Rather, it refers to the renewal of vision as a fundamental human value – Prometheus is transcendent only in the sense that vision itself is of permanent value to reflective life. We can experience the excitement of this active renewal of vision in the pulse-like shape of the variation as a whole (echoing the detail of the writing), as it follows the original by growing in tension to a climax in the third version of the thematic material and then relaxing in the fourth and fifth versions.

Success in achieving this degree of assimilation between the conflicting elements which have dominated the work from its beginning injects a renewed confidence and energy into the variation on the second section, and all traces of hesitancy and uncertainty are removed. This is apparent in the combined effect of increasing to two octaves the span of falling and rising intervals in the opening gesture, and removal of the self-protective trill which shields the composer at bars 2–4. The contrast intensifies the assertion of will that lies within this introspective music, and momentum is increased by a succession of staccatoed, rapidly ascending scalar passages in counterpoint with the opening gesture. An intensification of this kind can be felt throughout the variation, and the exhausted tailing off we have seen in the original section (see above, page 124) is replaced by a calm and quietly composed resolution which prepares us for the closing variation.

Thus, the movement closes with the second variation on the first section, the most penetrating investigation of the conflict at the heart of the piece. Based upon the first variation, in which the voice of the celebrant in the initial theme is given to the composer and thereby comes to life as the voice of an individual, this theme retains its basic intervals but is altered by a rhythmic diminution which intensifies the effect of the dotted rhythms in the first variation. The expression of inner experience is now given a more definite meaning, as the feeling of estrangement is more clearly conveyed in the music, while the pulse of the first variation (of the first section) is now an echo of that pain, suggesting that it is ever-present in the mind of the composer. The music gives further emphasis to this in bars 168–181, where the theme or its echo is present in some form throughout, and in places it is present in three of the four voices.

In counterpoint with this theme is a cantus firmus, based upon two and a half bars of the minim theme as it first appears, and in following the previous variation this music alludes to the idea of a Promethean transcendence with which we are now familiar. Here, moreover, the first and second versions of the Kyrie material are fused into one continuous part, the duration of which is not restricted to the length that they share. This enables the composer

to divide the second variation into two long and exploratory parts, while retaining the pulse-like shape which we have experienced in the original section and its first variation. So, the climactic development, from bar 183 to bar 193, corresponds to the third version, in accordance with the pattern of feeling that has already been established, while the fourth and fifth versions create an unbroken continuation of its musical thought.

Thus, we can see the third movement as a further attempt to achieve what has already been tried in the opening movement, but with greater assurance and composure. Here, in the more measured transformations of this very slow movement, the composer adapts the fundamental ideas of the mass, in an attempt to resolve the conflict. As a development of the first variation of the first section, in which the idea of a Promethean transcendence is harmoniously integrated with a penitential feeling of moral uncertainty, the second variation plunges the subject into a turmoil from which his Promethean thought is called upon to rescue him. This is the deepest expression of the composer's thought in action, wherein the act of composition itself is the focus of virtues that the work is intended to affirm. Hence, the two parts of this variation represent stages in a dramatization of the composer's musical intellect in the process of seeking to resolve the conflict that is portrayed in this composition.

In the fugal opening of the second variation the release of one voice upon another intensifies the psychological pain expressed in the theme, and gives to this theme an initial dominance over the cantus firmus and its intimations of transcendence. This moment of awakening is a further echo of the opening of the work and recalls its feeling of disorientation. Correspondingly, an intensification of the intellectual energy with which the composer is now able to transform this feeling can be seen in relation to three aspects of the structure of this part of the second variation. The first of these is related to the theme itself, which, after the fugal introduction of voices in descending order from the second violin to the cello, begins again (in counterpoint with the cantus firmus) from the first violin and descends again, more gradually, in strict order to the cello. Second, the theme and cantus firmus are not simply in counterpoint but subtly intertwined, so that when it first appears (bars 170–172), the cantus firmus is at a slightly higher pitch. It is then at a significantly lower pitch in bars 172–174, and slightly higher once again in bars 174–176, before rising to the upper voices as the theme is sounded in the cello. Between these two aspects of the structure a sense of opposition is created, in which the transcendent cantus firmus is initially obscured by the theme (denoting estrangement); even when at a higher pitch than the

theme, the cantus firmus is drawn down into the lower voices. It is only when the theme inhabits the cello that the cantus firmus can assert itself clearly in the first violin and then in the second violin, and this implies that the visionary power of the composer has its origins in his social failure and estrangement.

The third aspect of the structure to be observed is a subtle harmonic confirmation of this allusion to the visionary impulse. Once the counterpoint between the theme and cantus firmus has begun, the theme is established on alternating chords, so that the more powerful expression of its meaning on F–A–C (at bars 171–173 and 175–178) is muted by moving to C–E–G (at bars 173–174 and 177–179). By creating a pattern of varying intensity, this alternation makes it possible to mute the theme as it moves into the cello and thus enables the cantus firmus to be heard with equal clarity. And a further harmonic effect is created in the closing bars of the first part of this variation, where a ripple in the harmony arises from the tying over of notes from one chord to the next. This occurs in bars 179 and 180 and spreads a transcendental light through the quiet conclusion on the chord D–F–A.

The second part of this variation coincides with the third version of the material, as it has appeared earlier, and is a climax of the variation, the movement and the composition as a whole. Having elucidated the primary elements of the music and persuasively defined them in relation to each other, Beethoven has created a musical order which makes it possible to both represent and exemplify the interaction of Promethean vision and unfulfilment in life. Hence, a revisionary purpose is announced in his return to the fugal opening of the variation, with a change in the order of the voices, and this changes the relationship between the theme and the cantus firmus. Following its brief entrance in the second violin, the cantus firmus is now heard in the first violin and cello, while the theme is mainly confined to the inner voices. This consolidates what has been achieved in the first part of this variation, as it now becomes possible to weave together the voices in a harmonious expression of unity.

The climax occurs between bars 185 and 193, and here the suffering Prometheus can be sensed in the mounting excitement of the music. In two places in particular the myth appears in the climax, which is wave-like in form, swelling in intensity and relaxing as though guided by the descending and ascending whole tone and semitonal steps high in the first violin. The first of these is related to the harmonic change that occurs from bar 186 to 187, where the effect of a note tied over from one chord to the next recalls the ripple in bars 179–180, but is decidedly more vigorous. The rhythmic

shape is the same and, correspondingly, the G (in the second violin) in bar 187 becomes a ninth in the chord based on F. A greater vitality is created by the chord progression itself, which is rather more forceful and signals the imminence of a crescendo, so that the twist leading from G to F evokes the writhing Prometheus, and this image continues to develop within the climax. An even stronger identification with the myth is in the precise moment of climax (bars 191–193), where the first four chords clearly recall and intensify the moment in the first movement (bars 103–106) where the torment of Prometheus has already been portrayed. The difference in tempo between the allegro of the first movement and the molto adagio of this variation means that the semibreves of the one and minims of the other are rhythmically equivalent, indicating their connection in the development of the music.

This identification of the composer's estrangement with the torment of Prometheus has a further purpose in the development of the ideas behind this composition. For there is an obvious association between the desire to reconcile a Promethean renewal of vision in the music with the sense of being dispossessed as it is expressed in the myth. Zeus punishes Prometheus for stealing the power of knowledge, and so his physical torment can be seen as a metaphor for banishment; however, the music implies that the fire he has stolen gives him the power to resist. In contrast with the stark and dissonant image of Prometheus' agony in the first movement, the climax in this variation is subtly constructed in order to express both suffering and resistance, beginning with which the elucidation of elements in the first stage frees the transcendent cantus firmus from its entanglement with the primary theme.

We have seen that the idea of transcendence in this case is not celestial but alludes to the power of vision itself, and to the kinds of freedom to which this power is related. So the wave-like movement that is guided by the cantus firmus in bars 188–190 is represented so that the trough corresponds with the moment of greatest dissonance (at the beginning of bar 189), and the torture to which it alludes is overcome in a pattern of harmonic relaxation that corresponds with a return to the crest. In acting against the primary theme in this way the cantus firmus affirms the power of vision to resist and transform the pain of dispossession. Hence the minims at the climax (bars 191–193) do not merely recall their counterparts in the first movement, but transform them with harmonic richness and glowing vitality. In this moment the psychological pain has become vibrant and its victim is unbound.

The anti-climax, which completes this variation and the movement, corresponds to the fourth and fifth versions of the Kyrie theme. Version four begins (at bar 194) with a retreat of the wave-like pattern, created by a steep

descent in the first violin which gradually evens out, in counterpoint with the tail of the primary theme (elaborated in different forms) in the other voices. The fluency with which this retreat follows the climax intensifies the sense of fulfilment which is achieved by the transformation of torture into visionary insight. This is confirmed in the concluding section of the movement, which recalls the primary theme, and thereby draws attention to the development that has been achieved in this variation. From bar 201 the theme is repeated in strict succession and without any of the overlapping with which it has hitherto appeared. Thus, it appears not as an emotional pressure but rather seems to be held up to scrutiny as an object of contemplation. The creative activity to which this theme has been subjected has transformed it and dispelled the pain associated with it, and the absence of this theme in the closing bars of the movement completes the reassuring self-affirmation towards which the work has been leading.

We have seen that the opening motive of the work evokes awakening to a sense of disorientation, and this motive becomes a cantus firmus in the rest of the opening movement. It is especially significant in the music which alludes to the torture of Prometheus, at bars 103–106. We have also seen that in the climax of the slow movement, at bars 191–193, in counterpoint with another cantus firmus, the allusion to torture is transformed into an image of transcendent vision and freedom, an affirmation of the spirit of Prometheus in the composer. Thus a pattern of meaning is conveyed by these formal relations, in which the transformation of an awakening of one kind into an awakening of another is not so much described by the musical detail as worked out in the act of composition.

This represents reflective life in action since it expresses more than a resemblance or a set of beliefs and attitudes. Rather, it enters into the essence of such life by reflecting the fluidity of thought and experience. In this respect the music is subject to the uncertainty and fragile impermanence of a moment of illumination and its resolution. The composer's penetrating insight into the possibilities of his own psychology is given a brief moment of life, and its brevity is essential to its truth in the representation of reflective life in action. As in the sonnets this truth lies not in what is argued by the 'poet' or composer, but in a highly sensitive dramatization of his intellectual purpose.

This climactic movement of the piece powerfully exemplifies the characteristics which have been identified as essential to music as the representation of reflective life in action. At the beginning of this chapter we saw how such devices as repetition, variation and development of musical ideas can be related to the underlying structure of our subjective experience.

In this movement the music is constructed entirely from the resources of repetition, variation and development, and Beethoven uses these resources in order to exploit the plasticity of musical form. His extended interweaving of Promethean music with music based upon the penitential opening of the mass depends upon these formal devices which evoke the form of our subjective experience.

Movements four and five

Beethoven's Promethean ambition can only be assumed, without being absurd, at the highest level of accomplishment. Prometheus does not simply offer to mankind a means of renewing vision, he transforms the very nature of experience by giving us the power of self-realization and understanding, of vision itself. Hence, in the fourth movement, the subtle inwardness at the heart of the piece is subjected to a brutal interruption of the 'real' world, in the form of a satirical march that is as brightly hollow as it is impervious to the sensitive preoccupations of the artist. The fourth movement is an obvious parallel to the second, as a further attack upon the indifference of the world, but while the second movement is designed to suggest the interminable, empty chatter of society at large, here the music is terse and brief. It creates an impression of young soldiers who are less fluent than the belles of society, and more highly finished in appearance than formidable on the field of battle. The mechanically alternating rhythmic patterns, and the compression with which they succeed one another, accentuate the narcissistic sense of style and air of intimidation that is characteristic of the military march. Thus, at the beginning of the short section which links the march to the final movement, we have a moment of pure burlesque, portraying the composer bounding in mock fright from the scene; this is clearly suggested in the ascending separated quavers (bars 35 and 36) and the shuddering tremolos which accompany the succeeding melody.

The close of this movement forms a seven-bar introduction to the fifth movement, and this brief passage indicates the composer's purpose in the conclusion. Beginning with the V-shaped motive which has been associated with Prometheus in the opening movement, and here given an even greater sweep and emphasis, this introduction returns the music to its underlying conflict between the composer's Promethean impulse and his sense of a life that has failed. Thus the fragile vindication of his ambition in the first and third movements, together with the satirical recognition of his negligible effect upon the world in the second and fourth movements, overshadows his final attempt to reconcile the conflict. This is suggested in a brief period of

composure before the appearance of the principal theme, and the music is also affected by a change from common time to a graceful waltz-like rhythm. In contrast with the energy and momentum of the opening movement this music introduces a feeling of reflection and the passing of time; while seeming to echo the earlier theme it evokes a once powerful impulse which is now receding and losing its inner conviction in a growing atmosphere of disillusionment. Where, initially, a heroic attempt to reconcile the conflict is susceptible to irony, now the enterprise is increasingly open to self-mockery. The principal theme, with its generously encompassing movement, is undermined by the sense of regret at something that is lost, as the music strives unsuccessfully to incorporate its gestures of Promethean energy into a universal renewal of vision.

On the surface this movement takes the form of a rondo, the principal theme being presented as a ritornello which appears in alternation with various episodes; but the rondo is merely an outline for a more cogently integrated organization of musical material and thought. In the first place, the sections of the movement are not simply arranged so that the ritornello is followed by a number of different episodes; rather these episodes are closely related to each other in an a–b, a–c, a–b pattern, succeeded by a presto in which a condensed variant upon a–b is extended by a repeat of this material from within its (a) section (at bar 351). Moreover, the ritornello and episode are not separated in the way that we might expect from a composition in rondo form, as the transition from one to the other is either a clear development of the preceding thought or its violent disruption (in the case of a–c). In structure the ritornello creates an obvious contrast with the opening movement, as its ideas flow in a sequence of growing intensity towards an integration of Promethean energy and social harmony – implied by a waltz rhythm that creates the impression of dancers in motion.

However, the effortless continuity of this development should not be seen as a resolution of the complex difficulties of the piece and a feeling of melancholy suggests another intention. The easy development of the music evokes the composer's recollection of youthful ambition, before the superhuman immensity of his task has been recognized, so the music is both an elegy for the unfulfilled ideal and a doomed attempt to integrate the central ideas of the work. This is elaborated in bars 34–38, where an injection of Promethean energy in the accompanying second violin and viola leads into the bouncing optimism of separated quavers at bars 40–41, only for the same rhythmic pattern to be used as the mood dies away in the closing bars of the ritornello (bars 48–50). Similarly, continuation of the underlying purpose of

the music intensifies the composer's elegiac reverie at the beginning of the first episode (b). Here (bars 51–74), the gradual building of integration between waltz and Promethean gesture changes into an abrupt alternation of inward reflection (bars 51–60) and sustained assertion (bars 61–74). The effect of this contrast, after the seemingly careful preparation of the ritornello, is to associate the Promethean energy with a recollection of youthful illusions. As in the optimism of bars 40–41, the assertion of Promethean spirit is comically overstated. Consequently, following its failure to achieve a smooth integration of the central ideas of the movement, the music subsides into a quiet preparation for the second exposition of the ritornello (bar 90).

At this point in the movement the composer's prospects of achieving his 'spiritual' purpose look decidedly slender, and a return to the beginning seems more like wilfulness than optimism. Now he is in the position of a wayward schoolboy who makes fun of the system, and does not know from which quarter the sky is about to fall on him. Hence the ritornello is allowed to proceed as before, with only some small changes in the harmony, until, about two-thirds of the way through, the patience of the gods is exhausted and the second episode (c) violently intervenes. The sudden and severe appearance of a military march in bar 123 immerses us in the chaos of battle (bars 124–159), within which the music slides into a series of convulsions, the most immediate effect of which is to destroy its continuity altogether and ridicule the aspiration that lies behind it. Allusion to the march reminds us of the parody in the preceding movement, and in this the chaos of war is associated with a negligent indifference to the Promethean gift. The satire on social life in the piece identifies one aspect of the composer's failure with the unpredictability of how that gift will be received. Moreover, behind the convulsions that affect both the progress of the music and the social world to which the ambitions of the artist belong, we can imagine the tortured Prometheus, whose physical punishment is an image of isolation and failure. This, of course, implies a psychological affinity between the artist's renewal of vision and the spiritual rebellion that is portrayed in the myth.

A muted re-entry of the ritornello (bar 164) portrays the composer as chastened and bewildered, recovering his sense of purpose through an instinctive mastery of musical form. The cyclical nature of the rondo form gives him a footing from which to restore his balance and continue; the sense of assurance is consolidated by a return to the beginning of the movement in a complete recapitulation of the ritornello and first episode (a–b). This can be seen as the basis for a reconstruction in the coda, which combines an exhilarating mastery of musical form with an expression of frenzied

disillusionment at the intractability of his task, both in the ostensible purpose of this composition and in life.

Thus, a sense of reconstruction begins at the close of (b) (bar 243) where a brief fugal passage quietly builds up towards the presto that concludes the work. Transforming the elegiac waltz by an increase in tempo, and an accompaniment that is dominated by repeated quaver-note chords, the music now rushes self-mockingly to its climactic affirmation at bar 298. The mood of sarcasm is enhanced by the false optimism of a modulation from A minor into A major, as the movement of the music is gradually inverted and forms a downward spiral between bars 307 and 319, and all attempts to achieve a precise and delicate integration of the Promethean impulse into a vision of social harmony are abandoned in the torrent of creative energy. In keeping with this transformation, the subtle distinctions of memory and reflection are obliterated and play no part in the distorted return of the first episode (bar 320), while the measured assertion of Promethean force in this section is reduced to staccatoed crotchets (bars 328–331), as stark remnants of its ruins. The cyclical nature of the movement applies equally to the coda, as the music is repeated from the point at which the downward spiral begins, following the change of key, and this gives weight and equilibrium to the sardonic finality of the conclusion, as it rapidly decelerates into silence, before exploding in a jagged pattern of chords.

If we compare the coda of the first movement with that of the fifth then the course of the piece as a whole seems to map the composer's failure in the Promethean venture of his life as an artist. The first coda grapples with the central conflict of the music while the second coda retreats, discouraged by the ensuing movements, into a self-assertive frenzy of disenchantment. Thus, it might appear that the significance of the work lies simply in its charting the composer's disillusionment with his life and with his art. However, this discussion is based upon a fundamental distinction which runs counter to that impression, as the primary concern of the work is not so much with what the composer is saying as with a dramatization of the composer's engagement with the fundamental ideas of the piece. In this, the composer is akin to the 'poet' in the sonnets, and his failure as a Promethean figure, capable of transforming human life in a universal renewal of vision, does not imply failure in the work itself. Rather the depth and subtlety of the dramatization creates a renewal of vision of a different kind; in this respect the music recognizes that, in the sphere of aesthetic representation, Promethean ambition is delusory. The music reveals the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding, and delusory ambition is at the heart of this revelation.

From the general progression of ideas in this chapter we have seen how music integrates abstract thought and the concreteness of aesthetic expression. Hence, the quartet is composed with certain fundamental ideas in mind, which give the work its form and significance. The abstract conception of an underlying conflict between the Promethean image of the artist and his sense of personal failure is used to organize an aesthetic representation, and thereby determines the purpose which is given to a relatively non-specific medium of expression. There is no essential difference between the employment of abstract thought in this music and its employment in drama, poetry, painting or sculpture.

Moreover, as in the sonnets, this quartet is abstract in its dramatization of the artist's creative activity, in the portrayal of himself and the world to which he belongs. His energetic synthesis of Promethean vision with a sense of personal failure lies at the heart of the work; the fragility of this achievement and its transience can be directly compared with Shakespeare's dramatization of the humanist mentor and the love poet. In the string quartet and the sonnets the act of composition itself is fundamental to the representation of life, and this highly developed use of abstract thought gives to both a density of expression which is related to the essential distinction that should be made between music and literature.

Thus the logic of this composition demands an exceptional precision in the employment of a purely sensuous medium. The character of the music requires that a relatively non-specific medium should become more specific than usual, while making full use of its plasticity of reference and allusion. From the opening bars of this quartet, freedom in combining different aspects of subjective experience is fundamental to its representation of reflective life in action, and this is done with great concentration in its interweaving of the composer's Promethean music with the Kyrie in the third movement. The pyschological transformation enacted by the composition of this music is itself dependent upon the plasticity of musical expression, and here we experience a profound integration of subtle abstract thinking with the concrete inner experience of sensation, feeling, mood, emotion, memory and imagination. The listener feels this depth of expression even when the ideas are obscure, though their explication will change the experience. In this connection, we should note that the power of music to suggest the form of our subjective experience explains how some degree of understanding is compatible with indefinite reference. We can make sense of music as a representation of life before the sounds are directly associated with any particular experience.

Chapter 4

The portrayal of reflective life in action in painting: discovery of the inner life of sensory perception in watercolours by Turner and oil paintings by Cézanne

In a study of aesthetic representation as a form of enlightenment it might seem that painting is the least promising of forms, but what might appear to be its greatest limitation may turn out to be a unique strength. Because they can be extended in time according to the will of the artist, literary and musical forms possess an exploratory freedom in the representation of human action and character that goes far beyond the possibilities of the discrete visual image. Thus, in order to reveal the sense in which painting can make its own claim as a form of enlightenment, we should concentrate upon the aesthetic advantage that lies in creating an image that stands before us and is accessible, at once, in its entirety. In contrast with that of a play, or a poem, or a string quartet, the form of a painting can be taken in essentially, if not in detail, in a single span of attention, and therefore it can make sense to us aesthetically as a continuous act of perception. Our being able to achieve this immediate apprehension is certainly dependent, in many cases, upon prior acquaintance with the painting and some analysis of its formal characteristics, and we should not assume that there is a simple ideal way in which all paintings should be viewed. Therefore, in this chapter we will see how the aesthetic representation of reflective life in action can be exemplified in the plastic arts. What is distinctive to painting as a form of enlightenment will be examined in works by Turner and Cézanne. Because, however, this may lead us into unfamiliar ways of thinking about painting I will begin with a work that can act as a bridge between conventional theory and my goal.

Portsmouth

Turner's watercolour *Portsmouth* of 1825 belongs to a set of drawings published by Thomas Lupton under the title *The Ports of England* and therefore belongs to a genre in which an interest in history and narrative plays a dominant part. This makes the painting typical of Turner's work, and may suggest a conflict with the artistic intentions that I have just described. However, by virtue of its size (16 by 24 cm) and composition, this particular watercolour is one in which the essential character of the work can be absorbed in a single, continuous act of perception, and so, in this case, a narrative interest is compatible with aesthetic qualities which are distinctive to painting. Moreover, a compatibility of this kind is not accidental, as the human activity at the centre of the narrative is economically contained within a triangle on the right side of the picture, the apex being the man-o'-war which gives the image its focus of attention.

The work represents a turbulent morning seascape in which the ship is being piloted from the harbour by its sailors, whose task is to row out and locate the buoy in choppy waters. Clearly this has involved the use of another boat, which we can see is returning some of the sailors to their duties on the ship. A sense of co-ordinated purpose is strongly suggested by the relations of the buoy, the two boats and the approaching ship, an effect that is amplified by the cutter to the far right, which is both moving towards the returning boat and taking the wind in parallel with the ship. Meanwhile, a sense of co-ordinated purpose is more directly and dramatically conveyed by the pilot boat, in which the sailor waving their position to the ship is also steering, while being supported by two others one of whom is baling water out of the boat. It has been observed (Shanes 2000) that the Admiralty Semaphore Tower, which guides these great vessels through a narrow channel into the harbour, and also acts as a source of communication between the port and the Admiralty in London, is indicated to the left of the cutter. In this respect the pictorial narrative creates a detailed representation of the demanding and highly organized working life of a naval system which is an important function of the society it serves. The nature of Turner's commission in this case implies that the work is intended to be a celebration of the intellect, skill, personal courage and discipline that are necessary to the proper functioning of the system, and that the essential details of the narrative are tied to a deeply established and evolving tradition. But, in pursuing our conception of the image in relation to an aesthetic significance that is unique to painting, we should also respond to ways in which the narrative is expanded in the formal and technical elements of this picture.

Notwithstanding its compositional intricacy this image possesses a clarity of essential relations which extends beyond the triangle of activity that has already been mentioned. A central element in these relations is the line that is created towards the lower right corner by the direction of the oncoming ship as it approaches and the wave breaking forcefully in the lower left corner. The energy within this relation is amplified in the sky directly above the wave, in a cloud formation surging in the opposite direction, towards the top right corner. Meanwhile, another rhythmic impulse, which also employs a vertical alignment of related imagery, can be seen within the triangle of activity, with the significant difference that, in this case, the physical elements are slanted against each other in contrasting planes. Beneath the pilot boat, which is being tossed upwards from a horizontal position in front of us, cross-currents meet to form a shallow peak in the water, and this, too, is in visual opposition to the angled, tenuous clouds that are racing towards the top right corner. The sense of co-ordinated action in the human sphere is thus complemented by a turbulent energy in the world with which it must contend, all the more so for the unsteadying impression that is created by the cutter's billowing sail in relation to the exposed figure of the standing sailor, and the direct opposition of the wind to the light, which pours in from the top right corner.

The integration of complex rhythmic impulses in the painting enables the artist to create an impression of various kinds of movement in nature that act with a cohesive and unfathomable force. Moreover, because the order and power of nature seem constantly to elude our complete understanding, we feel all the more strongly the mental and physical strength that is necessary to establish a mastery over them. In this connection, Turner places a small sailing vessel alongside the magnificence of the man-of-war, but only in order to invite a further comparison, between the ship itself and the much greater sea and sky which create an unpredictable turbulence around it. The man-of-war's foretopsail which is immediately visible to us, and properly set, is painted with a rare lustre, stretched by the wind from behind and directly absorbing the streaming light; this is conspicuous in the picture and may be read as an emblem of character, the more tellingly for being a small and incidental detail. The disorder in the sails behind it conveys a sense of the difficulties with which the ship has to contend.

There is, however, a narrative element in the painting that reaches beyond the celebration of character, skill and intellect, and may inspire a purely aesthetic response to the work. The vertical alignment of the sea, the pilot boat (in particular the waving seaman) and the racing clouds above is integrated with the energetic opposition of wind and light to suggest the

passing of time, and the picture as a whole is saturated with a sense of time. This is accentuated by the way in which the passage of light is reinforced by perspective, the recession of space being slanted away to the left while the accompanying thickening of cloud creates movement in the sky to the right above the boat. Moreover, the creation of aerial perspective by light gives the thin line of the port, as it tapers away to the left, a softly defined white luminosity which is coolly remote, and this is dramatically enhanced by the orchestration of colour in the sea and sky, gradations of dark purple blue and Prussian blue in the former against ultramarine and white on turquoise in the latter. These effects are delicately co-ordinated with other colours, such as the pink and white buildings along the port, and the orange sail of the cutter (echoed in touches of pink in the clouds above it). While these features help to define a life that is exacting, precarious and transitory in a larger world of history and tradition, they also enhance the aesthetic significance of the picture. The elements which give us a powerful sense of time can be related not only to the narrative, they are also connected to how we respond to the image as a whole, to its effect as a continuous visual perception.

The most immediately discernible effect in our sensuous response to the image can be identified with a rhythm that is created by the relationship between the dominant elements in the picture: namely, the man-of-war which advances purposefully to the right; the pilot boat and its crew (and the cutter which echoes its shape and the effort of staying afloat); and the raking sky across which the clouds move in alignment with the ship. Solid in form and perfectly stable in the water, the ship's capacity to fulfil its purpose is powerfully suggested by its position in the painting, left of centre (by its own length) and approaching the larger animated space in front of it while leaving in its wake an expansive void. Across the energetic line of its progress through the water, which is amplified by the alignment of movement in the sky, the upswing of the pilot boat creates a counter-rhythm, which has a destabilizing influence upon the image; this is clearly accentuated by the cutter at a slight angle beyond and pitching in sympathy. This counter-rhythm is notable for the connection between the pilot boat and sky that is made by the waving sailor, whose posture and intense concentration expose him to the vertiginous motion of the clouds.

Thus, elements which give stability and order to the image are subtly integrated with elements of equal importance which create an antithetical sense of instability and disintegration. The triangle of activity towards which the ship is moving creates the impression of an imaginary vortex, and we feel this all the more strongly because of the smaller triangle of dark violet sky

which is exposed beyond the streaming sunlight. If there were no counter to this in the geometry of this composition then the ship would seem to be drifting to the right and into the imaginary vortex and its threatening uncertainties. This, in turn, would remove the visual support that is provided by the stability of the ship to the pilot boat and the cutter, so they would appear to be on the point of capsizing. Therefore, in this connection, the single most important element in the picture is the buoy, as the triangle that it forms with the pilot boat (with which it shares an affinity of colour – the dull lemon-yellow of the buoy with the brown-yellow of the boat) and the warmly vibrant foretopsail, distended against the light, secures the stability of the ship to our visual perception.

The manner in which this painting plays with our visual perception is not merely due to compositional technique, formidable as this may be in itself, since the use of geometric forms is inseparable from an exploration of the psychology of sensory perception. If the buoy were to be removed the composition would collapse to the right, but not only because a triangle had been removed. The geometric form is significant to the balance of the picture in relation to the things that are represented, and this is true of the formal elements of the composition in general. We would feel the effect of the buoy's removal because the imagery has affected us and created an interest in the life that is represented. Thus, the tension between a vortical horizontal triangle and a central perpendicular triangle are affective in the painting primarily because they are interconnected with our perception of the ship, and its sailors, and the cutter.

In this respect, Turner employs the resources of his art in ways that resemble what we have observed in the work of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Bach and Beethoven: the manipulation of form and genre reflects the psychology of human perception. In *Portsmouth* there are many ways in which the artist explores the psychology of sensory perception, and they can be seen as working in accord with the narrative aspect of the work. For example, a link can be made between the precarious balance of the waving sailor and the uncertainty that lies behind our ordinary perception of the world, and there are other elements in the aesthetic realization of the piece which substantiate this link. Turner's virtuosic use of white in this picture sets the vibrant warmth of the foretopsail against the remote coolness of the line of the port and a wraith of ghostly cloud, to stimulate (and expose) our sympathetic attraction to the human interest at the centre of the image. This is supported by certain tonal contrasts of the image, as, for example, in the gradations of colour and tone in the sky, and these and the dark band of water in the foreground.

Thus the energetic rhythms and subtle geometry of this composition, the sensitive contrasts of tone and texture, and the opposing natural forces of sea, wind and light make it possible for the artist to create an image in which a tension between turbulent instability and a reassuring sense of order reveals the nature of our perception. The moral grandeur of the ship and the everyday heroism of the waving sailor are dependent upon purely visual elements in the image, such as the balance that is created by the buoy in association with the vibrant sail and the pilot boat. But, equally, these elements work in this way only because we are disposed to see both ship and sailor sympathetically; and so, by playing upon the interdependence of perception and personal inclination, the painting reveals this interdependence aesthetically, in our visual perception of the world.

Turner's Neo-Platonism and an alternative view

Turner's interest in the psychology of sensory perception is connected to the Neo-Platonism that was promoted by the Royal Academy, particularly through the writings of Joshua Reynolds (see Shanes 1990, page 251, for an analysis of this influence in Turner's work). However, while this philosophical movement certainly influenced Turner's thinking about art, in his painting he applied the theories of Neo-Platonism with considerable intellectual independence. Neo-Platonism is primarily concerned with Plato's theory of Forms and, in particular, with the ideas of Plotinus, who regarded the Form of Beauty as the origin of truth and wisdom (Weitz 1969). In works of art this connection between truth and the Idea of Beauty is typically realized through the mastery of form, which, according to Plotinus, has the power to reveal an eternal order in the flux of ordinary experience.

The geometry in *Portsmouth* can be seen as an expression of this purpose in Turner's art, but the preceding discussion of the painting implies something more than a merely aesthetic idealism. For Reynolds, the order with which great art is concerned is a moral order; the artist's highest purpose, therefore, is not to 'amuse mankind' but to 'improve them with the grandeur of his ideas' (Discourse 3); this suggests that the pre-eminence of the Form of Beauty lies in its powers of moral representation. In other words, the hidden order that is revealed by aesthetic means becomes significant to us only when the revelation is morally serious. This central tenet of the theory can be recognized in the narrative aspect of Turner's painting, but its relevance to the work is even more interesting in his subtle exploration of the psychology of sensory perception.

In order to appreciate the cohesion between these ideas in a picture like *Portsmouth* we must consider certain underlying assumptions. Of primary importance is the connection between beauty and serious purpose in great art. The profound representation of reflective life in action depends upon a mastery of aesthetic phenomena; compelling and logical composition, or rich and harmonious colour are not simply attractive effects, but are necessary to the cogent expression of ideas in which feeling, sensation and sensory perception play an essential part.

In relation to this the artist's Neo-Platonism can be seen in different ways; for example, he might be seen as giving expression to the Form of Beauty by representing the ideal form of objects of experience, by revealing the archetypes which are normally hidden within the flux of everyday life. However, this definition implies the reflection of a fixed and eternal truth, which is incompatible with a dynamic involvement in the world and the resulting uncertainty we experience in this painting. The portrayal of reflective life in action conforms much better to an interpretation of Neo-Platonism in which the Form of Beauty serves as an ideal, or guiding principle, to which the work aspires in its mastery of aesthetic phenomena. In the light of this interpretation, Turner can be seen to be exploring the psychology of sensory perception in a manner that both evolves as a natural development of representing the world and conforms to the moral seriousness of his mentor. However, on this interpretation the artist's Neo-Platonism merely acts as an inspiration to produce work which is aesthetically highly charged and morally serious, and therefore does not guarantee that its meaning and significance are related to the Form of Beauty as an unattainable ideal to which the work must aspire.

We can develop a convincing alternative to this idealism by examining more closely the 'inner life' of sensory perception. This will lead into the analysis of later watercolours by Turner in which narrative is minimal and the inner life of visual perception is, correspondingly, more subtly and richly explored. In relation to this inner life our sensory perception of objects is always more than the neutral apprehension of their physical characteristics, quite apart from the 'meanings' and emotional connotations which they might have for us. For, though we cannot observe the process, our sensation of an object engages immediately with our previous experience of life. This can be seen in our experience of music, and the way in which, without any analysis, a composition becomes comprehensible purely by means of sensory perception, as we listen to it over and over again. And in visual experience, the perception of a room, for example, is also affected by our experience

of it in the past. Quite apart from the attention we might pay to particular objects, there is a psychological density in our experience of a room that we have lived in for many years, a feeling of substance in our sensory perception of it, in comparison with our perception of a room that is new to us. The full force of this distinction can be felt when returning to our family home after a period of, say, ten or fifteen years. A place that has been familiar to us for a long time is once again seen afresh and this can give an odd character to the house, its interior, and surrounding spaces. In such an experience they may be physically much the same as before but psychologically quite different, as they seem to have lost the inner solidity that they once possessed. Far from being a momentary impression, moreover, this sensation can continue for several hours.

Normally, the inner life of our sensory perception goes unnoticed because our attention is directed towards our actions and what is happening around us, to past events or to where our imagination leads us, and because changes to this inner life (for example, our changing perception of a room over time) are so gradual that they escape detection. Though it might not have been so elusive to Turner, who from childhood was preoccupied with the nature of visual perception. Moreover, its elusiveness does not make this inner life any less significant; it can be seen as a phenomenon that is perfectly in accord with our experience of a life that is valued. Personal inclination affects not only our emotional responses and thinking about life, it also affects our immediate perception of things and our sensation of them. Thus, in the analysis of paintings by Turner and Cézanne we will see how artists of great sensitivity and skill can explore the inner life of sensory perception as a fundamental aspect of reflective life.

It is possible to give a more detailed exposition of the phenomenon with which we are concerned. For while ordinary experience tends to obscure from us the true nature of our sensory perception, there are occasions when its inner life can be observed introspectively. Experiences of this kind seem to depend upon a certain complexity involving the interconnection of perception, imagination and memory. It is relevant, therefore, to mention that the following paragraph describes the experience of a boy waking up while staying with grandparents for the first time. Thus the familiar and unfamiliar are significantly interfused.

This waking is unusually solitary and quiet and the unfamiliar room is unusually large, with a large window. The air is cold and clear and pierced by the call of doves, while an empty school across the road warmly reflects the brilliance of the light. This experience is fundamentally composed of

correspondence and contrast: the crystal-clear effects of light and atmosphere in the visual images and sharpness in the air are enhanced by the sound of the birds, a sound which is both bright and somewhat plaintive. In contrast with the openness of the outside world, the interior is muted, receding into shadow, and has the intriguing odour of an elusive time long past. In the midst of these sensations the deserted school is filled with a sense of absence, the absence, of course, of children, movement, colour and noise. This perception of a place that is 'filled with absence' can easily be related to the suggestive powers of both correspondence and contrast in our sensory perception. Thus, the elements of the experience which create a feeling of clarity and definition enhance each other and are naturally felt to belong together, while the contrasting elements create an exchange in which feelings connected with one aspect of the experience are unconsciously transferred to another. The former is easily grasped and requires no explanation, while the latter is more subtle and conjectural. However, in this sympathetic solitude, the contrast between a lucid and open outside world and an unfamiliar interior which is both reassuring and intriguingly steeped in time could be experienced as a feeling of absence in another object, in this case in the school.

The aesthetic excitement that makes an experience of this kind memorable has implications for the Neo-Platonism that influenced Turner and provided him with a theory for his art. For attachment to the Form of Beauty as an ideal to which the artist aspires in order to create works of aesthetic value does not validate the theory; the Platonic Form may simply act as a stimulus to the sense of beauty and a philosophical support for artistic activity. Moreover, the moral seriousness of art does not necessarily depend upon its being connected with this kind of idealism. Therefore, Turner's subtle exploration of the psychology of sensory perception in *Portsmouth*, integrated with its moral purpose, could be associated with an altogether different conception of beauty.

The personal experience which I have just described strongly suggests that an alternative lies in the possibilities of sensory perception itself, quite independently of the Form of Beauty as something to which the artist aspires. For the heightening of ordinary experience, created by a correspondence and contrast of aesthetic elements from nature, human attachment and the fascination of things existing in time, is, in this case, sufficient for both beauty and knowledge of ourselves. In opposition to the Platonic conception of an object which approximates to the Form of Beauty, my illustration exemplifies the interaction between experience of the object and experience of oneself and the world, an interaction which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, is fundamental to reflective life.

Hence, aesthetic excitement lies not in one transcendental idea of beauty, however this is defined, but in the intricacies of our ordinary experience of life, and this may include the disclosure of conflict, disillusionment and personal failure. In reflective life, knowledge of oneself and the world is interwoven with aesthetic excitement; the sense of beauty and an apprehension of oneself and the world are essential aspects of cognitive experience. This suggests that the development of our knowledge of ourselves and the world has an aesthetic aspect. In the following pages we will see how painting can draw us into its sphere by the aesthetic excitement of its surface and sustain this excitement by revealing the form of our subjective experience.

The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche: Tending the Vines

The suggestive powers of correspondence and contrast affecting the inner life of sensory perception can be appreciated in the aesthetic organization of a watercolour of 1841, *The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche: Tending the Vines*, an image of early morning activities in which the idea of awakening is present in the quotidian life represented in the painting and in its sensuous effect. So direct is this correspondence between the image of morning and the idea of awakening, and so fully does it satisfy the essential criterion for such an achievement – our being able to encompass its form in a single act of perception – that its meaning should be analysed primarily in terms of its considerable aesthetic power. Hence the awakening of human activity, in the bottom left corner, is sketchy and very indistinctly realized, and acts as a setting for the representation of the real interest of the painting, which is to be found in the psychological significance of the idea of awakening. It is obvious, moreover, that the indication of human activity in the painting is visually subordinated to the image of the mountain and that this is the focal object around which all of the other elements of the work are organized.

Basic to the organization of the painting is a horizontal line that divides the image into halves, and the mountain is realized directly on top of this line in the middle of the picture. The centrality of the mountain is connected with the idea of awakening, in the first place, by creating an axis, from the left across the surface which divides it into four, like the sections of an opening fan. The first section, representing the land, is only partially included; the second section traverses the lake up to the horizontal line; and the third represents the sky from that line to the top right corner, while the rest is composed of a sky of variegated colours and textures. This opening fan is not merely a flat surface divided into sections, rather it is curved so that the land is tilted downwards; the lake evens out, and the sky reaches up and backwards into

the distance. The spatial tension and elasticity which this gives to the image contributes to the dynamism with which a sense of awakening is conveyed by the fan-like design of the composition, and can be related to other aspects of its sensuous effect.

Other elements in the painting are determined by the basic shape, and the shape itself is involved in the differentiation of these elements. Thus the central form of the painting is imitated by a descending line which defines the gradient in the foreground, in an augmented version of the right-hand face of the mountain. This linear correspondence highlights the contrast in light between the two sections of the image. So while the mountain is somewhat blurred and its summit is veiled in mist and cloud, the golden foreground is given lightness and clarity by spare crimson ink strokes indicating old vines, together with small patches where the white paper is allowed to show through. The contrast is enhanced by a further correspondence, between the thick line of indigo that is placed immediately in front of the mountain and the soft halo of the young green vines which merges into the expanse of pale blue-grey water just below the vineyard labourers.

In relation to the idea of awakening, in an image that is vibrant with the inner life of sensory perception, we can see rich psychological implications in the contrast between these sections. Thus the aesthetic power of the work and the richness of its meaning are united by our sense of a foreground illuminated by the spreading light, indicating a physical awakening in which the people we observe are already active, and a background of vivid colour and hazy contours, an intimation of hope and anticipation. Before us we have a dominant quotidian reality fully revealed in the sunlight of familiar experience, and behind it a more submerged element of experience of which we are ordinarily unaware, the element which occupies the centre of the painting.

This fundamental distinction is refined and developed by several other ways in which the image acts upon us as a visual experience. For example, the central sections of the fan-like structure create in the lake an inversion of the sky immediately above it, with the colours and textures modified so that the water possesses a coalescent and velvety reflection – achieved by fine horizontal veils of one colour over another (as in pink over indigo and gold). In accordance with this inversion, the lake and sky together create a sense of movement from left to right; the clouds building progressively as the eye moves to the right while the rhythm of the water moves towards an olive-brown patch of shore which provides a visual clue to that movement. Thus, the inversion of sky in the lake creates a powerfully concerted movement in

one direction, and, in something akin to what we have already seen in the composition of *Portsmouth*, the light streams in from the opposite direction and gives colour to the constituents of the image.

Observing the combined effects of this and the contrasting character of the mountain and the corner of land in the foreground, we can recognize an essential aspect of the painting's sensory effect. The contrast between a fully awakened quotidian life in the foreground and the sense of something withheld and assuming form in the image of the mountain is more precisely defined by their relations with the sky and lake. In the first place, the layers of indigo, crimson and gold concentrate the colours of the picture in a rich impression of life that is partially concealed behind mist and cloud, while the physical integrity of the mountain is revealed completely in profile, in contrast with the land in the foreground. Added to this, the clear definition of the mountain and its central position give it a prominent place in the opposition between physical movement in the sky and lake, and the light streaming in against it. This association of a rich and hidden life and a strong sense of resistance to the light is suggested in the tonal variation in the face of the mountain that receives the light directly, and it affects the representation of awakening in the image.

These tensions evoke more than an ordinary experience of waking up and resuming the activities of the previous day, for the idea of awakening can also be seen as an essential underlying tendency for reflective experience. An awakening of the mind is possible at any time, and a disposition to have the mind awakened is fundamental to the experience of life as something that is valued. In relation to this conception of the idea of awakening, the opposition of movement and light and an impression of resistance to its own illumination by the mountain generate both the feeling of excitement that belongs to the promise of disclosure and the pain of uncertainty which is inseparable from such excitement. Our response, therefore, to Turner's image, which is created out of sensory perception in itself, represents reflective life in action by exploring the psychology of such perception – involving the effect of personal inclination on this experience.

The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche, from Lausanne: A Funeral

The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche, from Lausanne: A Funeral is another watercolour from 1841, and can be seen as a counterpart to *Tending the Vines*. Clearly the motif is very similar, being created from the same objects, and once again the picture is organized around a basic vertical division of the space into halves, with the mountain placed centrally on its mid-point horizontal.

However, this painting is not so obviously geometrical, and this reflects the different way in which it explores the inner life of sensory perception. Instead of the idea of awakening, this image is given its character and expression by a sense of the process of transformation that is suggested by the thought of death. This representation of reflective life in action should not be confused with an image of life after death, as the intention of this image is not to present a consoling or disturbing image of what lies beyond our perception. In this connection we can see the artist as taking the motif and its basic elements of landscape and funeral procession, and reordering them in accordance with a sense of temporality. Therefore, the painting can be seen as a response to the idea of death in the sensory experience of the living. It represents reflective life in action as it might be affected by the idea of death.

In tone and colour this work is both muted and limited in range, but its subtle variation plays a significant part in its meaning. Simplicity of structure is equally important, and the unobtrusive development of these elements of tone, colour and structure is fundamental to the process by which the idea of transformation is suggested in our experience of the image. The features and organization of this painting are so simple that at first glance it might appear to be merely attractive but insubstantial; however, once the relevant connections are made we can appreciate the formal intricacy and intensity of the image. For example, the funeral procession gives us an obvious clue to feeling and intention, and this is associated with the manner in which the mountain is defined. The setting sun creates a ripple of crimson over its visible face to create an image of embers dying into a heap of ash. From this connection we can go further, and see the embers reflected in the cloud above, which is also reddened by the sunset. Thus, a logical extension of the meaning of the imagery in the painting enables us to interpret the essential rhythm which is created by the contrasting upper and lower halves of the image.

Mathematically they are related to each other by a division of the upper half into three equal parts, while the lower is divided in accordance with the golden section, the dividing line being the pine to the left which coincides with the lightly sketched area of grey in the foreground. More dramatically, the upper half is set against its passive inversion in the lake and the immobility of the vertical images in the foreground to the right. These mathematical relations help to create a feeling of movement in the cloud and mountain which extends across the whole of the upper half, suggesting a sense of release. Involvement of the mountain in this rhythm is accentuated by the angled brushstrokes, and by the wave-like shape of the forms, the mountain forming a crest alongside the trough that is made by the shape of the cloud. Moreover,

this idea of release is suggested by the discreet variations of colour and tone that have been mentioned, and by the fan-like opening of the image across the picture from left to right. The relatively cold and obscure atmosphere is expanded into soft warmth and light with the wave-like movement across the surface, and a sense of release is accentuated by the tendency of cloud formation and mourners to move in sympathy with each other towards the corners of the picture.

Within this impression of release, the idea of transformation is gradually realized in our deeper absorption in the image, which unfolds in several interrelated ways. Reference has already been made to the broadest and most obvious of them, in the resemblance of the mountain to dying embers, and exhalations of smoke may be seen in the mist that is wrapped around it. This visual substitution is neither a symbol nor a metaphor, but rather a manipulation of purely visual imagery. In this respect it is in harmony with the other ways in which the process of inner transformation is suggested. One can be felt in a further effect of the movement across the surface, from left to right, for, along with the sense of release an underlying transformation is conveyed in many of the details.

Thus, a qualification of this shift is created by the alignment of the pines in the foreground with the mountain. This alignment contains the strongest touches of colour in the painting (complementary green and red), and redirects us back into the contracted and relatively hazy space to its left. We can then appreciate that at the border of the cold grey-green lake lies an insubstantial, grey strip of shoreline, which seems to dissolve into its elements. Above the lake, and diminished by perspective, is a softly glowing apparition of further mountains which creates a sense of promise or the disappearing vestiges of a vanishing dream. The contraction and uncertainty of this distant sphere goes far beyond any impression we might expect from a naturalistic representation of the lake and its surroundings, particularly in relation to the colours, textures and light on this side of the picture. Our natural inclination is to move our attention back across the painting, following the dominant rhythm of the image.

Here we can see even more clearly how inner transformation is suggested by relations of tone and colour across the whole of the picture, and how one effect is overlaid by another. This is especially strong in the counterpoint between sky and foreground, where a striking example of integrated transformation occurs on the right-hand side around the funeral procession. Along with its shadows, the procession reverses the shape of the mountain, rising somewhat more gently from the mid-point horizontal. As one kind of inner

transformation, the inanimate mountain is alive with a sense of movement, while the living mourners seem to be frozen like the pines alongside them. However, the luminous atmosphere in which they appear to be frozen is enlivened by contrast with that of the mountain, and this effect is created not by using brilliant colours but by relations of tone and colour over the whole image.

The most powerful of these can be found in the colour and tone of the lake, in the contrast between grey-green on the left and a subtle upward gradation of pale yellow to a white halo bathing the 'still' procession on the right. Meanwhile, a sketchy indication of buildings behind the mourners and in front of the lake concentrates the light on those behind the coffin. This develops the contrast in light between the left- and right-hand sides of the painting, and the light and clarity of the lower right-hand side set against the soft haziness of its upper counterpart. By being so subtly ordered and delicately balanced the image creates a sense of things transforming themselves inwardly. The many ways in which the elements of the image oppose each other in this 'transformation' depends upon a mastery of form and a supreme aesthetic sensitivity.

The Bay of Uri from Brunnen

Another approach to watercolour painting can be found in *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen*, also from 1841. In this work exploration of the psychology of visual perception is related to how the painting must be viewed in order to be understood. Thus, contrary to expectation, the image does not possess a focal object around which the rest of the composition is organized, and, connected with this absence, there is no clear geometric pattern underlying the forms and their interrelationships. The strongest individual forms are the pairs of rocks on each side of the bay, those on the right being augmented by the mountain beyond them. But because these forms are not harmoniously balanced but aggressively opposed, they resist the immediately intelligible relationship around which a composition might be conceived.

On the left the rocks are definite in form, a curved slope in front of a straight slope; and their sharp definition, accentuated by dark strokes of the pen, suggests that they are damp from the morning dew. In contrast, the rocks on the other side of the bay are more distant, gently sloping and softened by mist and sunlight, and this effect is even greater in the mountain in the background. The contrast is complemented by gradations of colour, tone and texture from the icy and glistening foreground to a misty background. The rocks and tingling surface of the water, which is varied by reflection and shimmering

sunlight, are softened by the warmth of the sky and its creamy light, and these two spheres are integrated by the subtly judged far bank. Furthermore, there is a connection between the absence of a focal object, or harmony between the dominant forms, and the absence of a clear geometry in the composition as a whole. This work represents a shift of emphasis from a fairly obvious structure to formal relations that are unclear at a first viewing. In so far as it does possess a geometric arrangement, a mid-point horizontal line separates the bay and its immediate surroundings from the distant mountains and sky, but it is not quite horizontal and bends downwards to the right. Similarly distorted is the central peak, obscured by mist, which implies an underlying triangle extending into the bottom corners of the picture, except that it is slightly off-centre, with its apex to the left.

Therefore, when we look directly at this image, our enjoyment of its orchestration of colour, tone and texture is complicated by an unresolved tension in its composition. This is felt in a lack of balance in the dominant forms on either side of the picture, in the division of the bay into areas of reflection and shimmering sunlight, and in the strikingly asymmetrical affinity of shape and outline that is created between the reflection on the right (which belongs to the rocks immediately beyond it) and the distant mountain half-hidden in mist. This reflection is also related in form to the rocks to the left, but again without the harmony we might seek. When we add to these elements the isolated fragment of shoreline in the bottom left corner of the image, which resembles in shape both the slope behind it and the distant mountain but stands apart from the rest of the painting in colour and tone, we feel even more strongly the sense of a composition that is rich but elusive. And though this tension is consonant with the icy glitter of the foreground, it does not produce a complete resolution of the image, or enable us to grasp its significance.

It is only by becoming absorbed in the image that we can release its various elements and experience their true relation to each other. In particular, a release of this kind can emanate from the avoidance of a strong focal object: the sense of subtle dislocation observed in the mid-point horizontal and off-centre central peak creates a feeling of movement in this seemingly still image. Gradually, it becomes evident that this feeling is created in numerous different ways and that there is an order by means of which the imagery can be understood. Now the absence of a focal object can be regarded as an essential characteristic of the artistic conception, as it compels us to elucidate the image in another way.

Therefore, when we follow a natural inclination to begin with the most forcefully defined objects, the dark rocks to the left of the picture, the eye is

led on to the corner of shoreline with its human presence of two figures and a nearby hut. From the hut we are led to the shimmering light on the water, which extends across the front of the image to the reflection on the right and this, as we have seen, is an inversion of the high mountain that lies behind it. Here the feeling of movement is given a rhythmic spur by the physical relationship between the mountain and its inversion, as the reflection is also off-centre, being set to the right, and we experience the force of this effect as we move over the misty range of mountains and their surrounding sky. Incidentally, the central peak fits perfectly into the rhythm of this movement; we now correct the feeling of imbalance that is felt when the image is seen as fixed. Meeting the edge of the picture, we move naturally down the triangular rock to the right and along the bank, prompted both by the curve of the mid-point horizontal (the initial distorting effect being corrected again) and the shaping of contours in the bank by brushstrokes slanting upwards to the right. At this point we are arrested by the sharp patch of turquoise and its halo of creamy pink mist, and this leads us back over the bay.

By following this pattern of movement, which is suggested by many of the details and relationships in the painting, we come to appreciate that the image is intended to be read in two different ways. Once we have experienced the parts as locked together we should allow the eye in motion to elucidate the image completely, and this especially affects our impression of the bay itself. When viewed directly, the distinct areas, including the reflections and patches of shimmering light, tend to oppose each other; while, as the culmination of our continuous movement around the image, the bay opens out and spreads freely before us.

Of the many ways in which this continuous movement around and through the image is suggested by form and structure, we might notice that dissonance in the colours of the reflection on the right, created by a juxtaposition of purple and green, is resolved by creamy pink, turquoise shadows, and creamy white in varying tone and texture, in the succession of rocks, low hills, distant mountains and sky. The bank is given its distinctive and sensuous volume by the ultramarine that defines its contours, but also by a fine and supple line of purple-ultramarine at its foot and at its top, the mid-point horizontal. The aesthetic excitement of the image is inseparable from the sense of movement that enables us to unlock its formal relations and experience its exploration of the psychology of sensory perception. In this connection, the duality of our response itself distinguishes *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen* from the other watercolours we have examined so far, for this painting does not align our visual experience with a particular psychological disposition, such as that of

awakening or the idea of transformation in death. In those paintings, an image that must be seen in one way and then properly resolved in another would be unnecessarily complicated. Rather, this technically sophisticated painting seems to be related to a more abstract enquiry into the psychology of sensory perception, one that is nearer to the core of reflective life in action.

Hence, we might interpret this painting in relation to ideas we have already seen to be of great importance to Turner. The idea that our perception of things is determined by intellectual Forms or Ideas, and in particular that our capacity to see into and understand things should be determined by the Idea of Beauty, is relevant to the psychology of sensory perception. It is therefore significant that the imagery in this painting is closely associated with conceptions of beauty which play a dominant part in the whole of Turner's work, specifically in relation to conventions of the picturesque and the sublime. If, then, *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen* explores the psychology of sensory perception in a highly distinctive way, we may be justified in regarding our dualistic response to its imagery as a function of the artist's use of conventional representation in order to reach beyond it. Turner may be doing with the conventions of the picturesque and sublime, and with Neo-Platonism, something akin to what Shakespeare does in the sonnets with the conventions of love poetry. Sonnet 53 is especially relevant for this comparison.

Sonnet 53
What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
And you, but one, can every shadow lend.
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you.
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
And you in Grecian tires are painted new.
Speak of the spring and foison of the year,
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessèd shape we know.
    In all external grace you have some part,
    But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

This poem belongs with the sonnets that are addressed to the young man, and it is clear that in this case the conventions of love poetry are realized in the language of Neo-Platonism. Therefore, an experience that we may recognize as something that is familiar to the lover, in the opening lines, is given a distinctly Platonic interpretation in lines 3 and 4. An intense curiosity concerning the true nature of the beloved, expressed in the image 'millions of strange shadows on you tend', is a common experience, the elusiveness of which can be understood in a number of different ways. Here, the love poet equates the subject with the Idea of Beauty, and his doing so means that the poem can be seen both as representing the psychology of this poet and as a comment upon the theory of Forms. When he ascribes to the beloved the power to lend the shade of every one, his thought is guided by the theory that objects possess their beautiful qualities by virtue of their participation, to some degree, in an encompassing Idea of Beauty, and his hyperbole is deliberately contradictory. In the second quatrain the contradiction in this conceit is reflected in the opposition of the male Adonis with Helen, and in that of spring and autumn. For while the beauty of Adonis is legitimately understood as a counterfeit or imitation of the Idea, and the art that is painted upon Helen's cheek is similarly removed from the essence of beauty, they are discordantly united in the same person. This is also true of spring and autumn, for the beauties and virtues of youth and maturity are very different, and in many ways antithetical. In this the love poet's hyperbole is self-defeating, as it only shows that the identification of an individual with the Idea of Beauty leads inescapably to a conception of life that is ungainly and confused.

Shakespeare allows the love poet to indulge a Neo-Platonic interpretation that loses control of its own logic. But in the closing couplet this loss of control can be seen as more than a satirical attack on the conventions of poetry, for it possesses a philosophical intention which tears an untidy hole in the theory of Forms. The elegant inversion of these lines gives a familiar rhetorical shape to the concluding twist in the poem; however, the formal convention of this ending invites the reader to make a closer inspection of its actual meaning. Taken at face value, in accordance with the conventions of the poem, the couplet simply completes the idea of possessing all external grace by adding to it the possession of an incomparably constant heart, and thereby satisfies our conception of the subject as an embodiment of the Idea. But there are other possibilities, which betray a psychological conflict in the feelings and attitudes of the love poet. For while the words 'you like none, none you' immediately suggest the idea that none can be compared with you, this closing line echoes the repetition in line 3, 'every one hath, every one, one

shade'. Against 'every one hath' 'you like none' chimes negatively, and suggests that, for constant heart, you are non-existent, like nothing at all, 'none you' acting as emphasis, in a way that corresponds to 'every one'. This meaning is supported by reading 'like' also as a verb, implying that you warm to nobody and nobody warms to you, for constant heart (Burrow 2002).

An insinuation of psychological instability in the love poet's Neo-Platonic conception of his subject can be felt in the uneasy relationship that now emerges between the central ideas of the poem. For when its full meaning is absorbed the couplet tends to deprive the lines of their logical cohesion. This confusion is evident in the dichotomy between external grace and constant heart, a separation of ideas that conflicts with our general understanding of relations between beauty and a person's character. The conflict is all the more acute because the love poet's ambition is so high, and, therefore, it is difficult for us to accept that a beauty which can be likened to the Form is compatible with the absence of a constant heart. When given its full significance a constant heart is essential to our proper involvement in anything that is valued; it is synonymous with conviction and seriousness, and without it external grace is merely artificial. The point is made obliquely by describing the types with which the subject is compared as 'counterfeit' and 'painted new'. We might even return to the original impulse of the poem, and question the kind of beauty which is contained in the fascination of an elusive expression of character, in which 'millions of strange shadows on you tend'. Clearly, this psychological instability serves the satirical purpose of the sonnet by seeing through the genre by its characterization of the love poet. Less obviously, there is also an implicit attack upon his Neo-Platonic thinking and, in particular, the theory of Forms.

As a philosophical poem, this sonnet acquires its force from the richness with which it exposes the assumption that beauty can be understood as a quality which is found simply in the object. Such an assumption is clearly implied in the love poet's search for substance in the character of the subject, and it is developed via the theory of Forms in his argument as it unfolds. If things possess their beauty by virtue of their participation in the Idea of Beauty, then the theory self-evidently defines aesthetic qualities purely in terms of relations between the intellectual Idea and the object that presents itself to the senses and the mind. The contribution of this assumption to the confused logic of his argument is also self-evident. More tellingly, he betrays himself in the contradiction of a supreme beauty from which the idea of a constant heart can be withdrawn; the logic of the sonnet itself implies that the love poet is enthralled by something that he may quite simply be unable

to define. Thus the representation of reflective life in action, in the portrayal of his wrestling with this thought, shows that beauty cannot belong simply in the object, but is dependent for its true nature upon the psychology of the beholder, and, moreover, upon the psychological incentives which lead him or her to seek it out. Not only do the 'millions of strange shadows' exist as much in the psychology of this poet as in the 'external grace' of the young man, but having one 'shade' and a constant heart are essential to the beauty of a human being. The theory of Forms must fail because, in experience, it is impossible to isolate the Idea of Beauty from the many interacting psychological forces that might be involved in our aesthetic responses.

A parallel between Sonnet 53 and *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen* is strikingly reflected in the meaning that can be given to the painting. The subtle indirection in Shakespeare's exposure of the language of love poetry is akin to the creation of an image which is seemingly 'frozen' at first glance and must be unlocked, so that the relations within it are elucidated by the eye in motion. Something of the same richness of reflective life in action is captured, in particular, by the intricate movement of visual perception around and through the image, making it impossible for us to fix its coherence in relation to any one object.

Thus a different emphasis is created by changing from a fixed attention upon the image to our experience of a delicately balanced sequence of related imagery, in which many different aesthetic qualities affect our experience of the painting. Instead of being drawn to a focal object, the significance of which is isolated and then enhanced by the relations it shares with all of the other elements of the image, this work forces us to respond to a rich unfolding of relationships, some immediately suggested and some evoking what has already been encountered, such as from the mountain on the right to the reflection on the bay, or the eventual effect of the bay spreading before us to its initial effect when seemingly locked together with the other parts of the image. Just as the sonnet subverts the love poet's desire to confine the subject to a Neo-Platonic conception of beauty, so the painting resists the identification of beauty with the object. Here aesthetic meaning lies explicitly in the interaction between objects and our experience of them. In this respect, the painting is no less resistant to the theory of Forms than the sonnet; we have seen that Plato's Ideas depend for their existence upon an assumption that their essence lies in the object in itself. Turner's enquiry into the psychology of sensory perception engages with the elusiveness of beauty by evoking its own 'millions of strange shadows', thus exploring the effect of personal inclination on visual perception. In his actual painting, therefore,

his representation of reflective life in action subverts the idealistic theory with which his conception of art is associated.

Lake Lucerne: Sunset

The Bay of Uri from Brunnen also invites comparison with a sample study of 1844, entitled *Lake Lucerne: Sunset*. There is a clear similarity in the structure of these two watercolours, especially in the basic composition. In both, an open expanse of water is surrounded by large rock formations on either side with a range of mountains in the background, while dark and heavy rocks in the foreground on the left side of the image are contrasted with mountains submerged in mist, and this opposition modifies the light as we move further into the scene. Again there is no central object, and the viewer has to discover the principles that lie behind a coherent response to the image. However, the later work represents the scene at sunset rather than in the morning; this is reflected in softer, less incisive outlines and contours, and a more subdued colour and tone. We will see how Turner's exploration of the psychology of sensory perception in *Lake Lucerne* both extends the aesthetic methods of *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen* and re-enforces the departure from Neo-Platonic ideas concerning the cognitive value of art.

Quite different in its immediate effect, *Lake Lucerne* creates a phantasmal mood by means of a much deeper spatial recession and a sense of continuity, as we move from foreground to background forms. This difference is also created by colour, tone and texture, and by the subtle displacement of physical objects and compositional design. The mood itself is particularly strong, and suggests more than merely the light in a particular landscape at a certain time of day. Significantly, all life is removed from the scene except for the barely noticeable boat in the lower left corner with two diminutive figures which serve to indicate the scale.

This absence contributes to the feeling of the hour, at the close of the day when vitality and purpose are mysteriously withdrawn, and the mind is overtaken by an aimless, wandering imagination. Spatial depth is fundamental to this feeling, along with the soft outlines and contours; these are at one with a severely restricted palette, in which expression depends upon subtle distinctions of light and colour, thus enabling mist, shadow and reflection to create an overlapping of physical form and formal design. Compared with the fine transparency and luminosity of surface in the earlier painting, *Lake Lucerne: Sunset* both avoids pure colour and achieves a subtle harmonization of closely related colour and tone, built up in layers to create an opaque lustre which is akin to the density of oil painting. Moreover, the solidity of physical

forms is implied by an intricate richness of brushstrokes, especially in the rocks to the left and the mountains behind them. The concentration that is created by these aesthetic qualities provides a powerful foundation for a countervailing use of illusion in the phantasmal mood of the picture.

This is most directly observed in the rocks to the left, in which a formal pattern is made by the rock and its reflection, in a continuous and unified shape. The intricate formal ambiguity is developed by placing the surface of the lake, indicated by the dark strip of water passing from one side to the other, midway between a water mark at the base of the rock and its reflection in the lake. A similar play with appearance can be seen in the sheet of mist at the far end of the lake, which at first seems to represent the far shore and affects the definition of the lake and its boundaries. But the most dramatic employment of illusion can be found in the pale arc of thin reddish colour cast over the centre of the mountain range and wittily reflected in the foreground right of centre on the lake. This indication of the setting sun and its 'reflection' play such a large part in the overall integration of the image that some deeper connection is suggested by the invisible line that connects them. Allusion to the hidden complexity of electromagnetic fields may contribute to the atmosphere of this image, especially as the artist took a keen interest in the relevant scientific developments that were taking place at the time. He both knew Mary Somerville, whose paper 'On the Magnetising Powers of the More Refrangible Solar Rays' was published by the Royal Society in 1826, and owned a copy of her *Mechanism of the Heavens* (Tate Gallery 1975).

Turner's commanding integration of a rich diversity of resources in order to create the atmosphere of this painting ultimately depends, however, upon a structure which is even more complex than that of *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen*, and is an essential key to the meaning of the work. Sharing as it does a similar formal composition, this painting also appears at first sight to be awkwardly balanced, with a tendency to lean to the left and rely upon the counterbalancing volume of a mountain to the right that is both distant and veiled by mist. As we have seen, this is resolved in *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen* by giving to the eye in motion a pathway around and through the image that unlocks it to the viewer. The underlying structure in *Lake Lucerne: Sunset* is more intricate, and this is related to a deeper exploration of the psychology of sensory perception. In this painting the resolution is not smooth and continuous, but fashioned out of stark oppositions and heterogeneous affinities and contrasts.

The unusual concentration of this work depends upon a fundamental counter-rhythm at the heart of its formal organization. This involves us in a reading of the image which moves from foreground to background in one

way, and then from background to foreground in another, without losing touch with their relationship to each other. In the first place an order of deep spatial recession is established by a series of S-shaped curves that take the eye diagonally across the image from the lower right corner to the top left corner. Such a design is immediately perceived in the general shape of the lake itself, and it is significant to the phantasmal mood that the S-shape is made partly by an overlapping of the sheet of mist at the far end. The sense of movement and flow in this shape is enhanced, moreover, by an S-shape in reverse, made by the reflection of the rock on the right and another, obverse and on the left, which curls around the sheet of mist at the far end of the lake. These embellishments are given greater force by tonal contrast and linear form in the strip of dark water that crosses the lake and divides it into two. Added to these details is a further S-shape at the far end of the lake, where the mountain to the right seems to curve downwards and give impetus to a response in the opposite range of hills, as they veer away from us into an unlimited space.

The general effect, therefore, taking the dominant forms and their treatment together, is to create a vigorous movement diagonally from one corner, in the plane of the viewer's perception, rising through an associated visual shape towards infinity in the empty far corner. In this flowing movement mist seems to hang in the contours of the receding mountain range, and the subtle consonance which is created between shape and texture is relevant to the counter-rhythm that moves diagonally in the other direction. Thus, as the eye moves from the top right corner towards the bottom left, the partially veiled mountain generates a discreet counterbalancing of forms in the image as a whole. A contrasting set of relations is established between the shapes on either side of the lake, in which the massive rocks in the left foreground imitate the shape of the obscured mountain to the right, the nearer to us also imitating the middle-distance rock on the right by sharing its olive-green colour. Finally, the shoreline in the lower left corner runs parallel with the reflection of that rock and thereby unites the counter-rhythm with its original. The opposition is one from muted obscurity in the background to a relative clarity in the foreground, in a rhythm which is intervallic rather than continuous. An effective integration of the contrasting structural ideas is dependent upon both the mist which unites the fading into space of the mountains on the left with the veiled mountain on the right, and a precise diminution of the intervals as we move from background to foreground. Against the relatively indeterminate flow of their counterpart, in the intricate pattern of S-shapes, these intervals measure out both space and light in the painting.

There is no doubt that, once the eye is acquainted with the intricate structure of this image, these opposing structural patterns complement one another in a formally satisfying whole, and their cohesion is completed by the invisible line that passes from the arc of red in the distance to its reflection on the lake, in contrary motion to the flowing diagonal from the bottom right corner. However, this intricacy presents a difficulty for the idea that the image as a whole can be received in a single act of perception, as it cannot be read similtaneously from foreground to background and vice versa. In the earlier painting the image is unlocked in a continuous flowing movement; here the eye is interrupted by the need to reverse our perception of the dominant forms in the image. In mitigation of this problem it should be remembered that these watercolours are approximately ten inches by twelve inches, and this makes them easier to view in their entirety, especially as they are free from distracting detail. So, while the relative ease with which the image can be absorbed is supported by the ways in which the two structural tendencies complement each other, the interruption between them means that we depend upon memory to integrate the image in our experience of it. The relevance of this complication to the significance of the painting is connected to its size, as the concentration it entails (both of the image and our response) is in tension with ideas of the picturesque and the sublime. The subtle visual synthesis that is required by this painting is incompatible with an impression of awesome grandeur, and so its phantasmal mood alludes to the sublime without fully representing it.

As in *The Bay of Uri from Brunnen*, Turner explores the possibilities of art in a way which powerfully challenges the Neo-Platonic conception of truth in art, by challenging the assumption that significance lies solely in the object, as something that is independent from experience of the object and of oneself. When, for example, a picture is intended simply to impress upon us the awesome grandeur of a landscape, beauty and the sublime can be seen as working together, so that the more forceful the effect of the image upon our emotions the more inclined we may be to see the work as an expression of the Idea of Beauty. What we see in these paintings, and the more profoundly in *Lake Lucerne: Sunset*, is an allusion to the idea of the sublime, in which scale and the conception of form in general make it possible to explore the psychology of sensory perception. In this Turner departs from Neo-Platonism by including in the meaning of the work the significance of our experience of the object.

Instead of creating an overpowering emotional experience, the phantasmal mood of this painting involves us in a deeply integrated array of formal

resources that act upon our immediate perception, moving from how we apprehend the image in its entirety to the illusionistic manipulation of form and object, and the relation of these to conflicting tendencies in the treatment of space and light. In this respect perception is related less to our emotional reaction, and becomes interfused with what is represented in the painting; the psychology of our perception becomes essential to the meaning of the image. Thus, the elusive mastery of structure, which involves an element of uncertainty in our visual response to the formal aspects of the work, releases a current of anxiety into the sensuous vitality of the landscape, which is strengthened by allusion to an unseen field of hidden forces, in the movement of light over this scene.

Moreover, the association of beauty and anxiety is intensified by subtle distinctions of tone, colour and texture which affect the differentiated qualities of space and light, and give them an antithetical resolution in our visual experience of the painting. Essential to the effects of space and light are the clouded golden colour of the sky and its reflection in the lake; the colour of the lake is less uniform and is given a dense lustre by a muted green at its edges, which connects the colour of the lake with the rocks on either side of it. These differences and affinities, together with the heavier texture of the lake, serve both to emphasize spatial depth in the aerial recession of the range of hills to the left, and to create a sense of enclosure in the opaqueness of the sky pressing upon diminishing light in the foreground. In relation to light, a very fine tonal distinction is made between contrasting areas of the landscape, the foreground rocks possessing greater clarity of outline and contour, and the rock on the right being illumined by traces of emerald in the olive-green that links it to its counterpart on the other side. This affects the conflict between space and light by accentuating the feeling of enclosure and so contributes to the phantasmal mood in which uncertainty of perception is created by contrary impressions.

In all of this we can see how a powerful aesthetic excitement is achieved by the deviation in this painting from classical conceptions of beauty and their conventions. Conformity to the aesthetic ideal may dictate a lucid and harmonious composition in all elements of a painting, but here we are presented with a precarious order in which balance is created by inner tension and contradiction. In this respect an exploration of the psychology of sensory perception may be related to the anxiety which lies within perception itself, created by the need to see things as they are and understand them. Thus a painting that acts upon the inner life of visual perception itself can represent reflective life in action with greater sensitivity and insight. In place of the

Platonic Idea, in which moral seriousness is satisfied by an image exemplifying character in the qualities that are represented in the object, Turner explores the nature of moral experience in a disquieting image of uncertainty concerning the truth of our perception and judgement. This painting replaces the Idea of Beauty as the harmonious representation of 'conventional truth' with one in which seeing into the nature of vision, however disturbing it may be, has the greater aesthetic (and cognitive) value because it dramatizes the effect of personal inclination on sensory perception.

The Rigi with Full Moon and the Spires of Lucerne Cathedral

Exploration of the inner life of sensory perception in a reflective being can expose our anxiety to see clearly and understand ourselves and the world, but it can also reveal the aesthetic imposition of clarity and affinity which lies within our perception of things. *The Rigi with Full Moon and the Spires of Lucerne Cathedral*, of 1841, can be compared with *Lake Lucerne: Sunset* in precisely these terms, especially as its meaning is also conveyed by the mood of a deserted landscape in the early evening. Here, however, the mood is not phantasmal but is created by the rich diversity of ways in which a sense of proximity or remoteness can be suggested in a visual image. At first the picture strikes us as the representation of an alien landscape, and this impression is owed to the division of the painting into separate parts.

The ideal relations of the golden section govern the placement of the focal image of the moon and its reflection. The barren, deep-blue mountains of the lesser right side are dissonantly contrasted with the golden, orange and dull burgundy slopes to the left. This means that almost a third of the image, on the right-hand side of the distant moon, is given its character by the sculptural impersonality of the darker mountains around which the sky and lake form a resonant space. The powerful geometry also contributes to a feeling of estrangement; division between the parts of the painting is both blurred by the loosely overlapping triangles which define the topography of the hills beyond the lake and reinforced by the invisible line connecting the moon with its reflection. Equally significant is the optical illusion created by the impression that the moonbeam, which is actually quite straight, is angled inwards to the left. This illusion is created by the contrasting planes of sky and lake, and increases the feeling of disorientation in our initial response to the image.

In keeping with the sense of emptiness signs of human presence are minimal; in the foreground, to the left, is some shoreline equipment such as a mooring post to which a boat is attached, while the town and its cathedral

in the background are largely concealed by a curtain of mist. The overall effect tends to confirm the first impression of an alien landscape, and it is in relation to this feeling that the image as a whole explores the inner life of sensory perception. Thus our strong though unconscious inclination to impose clarity upon the object, and assimilate it to what we know and understand, is encouraged by a number of aesthetic qualities which gradually impress themselves upon us and modify our response to the painting. We can see this in the importance of colour, which is all the more significant because the image is relatively uniform in tone. Here Turner's palette enables him to create a harmony that is appropriate to the pictorial imagery of the painting, by using the scale of colours between yellow and red to include orange; red and blue to include purple; but while yellow and blue are included green is omitted. This combination, with its particular balance of colour relations, gives the image its quality of weightless and ghostly dissonance, and is most heightened in the meeting of the burgundy-orange slope to the left and the dark-blue mountains to the right.

However, there is another tendency in this work which counters the immediate effect of the pictorial imagery; against the stillness of the image there is inner mobility in the precise quality of a given colour. Astringency in the colour balance is opposed by a tendency for some colours to move towards or flow over into a neighbouring colour. For example, the blue of the sky, especially the band that connects the Rigi with the left edge of the picture, moves towards turquoise, while the deep blue of the mountains to the right moves towards purple. This modulation of colour is characteristic of the painting as a whole, and can be seen in the movement between yellow, orange and red in the slope upon which the town is built and in the veil of rose mist on the blue of the lake which creates tints of mauve and purple. Such harmony is employed as an organizing principle in the animation of one area of colour by another, in order to resolve the dissonance to which I have referred. Hence the soft, rose-tinted gold of the Rigi stands out against the turquoise-blue of the sky on one side and the purple-blue of the mountains on the other, while providing muted continuity with the red-orange of the slope in its immediate foreground.

The assimilation of an alien landscape is not created simply by the artist's subtle mastery of colour; this mastery is thought out in terms of the image as a whole. One indication of this purpose is seen in the function of a contrasting lack of animation in the dull yellow of the shore, alongside grey and black in the lower left corner; this acts as a structural device to highlight the resonant use of colour elsewhere in the picture. Even more significant is the relationship

between colour and the impact of form and space in the manipulation of the central aspects of the image. When we consider its two parts, on either side of the moon and its reflection on the lake, a marked difference in atmosphere is created by colour. The right side is relatively uniform, the colours combining to establish a unified effect, while a greater range of related colours and consequently richer contrast between different colours is created on the left side. This contributes, quite obviously, to making the landscape more alien on the right and more familiar on the left.

Our assimilation of the image depends upon an aesthetic integration that unites the two sides in a single act of perception, and so depends upon the interplay between certain formal elements from the opposing sides of the image. Thus the moon, which has been identified as being the focal object, is obviously connected with its own reflection, and they seem to belong to the more alien right side, especially the moon itself, which appears cool and distant. The reflection is decidedly less so, being close to the veil of rose-coloured mist and absorbing some of its warmth, and this distinction is related to the effect of the moonbeam on the proximity of the mountain. Accentuated by the way in which it is angled inwards by the plane of the lake, the reflection draws the softly glowing mountain towards us, and thereby completes the resolution of dissonant colours. Thus the moon and its reflection help to unite the two parts of the image and make it seem familiar and reassuring. The powerful co-ordination of form and space with sensitivity to colour makes it possible to convey through aesthetic relations the effect of personal inclination on our visual perception.

The Rigi with Full Moon and the Spires of Lucerne Cathedral has two focal objects: the moon, which is connected to our sense of the painting as an alien landscape, and the Rigi, which shares the fundamental division of the painting (in accordance with the golden section) and also divides the left side into halves. These two focal objects are related to the different ways in which the image works upon us; the initial impression of the image is not merely superseded by our growing awareness of the elements which tend to counteract it. Rather, attention to our changing perceptions as we look into the painting enables us to see how the aesthetic dimension of our experience affects our apprehension of the world.

The Lauerzersee with the Mythens

The employment of this dualism as a means of exploring the psychology of sensory perception acquires a greater richness and depth in the watercolour of 1848, *The Lauerzersee with the Mythens*. In this work the partition of the

image is made vertically rather than horizontally, but the opposition of its parts is just as dramatic and equally important to the aesthetic character and meaning of the painting. Again the underlying structure of the image must be analysed in different ways before it is possible to experience the painting as a single act of perception, with a clearly determined psychological meaning. We have seen already how such analysis precedes the experience of an aesthetic perception which is charged with meaning, but in this case the complexity of the image is greater as there are three phases of analysis, and this puts more pressure upon our powers of concentration. However, the task is made easier by the extraordinary cogency and economy of the image, which combines clear and dominating geometrical forms with spatial elasticity.

The overall form is defined by the triangles that are found in the lake, the claw-like slope to the right and the inverted triangle of misty snow-covered mountains in the background. The island rock on the left has a shadowed triangular face, which gives a chamber-like effect to the triangle of lake in the central foreground of the image. A solitary human figure, pulling a loaded cart and surrounded by animals, is placed immediately before us at the mid-point horizontally, both of the lake and the image as a whole, significantly in line with the extreme point of the claw suggested by the right-hand slope. This links man and slope with the island rock, which is shaped like a human dwelling and has prominent buildings on its summit. These human connections give an air of menace to the 'claw'.

This human interest in the foreground and middle ground of the picture is amplified in the structural relations between foreground and background, upon which the form of the image fundamentally depends. For the stable and reassuring triangular shape within the lake, with its base along the base of the frame and its imaginary apex pointing upwards, is directly opposed by an inverted triangle of expansive waste indeterminately white and indefinite in contour. This connects lake and mountain range geometrically in order to develop a drama that is intimated by the disposition of rocks and figure in the foreground. In this case an inverted triangle is threatening. However, the dramatic resonances of the background do not end here, for it is a striking feature of its spatial qualities that this desolate expanse forms another triangle in opposition to the right-hand slope. In reaching down towards the island rock, the 'claw' creates a rhythm against which the mountain range beyond it reaches back into endless space, so that the base of the triangle now runs along the diagonal from the top left corner with its apex in the top right corner. Turner's play upon this basic shape extends the sense of an uncontrollable and impenetrable space, and makes it even more unsettling in relation to

the images of an ordered and familiar human world in the lower part of the picture.

Other aspects of form that help unite the picture visually serve to soften the severity of the dramatic implications of the image. This can be considered as phase two of the analysis. The farmer vividly expresses a sense of involvement, in the confidence of his stride, as he makes his way through the animals, seemingly unconcerned by any wider meaning that might be attached to his everyday surroundings. Placing this figure centrally at the front of the picture serves to emphasize its importance, and it also belongs to a vertical alignment which links the foreground and background of the image. This slightly angled vertical unites the farmer with an indistinctly drawn sailing boat at the far end of the lake and the exposed white peak that is adjacent to the moon. As we have seen in *Portsmouth* the sailing ship is an image of heroism for Turner and this alignment evokes a muted echo of that feeling; the purposeful activity of the man is quietly affirmed by the ship and the suggestion of a conquerable peak. Here the human and natural worlds are harmonized by bringing together foreground and background elements. And this is strengthened by a secondary curved alignment linking the moon, the exposed peak, and the white building and its reflection on the lake.

Because it is sheltered within its own 'chamber' at the foot of the claw slope, the white building has another part to play in the integration of the image. The suggestion of sheltering itself gives a transforming significance to the slope and reduces its menace, while the smaller chamber accentuates the chamber-like effect of the central part of the lake. Moreover, the curved alignment of moon, peak and building imitates the curve of a halo which is suggested by the interruption of a pale-rose slope, perceived through the mist, directly behind the island rock. This halo effect recalls a similar use of varying tone and colour in *The Lake of Geneva: A Funeral*, but in this case we respond to a suggestion of protective care which is intensified by its affinity with the glowing orange of the island rock itself.

Finally, there are two other significant formal elements that attract our desire for stability in the dwelling-like island rock. One element is the relation of this rock to the combined force of the moon and its neighbouring mountain peak, which are drawn together by a little vortex of cloud moving anti-clockwise around the former (to our perception of them). This tiny swirl of energy separates itself from the general turbulence to bring the moon forward and in alignment with the peak, so that together they anchor the island rock and prevent it from sliding into the void created by the mountains receding into the top right corner of the picture (this is similar to the effect

of the buoy in *Portsmouth*). The other element supports the island rock by imitating its form, and gives some definition to the void by producing a third triangle in the waste of snow and mist. Discernible through the mist we can see how the central mountain follows the shape of the island rock. This triangle also unites the two parts of the painting in a way that contributes substantially to the balancing of the right and left sides of the image. There is, therefore, a subtle integration of the image in which the psychology of our own perception is illuminated.

Thus the first two phases of analysis give us a clear sense of how the image is organized so that the psychology of our visual perception can be recognized in its structure. However, the aesthetic force of the work does not lie simply in this arrangement of detail; rather it depends on a deeper exploration of the inner life of sensory perception. In particular, the significance of the triangle in the foreground extends beyond the visual cues that have been mentioned. In a purely sensuous form, and in a way that has no recourse to symbol or metaphor, the lake and its chamber-like enclosure employ spatial depth as a means of evoking the temporal depth that lies within sensory perception. This is especially true of the spatial intervals between the figures in the foreground, the white building and the sailing ship at the far end of the lake. As the eye moves from the gleaming surface of the lake to the visual complexity of the building and its reflection, and then to the vaguely defined vessel in the distance, the chamber becomes reverberant with its imagery. The depth of reflective experience, and its rich suggestion of possible meanings for us, is realized in the visual image itself, so that objects which may be associated with each other by affinity, and by estrangement or loss, are intertwined with the purposeful act of perceiving them. Depth in space is experienced as depth in time.

The rich suggestion of elusive patterns of purpose and meaning within an act of visual perception is also felt in the surface of the lake, which recedes so that the brilliance of its foreground effect is densely patterned by means of colour, shadow and reflection. Thus its gleaming emerald lies alongside a shadowed darker green to its right and dark blue in the distance, while encroaching reflections on both sides include shadow and reflection upon reflection (that of the building over that of the slope). The power of this imagery as a means of evoking the temporal resonance of visual perception depends upon the clarity of articulation given to this visual complexity. Moreover, we can appreciate that this third phase in our response to the image is possible only when we have passed through the other phases; the sense of temporal depth emerges when we see the image as an integrated

representation, one which is shaped by the influence of personal inclination upon sensory perception.

In several ways this development can be extended to our grasp of the painting as a whole. Thus, if we return to our starting point and reconsider relations between the two sections of the image, we can see how it is organized in bands of colour combinations, and that these help to define the representation of visual perception in the work. A strong contrast between emerald and orange in the foreground merges into a muted blue and orange in the middle distance, and against these, in the remote distance, an expanse of white is placed against a patch of intense ultramarine surrounding the moon and mountain peak. The richness and warmth of the chamber and its immediate environment is, of course, instrumental to the separation of the two main sections. But, in addition to the formal relations which we have seen as uniting these parts of the image, the shape of the chamber is almost exactly imitated (tilted upwards and back) by the mountain behind it, slightly displaced in accordance with the vertical alignments already observed (which include an alignment of the sailing ship and mountain peak). Following the slightest of suggested lines in the chaos behind it, the order of the foreground chamber is extended into a seemingly indeterminate waste of mist and snow. And the more clearly we recognize this relationship the more definite the form of the mountain becomes; which in turn makes us aware of the range of mountains beyond, defined by a diagonal tendency in their contours. Moreover, the shape of the lake as we see it is echoed in the patch of sky, connecting the near with the remote, the more so by a brilliance of colour harmony between the gleaming emerald and intense ultramarine. All of this is contained within the dominant harmony of complementary blue and orange in the image as a whole.

The sensuous order of the painting affects the portrayal of time within visual perception, and this is related to our sense of unity in the painting. For example, being integrated in this unity contributes to a certain kind of suggestiveness in the 'claw' of the right-hand slope. By analogy with memory we can see in this imagery the 'claw' of a sudden and unwelcome recollection, such as when we see our past actions, or those of others towards us, in a new and disturbing light. Similarly, the order that unites the background with the lake and its 'chamber', by imitating its shape and giving stability to the image, affects the meaning that can be felt in the infinite waste of the misty, white mountain range, and in the patch of sky surrounding the moon.

The inner life of sensory perception is both elusive and obscure. The opposition of clarity and unfathomable space in this image, once it has been

assimilated, is powerfully suggestive. In this connection the receding mountain range augments the elusiveness conveyed by the sense of time in our response to the chamber within the lake. More striking is the relationship between this chamber and the moon. Here the significant contrast is one of movement: the chamber is quite still but conveys lively movement in the imagery, light and objects on its surface or around it, while the moon is motionless within its encircling swirl of cloud. In contrast with the psychological vitality of the lake the moon is an inaccessible core of sensory perception, a limit resisting our desire for understanding. In this element of the painting we feel that time is being annulled.

This very late watercolour provides an appropriate conclusion to our discussion of Turner's painting. It enables us to see in a work of unusual richness and subtlety ways in which this particular art form can achieve a distinctive insight into the experience of a reflective being, and in a way that enables us to refer usefully back to the painting considered at the beginning of this chapter. In *Portsmouth* the painting acquires its form from certain ideas concerning the life that is depicted, and from the suggestions of a narrative which the artist is able to weave from these ideas. The tone of the work is heroic and its conception of the everyday perils and demands of naval life is a celebration of the mastery that is essential to the survival of that world. On the other hand, *The Lauerzersee with the Mythens* is a painting which is mainly concerned with visual perception in itself, as a potentially rich field for psychological exploration. The meaning and significance of these late watercolours lie not so much in the depiction of objects as in the nature of our visual response to the painting, its objects and its aesthetic character. Analysis of our response enables us to appreciate how the inner life of sensory perception is given an imaginative realization in the work as a whole.

But we have also seen in these late works something that unexpectedly associates them with the earlier picture. For the mastery of life that is explicitly described in *Portsmouth* has a counterpart in the representation of sensory perception as it is affected by personal inclination. Just as the many forms of activity essential to the navy are seen as our collaborative mastery of a world in which action must be taken, so, in sensory perception, apprehension is determined by the inclination to see things in a certain way. Perception itself is a form of mastery, and this mastery implies a conflict between seeing things in accordance with inclination and seeing things as they are. By revealing this conflict within visual perception Turner achieves a significant insight into the form of our subjective experience, by representing reflective life in action in the way things are seen by us.

Cézanne

This discussion is not concerned with the influence of one artist upon another, but an affinity between the watercolours and several oil paintings by Cézanne will show that the ideas that I have expounded are not simply related to one aspect of Turner's œuvre, and that there are other ways in which they can inform the plastic arts. Thus, in his mature and greatest paintings Cézanne, also, turns his back on literary inspiration as a source of original images, and generally excludes narrative and its resources, such as symbol, metaphor and allusion. This attitude is associated, moreover, with an interest in 'sensation' as the basis of meaning and significance in painting, and analysis of his paintings will show that 'sensation' refers to the inner life of sensory perception. Cézanne uses the term 'organized sensations' to describe what he is aiming for in his work, and combines this concept with the idea that art is parallel to nature, and not simply concerned to copy it (Doran 2001). Thus his intention to paint the *sensation* of things brings him directly into the sphere of Turner's late watercolours. For the idea of art as parallel to nature fits in with the purpose of adapting natural imagery to an exploration of the psychology of sensory perception, while '*organized* sensations' implies a resolution of intelligible order from the fluidity and elusiveness of ordinary sensory experience. Therefore, like Turner, Cézanne does not simply portray the object of vision; his painting includes the unseen effect of personal inclination on sensory experience that has been analysed in this chapter and in Chapter 1. Capturing this 'inner life' in the work of art is a portrayal of reflective life in action.

Houses in Provence – The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque

The painting *Houses in Provence – The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque* provides a powerful example of Cézanne's intention to represent organized sensations in a visual image. Its exceptionally lucid composition and use of tone and colour immediately suggest an elucidation of visual experience: there being a close relation between the execution of the image and the intermittent and momentary clarity of our visual perception in ordinary circumstances. Emphasis is given to this relationship by the unspectacular character of the landscape, which, in contrast to those of Turner, is completely free from any strange and mood-affecting elements. In this case aesthetic meaning is concentrated initially in our perception of what is most ordinary and familiar.

Whereas Turner creates landscapes from his memory, Cézanne works primarily from the motif. Since the sensory perception of a reflective being is more than the observation of objects in space and their sensible characteristics,

a painting can be powerful even when there is no literary or historical reference, and no atmospheric associations. In this particular painting we can see a relatively early example of the artist's representation of sensory experience in which the 'inner life' of visual perception is magnified by the aesthetic resources of composition, tone and colour, and contrasting texture. This can be seen in a characteristic elimination of aerial perspective and atmosphere. Thus the significance of the object of perception is determined less by its position in space than by the more directly sensuous considerations of its place in the compositional rhythm of the image, and the relations of this to the arrangement of colour, light and texture. Because form intensifies the ordered perception which takes place within ordinary sensory experience, the artist is able to express the inner life of visual perception in the internal aesthetic relations of his image. This inner life can be seen as a response to the objects of experience in accordance with personal inclination.

Hence, an attunement of this kind can be felt in the various sensuous effects that are created in this image around the opposition of the slope which descends from the top left corner, spreading diagonally, and the vertical ascent of the buildings which seem to be held up to the light by the triangular 'plinth' of rock. In this compositional rhythm, and its complementary effects of colour, tone and texture, there is little sense of emotional attachment: the elimination of atmosphere in a physical sense eliminates also the sentiments of affection and nostalgia, and the like. Along with the exclusion of literary and historical references, the exclusion of sentiment ensures that realization of the inner life of sensory perception is not blurred by other kinds of feeling and expression. The sensuous vitality in this image owes much to its emotional restraint.

In the structure of this painting there are significant formal elements which enable the artist to heighten the primitive attunement that lies within our sensory perception of things: the integration of visual objects with each other in our response to the image, and an aesthetic harmony between the objects which make up the image together with the technical resources by which the image is realized. Interaction of these elements can be seen in the basic compositional rhythm. Thus, when it is read from the top of the painting to the foot, the slope is composed of stylized shelves of grey rock and their dark shadows, which concede space, as they descend, to the grasses in the foreground. This graduated descent is at once wave-like and solid, as the downward movement is opposed by the direction of parallel strokes of green, orange and yellow placed transversely in relation to the slope. At the same time a transition from clear and incisive shapes to the relative untidiness of the foreground, especially evident in the casually related strips of rock,

intervening path and confusion of dead grasses, creates a rhythmic impulse for the vertical movement at the heart of the picture. In this connection the central buildings are held up to the light by a force that is suggested in the transition from a relatively shapeless foreground through livelier colour harmonies and the geometry of the plinth rock. In accordance with this impulse the direction of the brushstrokes enhances the feeling of movement upwards, while orange and yellow in the grass and orange in the plinth rock add to a sensuous transition that culminates in the luminosity of the buildings.

An aesthetic harmony, which unites the objects within the image and the resources of the artist in creating it, is especially evident in the way in which the uneven geometry of the slope becomes, by a process of sensitive modulation, the crystal-clear geometry of the buildings, and this is co-ordinated with an enrichment of colour and intensification of light. Cézanne continues this upward movement in the suggested form of a spiral in the alignment of the roofs. At the same time the concentration of related colour, overlapping different shades of grey, Naples yellow and intense touches of orange, creates a light that acquires even greater force from a contrasting sky of pale cobalt blue and light-grey cloud. Both the geometry and the contrast in brilliance of tone, colour and definition are continued in the background to the right, where the spherical hill is defined by curving lines of rock, and the close harmonies of colour are removed. In colour, shape and texture the right-hand side acts as a visual support for the central focus of the image.

Therefore, when we consider the impact of this painting as a whole, it is possible to see the image as a heightened expression of the inner life of our ordinary sensory perception. The artist's departure from the creation of a resemblance is evident both in the stylization of his method and the relation of his methods to the phenomena of experience. Not only is the image constructed in terms of complex internal aesthetic relationships, its organization clearly departs from nature as we normally expect it to be. For example, the intense light on the buildings is incompatible with the relative dullness of the lightly clouded sky; however, such a departure from resemblance enables the artist to give to his image its precise emphasis and meaning, and thereby reflect the inner life of sensory perception. Moreover, the central geometric object in the painting is connected with an encompassing mastery of aesthetic organization in the work as a whole. This is particularly strong in the relations already suggested in the transition from one element of the image to another. Movement from the diagonal slope and the spherical hill in the background to the triangular rock, and then to the clean geometric forms of the buildings, is extended by the pattern of

shadows on the weathered surface of the walls. Thus, a crystallization of form is achieved in the progression of geometry within geometry, from its imperfect realization in nature to the geometry of human design, which holds within itself and unites itself with a geometry that is created by light, and so 'resists' time and decay. The interaction between light and geometry in the image as a whole and their relation to the buildings at its centre convey a powerful sense of desire for a sustained attunement between sensory perception and its objects, and in this way illuminate the form of subjective experience for a reflective being. In contrast with Turner's imaginative portrayal of the inner life of visual perception, Cézanne concentrates upon the richness of this inner life in the attachment to things reflected in our visual sensations.

Rocks at L'Estaque

Rocks at L'Estaque is a painting from the same period (1879–82), and presents another approach. Here the intention is not so much to establish attunement between sensory perception and its objects as to evoke the psychological activity that is required to unite the two. In this respect the image can be seen as reflecting the indeterminate fraction of a second that precedes attunement, and conveys a sense of 'Promethean' energy which gives form and aesthetic coherence to our visual perceptions. What is instantaneous in our sensory experience, and therefore unconscious, is analysed so that the inner life of sensory perception is disclosed in the image. As in *Houses in Provence*, this inner life is revealed by means of a highly sensitive process of formal manipulation, in which elements of the motif are exaggerated and distorted. But where that painting creates an impression of ordinary experience and allows us to gradually absorb its subtle play with the motif, a physical working of the motif in *Rocks at L'Estaque* is immediately apparent. Its three contrasting sections are clearly distinguished by differences of colour, tone and shape, and correspondingly by a systematic distinction in the way in which light is transmitted and how it is reflected. In keeping with this the physically central section, also the focal centre of the painting, represents a ridge that is violently compressed in seeming opposition to the dominant rock, which takes the form of a fist. Because these energetic oppositions are not geologically descriptive, but rather suggested by purely visual relations in the image (as in the plinth rock in *Houses in Provence*), the painting is not a depiction of nature in a state of upheaval. In this case an impression of violence in nature represents energies that lie within sensory perception itself, the vigour of opposing physical forms being a stimulus to other ways in which tension between different elements of the image can be explored.

As a realization of organized sensations parallel to nature, as opposed to a resemblance to physical objects in nature, this image is defined by freedom of expression in the use of movement and light. Just as the illusion of physical opposition is created by a juxtaposition of contrasting forms as they appear in the image, so rhythms of form and tone are adapted to the form of subjective experience. Thus the bottom left corner is bathed in light and confined within a loosely drawn diagonal, which suggests a free descent of casually arranged forms from the high vertical rock to the bottom right corner. Above this is the tense opposition of the ridge and fist rock, which presents an obvious contrast in rhythm and tone, both in the conflicting movement created by the opposition of forms, and in the exaggeratedly deeper tone (as though affected by cloud partially obscuring sunlight). This play with light is extended by the shadow that lies within the fist rock; the void accentuates contrasting degrees of light and their relation to other elements such as colour and lustre. The third section is made up of the bay and its far shore, and an even, gelid strip of sky, pale cobalt blue showing through milky clouds, with hints of rose and gold towards the west. The rocks seem to move from right to left, 'drawn' by the angles of the distant hills, the shape of which is imitated on the near side of the bay by the house and ridge, while the sky tends to go the other way, influenced by subtle shifts in colour.

Within these relations of movement and light, the Promethean life of our sensory perception is implied in a sense of mass and imbalance in the dominant objects. For example, a tendency for the three sections to assert their individual character, and pull the image apart, is suggested by a precarious balance of contending forms. Thus a general impression of instability is created around stresses and tensions involving the fist rock. In its primary visual function, this rock presses against the ridge and prevents it from collapsing to the left, and in this way it is fundamental to the coherence of the image. But the emphatic sense of mass, which is created by a rich variation in colour, of vertical and slightly angled brushstrokes, around a basic slate-grey surface, is compromised by the uncertain equilibrium of its overall shape together with the effect of the 'empty' shadow inside it. This gives it the appearance of tending to slide down the diagonal in the foreground, and the support which is given to the ridge also accentuates the possibility of a collapse affecting the central forms of the painting. However, this is opposed by a complex of visual inferences which enable us to restore a sense of unity, and our receptiveness to these inferences makes it possible to see into the energetic response to things which lies within our sensory perception.

Interplay between the two kinds of instability is evident in the element which most clearly holds the fist rock in place and thereby prevents a collapse

of the imagery. The uppermost extension of the fist rock appears to rest against the vertical rock along the left edge of the picture, and so, in lending some stability to its neighbour, the vertical also unites the two sections of the image, giving the effect of one section merging with another. However, the distinction between them remains significant. The foreground section is characterized by an interpenetration of luminosity and soft, dry earth colours, and a loose dispersal of forms which enhances the impression that being open to the light makes them delicate and friable. In this picture the more filled with light the objects are the more they resemble light in substance. For this reason the vertical rock appears as a somewhat fragile support against the unsteady mass of the fist rock, though this precarious relationship itself serves to strengthen the interaction between the different sections of the image. The conflicting relations which this creates in our response to the image leads to other tensions upon which the complex unity of the painting depends. Since a rock that is filled with light may appear to be relatively insubstantial when placed against another in which mass is accentuated, the image is not primarily concerned with the relations between physical objects. The inner life of sensory perception is even less substantial than light, and its relation to physical objects is more than a matter of comparing their appearance of material force.

Hence the coherence of the image is affected by interactions in which relations between light and mass are experienced in quite a different way. In opposition to the effect of making things that are filled with light appear to be less substantial, there is a contrary movement in the image that makes the light seem more substantial. Passing from left to right there is a formal rhythm of diminution in the mass of the line of rocks, and it is accompanied by diminishing echoes of the foreground greens and browns along and beyond the ridge. When we read the image the other way it is not mass but light that guides our response, and the effect is for light to be intensified as we move to the left. This begins in the lightening implied in the blue-grey rocks on the right, and continues in the lustre that is given to the greens and browns along the ridge. Most striking, before we reach the illumined foreground, is the rim of light that catches the outside edge of the fist rock and enlivens both its solidity and its receptiveness to light. The contrary movement in which mass is diminished and light is augmented restores balance to the image by affirming the strength of the latter, and this inference is detected even in the empty shadow, which is finely coated with a muted yellow ochre. When we register these rhythms over the painting as a whole, it is clear that the movement of the bay and far shore complements the rhythm of the ridge as

it opposes the fist rock, while the light which is intensified as we move from right to left is reflected back towards the sky in the top right corner. This harmonious and complex interplay, contrasting mass, light and movement, enables us to see in action our integration of an image that must be given its coherence by the act of perception. The inner life of sensory perception is represented by a conflict within our responses and its resolution.

The Grounds of the Château Noir

If *Rocks at L'Estaque* represents the psychology of sensory perception at a fraction of an instant before the moment of attunement to the object, then a much later painting can be seen as representing a fraction of an instant after that moment, as the object begins to fade. *The Grounds of the Château Noir* was painted near the end of Cézanne's life, at a time when he commented, 'I started a watercolour in the style of those I did at Fontainebleau. It seems more harmonious to me. It is all a question of establishing as much interrelation as possible' (Doran 2001). By this time the interrelation we have observed in earlier paintings has been developed to a much higher level, in exploring the psychology of sensory perception through the creation of visual images of great subtlety. There is a further affinity with *Rocks at L'Estaque* in the division of this image into three sections, and the lower foreground is quite similar. Above its steep diagonal, the second section depicts an escarpment partly obscured by trees and their foliage, while the third section shows patches of sky seen through the trees. While these two sections are not very sharply distinguished from each other, and share a number of similarities in colour, form and atmosphere, they contain important and deliberate distinctions. We can see from the photograph of this scene (Machotka 1996) that Cézanne has considerably altered the motif, particularly by the elimination of aerial perspective. This foreshortens a measured recession in the rocks, and both exaggerates the relative height of the escarpment and creates formal relations between it and the foreground diagonal. These and other modifications are designed, as in the earlier pictures, to transform the image from a resemblance of objects into a representation of visual perception.

Our initial response to this image is determined by its structure. The three sections are composed so that the assimilation of one leads into the next, and this development generates a cumulative enrichment of ideas and inferences as we become increasingly aware of the aesthetic integration between them. Thus our interest is aroused in the first place by a striking and dramatic foreground, and especially by the perilously raking slope. This is combined with a luminosity of tone and colour which stands out from the

subtle variation of its background. Thus light upon the foreground creates a space between the slope and what lies beyond it, the spatial distinction being enhanced by a luminous rim along the line of rocks where the two sections meet. This heightens a sense of peril in the line of rocks, which appear to be in danger of sliding into oblivion and causing the image to collapse, just as we have seen in the fist rock and its ridge in *Rocks at L'Estaque*. An impression of embers is created by extreme contrast in tone and colour in the central group of rocks and an apparent illumination of the rocks behind it to the left. This is extended by the warmth of the reddish-brown earth along the lower edge; a contrasting patch of rich viridian before and to the left of the rocks; and an abrupt transition in tone created by the heavily drawn black inside line of the tree to the left. These 'embers' and their reflections evoke a sense of resistance to visual experience in decay as attention passes from the object, the psychological resistance of our sensuous attachment to nature.

However, the progression from an image of objects in a precarious state of balance to the representation of such resistance requires something more than a single connotation of the imagery in this painting. Hence we should recognize the importance of illusion. The line of rocks is not actually in danger of falling down the slope, and so its effect upon us lies in the illusion created by our visual perception, and this makes the psychology of visual perception central to the substance of the work. This illusion is complemented by another aspect of formal organization which resists the impression of disintegration. Seen geometrically, the foreground makes two triangles, one with its base along the foot of the canvas and its apex in the dominant group of rocks, and the other consisting of the rocks to the left with its base along the adjoining tree. Although the two sets of rocks are not actually touching we cannot help seeing the former set as holding the latter in place, which means that the dominant set is both sliding down the slope and pressing upwards to support its neighbour. This contrary motion is supported by the foreground trees on either side of the image, which seem to sway back to the left. The sense of inner resistance is also felt in an apparent reflection in the rocks to the left of the 'embers' in the dominant rocks. There is a striking difference in volume between the two sets, the rocks to the left appearing in silhouette as though lit from the side. In this our anxiety to hold on to the disappearing object is suggested by the ghostly resemblance of the upper rock to the profile of an archaic head carved in stone; a disturbing aberration of its features survives in the dying light of the 'embers'. Such play with shifting light and the psychology of sensory perception is characteristic of the image in general.

Whereas, in the foreground section, the disappearing object is involved in a conflict between equilibrium and the effects of contrasting light, the drama

in both of these elements is 'corrected' in the section beyond, which defines the escarpment. Here the motif is significantly modified in the interests of such correction, as the elimination of aerial perspective is combined with a considerable alteration of the crest, causing the escarpment to dip where it passes behind the forked tree to the right (Machotka 1996). This retains the line of the crest in relation to the fork, while drawing it downwards in parallel with the sharp descent of the foreground slope, which repositions the tree. Thus the relative height and directness of the escarpment, together with its steeply descending curve as we follow it from left to right, imitates the line of the foreground diagonal, but lends balance to the image by being approximately horizontal.

In this respect the escarpment is given a stability that counterbalances the vertiginous effect of violent foreground oppositions. The connection between space and equilibrium can be also seen in the trees that frame the image, and move in unison against the severity of the foreground slope, and they, furthermore, frame an avenue of trees which indicates the spatial recession while enhancing the stability of the image. In concert with this 'correction' the second tree from the left, alongside the top of the dominant rocks, stands at right angles to the slope and so acts as a visual accent for the rhythm of the image as a whole. And so, modulating from the extreme diagonal in the foreground to the escarpment section, a movement to the right is created by much gentler brushstrokes at right angles to the slope. Further emphasis is given by a line of darker foliage running above the crest, indicated by fine parallel strokes applied transversely to the inclination of the zig-zagging line.

However, in relation to the image as a representation of sensory perception, these 'corrections' have a deeper and more significant purpose. Contrast between the illumined foreground and the dense and secluded space beyond contributes significantly to the impact of the painting. An obvious distinction, upon which the contrast depends, lies in the relatively close relations between tone and colour in the escarpment section of the image. Whereas clarity of illumination in the foreground is created by contrasts of tone and dramatic touches of pure colour, the escarpment is largely defined by muted green, grey, blue and violet, depressed in tone and applied in thin, overlapping patches. Even where the colour is light, as in the central tongue of rock and slope falling away at the right edge of the canvas, it is subdued in conformity with the neighbouring patches.

The construction of forms using patches of closely related pigment, combined with deep shadow, subtly integrated to create a sense of weightless

volume, simulates the effect of objects dissolving and losing their contours and outlines. This is not a crepuscular image of light fading in nature, and there is no clear indication of the time of day. Rather, this painting, like the other Cézanne paintings examined here, has its own purpose that is 'parallel to nature' and observes its own laws. Hence, employing dark green against pastel blue and green as the dominant tone and colour, Cézanne achieves a visual glissando that is akin to his characteristic creation of volume from related patches of colour (the effect is experienced only when we are standing back from the painting). The visual dialectic of the image is one in which resistance to the decay of sensory perception is suggested in the foreground by a violent instability that is sharply illuminated, and in the background by a balancing of the image that is accompanied by a sense of dissolution, as forms appear to fade into obscurity.

A blurring of the definition of objects which is also part of this dialectic, in rocks and foliage, is associated with ways in which the two sections are united. So, the writhing tree in the foreground to the right leans back and its foliage becomes inseparable from the section behind it. Strong black outlines and touches of reddish brown and orange on this tree, and in the avenue to which it belongs, create an echo of the foreground luminosity, and their opposition to the predominance of muted blue-grey light also conveys a feeling of resistance to the dissolution of things. On the left of the painting, and seeming to mock such resistance, the archaic head forms a link with the escarpment, both by acting as an intermediate, connecting the dominant rocks of the foreground with the dissolving escarpment, and by virtue of its lifelike imagery. Correspondingly, the dominant rock contains an inanimate head lying on its side with closed eyes, the adjoining rock to the right is foetal in shape, and in front of them is a rock shaped like a skull seen from behind. Also noticeable in the escarpment are the disconcerting eyes of an alien creature for which the central tongue of rock represents a mouth. This imagery of death and precognitive experience is visually connected, by affinity or contrast, with the foreground 'embers' and their reflected light. Together they dramatize our attachment to the world and our inner resistance to the transitory nature of experience.

When we consider the third section of the image, this too can be related to the inner life of visual perception. Here the significance lies in one clear patch of sky amid the confusion of branches and foliage covering the upper part of the image. This patch is conspicuously placed to the left of the avenue of trees and is almost unique in being isolated, and free from the interference of surrounding objects. The part of the image which corresponds with this

open space in the densely interwoven texture of the painting is the brilliant and unbroken spot of vermilion towards the base of the dominant rocks. In their isolation from the rest of the image, these two elements create a rapprochement across the painting, due to the life that is given to one colour by another, in this case by a small, rich and brilliant spot of red and a larger, paler patch of cobalt blue. Within the structure of the painting, these isolated patches create an imaginary line that runs upwards from right to left against the grain of the image, and almost parallel with the foreground trees on either side of it. The deviation, and its extent, are very important to the effect of this line and its significance: a little further to the right and it would actually be parallel and create no tension; to the left and contact with the parallel would be lost altogether. This invisible line acquires its power by reaching beyond the parallel while remaining within its field, so that it bends the lines of force in the image back towards the left-hand side of the canvas.

Such an influence upon the structure can be seen as another expression of resistance to the slide into chaos that is suggested by the dominant rhythms of the painting, and this is heightened by the sensuous impact of the colours. Supported by its rapprochement with the patch of sky, the spot of vermilion stands out from the illumined 'embers' of the foreground diagonal as an even more intense gesture of resistance to dissolution. The interrelation of purely aesthetic and formal resources in this development of the work is further related to the psychology of visual perception in the allusive nature of these details. Hence, in the midst of dissolving imagery the sense of resistance is most heightened in the areas of the image that most directly represent the basic elements of visual experience: light in the spot of vermilion at the base of the dominant rocks and space in the patch of sky. Moreover, it is the fragility of these elements in the picture and the tenuous connection between them that enable the artist to integrate the image by means of a most telling expression of the nature of our attachment to things of beauty and to a life that is valued. Formal and aesthetic interrelation is the key to his exploration of the psychology of sensory perception in an image of frangible and glowing complexity.

Château Noir

The nature of our attachment to things within the psychology of sensory perception is explored in another way in *Château Noir*, painted around the same time. These pictures make an interesting contrast: *The Grounds of the Château Noir* represents an inclination to prolong the sensory experience of things that are valued, while *Château Noir* penetrates the inner life of

sensory perception in the opposite way. As defined by our response to a life that is valued, the psychology of sensory perception creates an illusion of permanence in the object of experience. Without this illusion there would be no memory, as there would be no incentive for us to remember an inconsequential succession of thoughts and feelings. Thus, the psychology of sensory perception is explored in this painting by an assimilation of the mutable objects of experience to the 'immutability' of mind; the image represents an unconscious tendency to invest a timeless significance in the objects of experience.

Château Noir is also arranged in three sections, with the significant difference that, in this case, one of the sections is superimposed upon another. In order to appreciate the way in which this arrangement works we need to identify the objects in the image and our point of view in relation to them. Thus, we see the chateau through a lattice formed by the uppermost branches and foliage of a row of trees. It appears that our elevation is roughly that of the chateau itself, which is separated from us by a valley rising up to meet it just above an area where the light creates a patch of medium and pale green through the middle branches. In all there are four trees indicated in the foreground, the fourth of which, on the extreme left, appears only as two small dark patches and traces of foliage. The left branch of the third tree from the right obscures the main building of the chateau, and its foliage overlaps the foliage of other pines which stand further back and to the left. Just how far back is made impossible to judge by the severe limitation that is placed upon perspective and modelling.

Whereas in *The Grounds of the Château Noir* overlapping patches of related colour are arranged in order to define the contours of objects, such as rocks, tree trunks and the escarpment, here we are presented with a mosaic of short, square, vertical patches that are characteristically discrete in effect. The resulting spatial compression includes the pines to the left in a pattern of foliage that is created by the foreground treetops. The three sections of the painting are the sky, and the lattice of trees and their foliage, which are superimposed upon a stretch of terrain rising up to the chateau. The dependence of this structure upon spatial compression represents a significant way in which the image achieves an unusual concentration of meaning in purely visual terms.

Our recognition of this basic design prompts a further enquiry into connections between the arrangement of forms and the compression of spatial relations. In particular, there is a conflict involving the space separating the trees to the left from the trees in the foreground. On one hand a certain

distance is indicated by the interval at ground level, and our perception of the trees on the left from behind the uppermost branches of those on the right, while on the other hand the foreground pattern unites them all in a continuous plane. The contradiction implies that we should not eliminate all sense of spatial depth. Rather, the effect is one in which space is clearly defined and at the same time compressed, thus we do not experience an elimination of space but spatial compression.

Correspondingly, this spatial conflict affects our response to the terrain that we perceive through the foreground pattern of foliage. The mosaic of square and flat patches of colour which define the slope leading up to the chateau also creates a sense of spatial compression. This is given further visual interest by a scatter of pale cobalt blue patches spread across the foreground, indicating a source of light from behind the viewer, light which is caught by the foliage of the foreground pines. The painting enables us to make this identification by means of their occurrence in the foliage to the right where there are no spaces through which to see patches of exposed ground. Therefore, on the left, above the lowest of the trees, these indications of foliage extending upwards become visually integrated with the mosaic of the terrain, and so add to the conflict between what we know and what we see. Whereas the trees to the left, the terrain to which it belongs and the chateau are compressed forward, the scattered patches of cobalt blue light are compressed backward into the mosaic which defines the terrain.

Thus we can appreciate how a visual concentration initiated by the superimposition of one section of the image upon another acquires a cogent and logical development by the use of spatial compression. Moreover, the deliberate uncertainties are also an important aspect of the meaning of the work. *Château Noir* is not an image of eternity in which perspective and modelling are excluded in order to convey the impression of an unchanging and timeless world which lies beyond our transitory experience of life. Rather, the compression and its uncertainties belong to an aesthetic concentration which illuminates the most transitory aspect of that experience, our sensory perception of things. The painting lures us into a sense of permanence in nature, and enables us to see how the use of illusion exposes our unconscious tendency to make such a response.

In this painting, the vulnerable sense of permanence that is necessary to sensory perception can be felt also in the effect of spatial compression upon changes of light and atmosphere, and the character of the landscape, which we know will be altered by growth and decay. Two things make this particularly acute. In relation to light and atmosphere, the setting of the image late in the

day is significant, for at this time the changes are most rapid and perceptible, and so it is clear that the image is designed to create a tension between fleeting and subtle changes in nature and the illusion of permanence that lies within our sensory perception. In relation to the landscape, a similar pressure is placed upon the nerve and sensitivity of the artist by the luxuriant spreading of foliage across the foreground of the image. The image draws us into the sense of continuous change that we know to be true of nature, and, in order to achieve his meaning in the aesthetic language at his disposal, Cézanne counters what we know by the composite force of his image.

Here, this requires an integration of large-scale design and detailed description in which spatial compression serves to reduce our perception of change both in the light and atmosphere, and in the growth of the trees. Hence, the compression of space does not simply incorporate the tree to the left into a pattern made by those in the foreground, it fixes the pattern in an elaborate and intricate form. In accordance with this intention, the flat, aesthetically satisfying shapes made by foliage are underpinned by strong accents made by counterbalancing tree trunks and branches on either side of the painting. Furthermore, the tendency of these accents on the right, and pointing towards the top left corner, is strongest in the branch which initiates an emphatic diagonal from bottom right to top left of the canvas. This diagonal gives further strength to the chateau, which moves in the opposite direction, stepwise from top to bottom.

Cézanne's depiction of the sky enhances this design in a number of ways. In its general effect it complements the superimposition of the trees and their foliage upon the terrain and chateau. The brushstrokes move in parallel with the strong diagonal while the shape of the clouds orients them at right angles to it. In combination these effects make the sky correspond to the spatial compression of the lower sections of the image and strengthen the connections between them. This is especially true of colour relations: concentration in the design harmonizes the pale cobalt blue in the foreground and deep blue in the sky, as well as the dark greens of the foreground and olive green of the sky.

Ultimately, however, the meaning and significance of this painting depends upon the life that is given to the image as a whole by a profound aesthetic sensitivity. This life is more than integration, and it is the power that we feel at the outset, and which draws us in and excites our interest in the meaning of the work. Its force is particularly felt in the way that the orange-yellow ochre chateau, with its red door, stands out before the clouded blue sky, and in counterpoint the medium and pale green patch of illumined terrain before it glows through the branches and foliage. The resonance of these colours is

complemented by the contrasting textures which emerge from each of the different kinds of patterning that are used: the intricate shapes of the foliage, the mosaic that is used to build up the terrain, the solid flatness of the chateau, and the geometric stylization of the sky. Together these elements enable Cézanne to evoke a sense of spatial compression which appears to resist the inevitable changes of nature, and so illuminate the unconscious tendency to experience the moment of sensory perception as enduring.

Rocks near the Caves above the Château Noir

As a final example, *Rocks near the Caves above the Château Noir* provides another side to Cézanne's exploration of the illusion of permanence. Like *Château Noir*, this painting is sensitive to relations between time and the intensity of our attachment to things, but with a significant change of emphasis. Here the illusion of permanence is shown as yielding to the flux of experience, as it inevitably must, in an image that owes its power to a sense of interdependence between the intensity of our attachment to nature and the evanescence of sensory experience. This is suggested by the immaterial character of the painting, which depicts not so much a physical object as the sudden recollection of a place that has a strong emotional significance. For a brief moment experience of the place is relived in heightened form and then escapes our grasp. Such a purpose is conveyed by the rich interpenetration of unusual relationships that give the painting its overall form.

These connections are determined by the indication of a diagonal shaft of incandescent light, from the top left corner to the bottom right, and the stepwise descent of the rocks, which are not directly on the diagonal but move asymmetrically across it, and this affects how the light falls upon them. We can see that it falls with varying degrees of directness and intensity on these rocks according to their level; the one most directly in line with the diagonal is the separated rock in the lower right corner. This separation itself gives a feeling of suspension to the image, its massive and delicately balanced objects being forcefully related to the movement of light and the variety of its transient effects. The shaft of light, richly and powerfully reflected by a multitude of tiny surfaces, holds everything in place in opposition to an uncertain equilibrium, and the interplay between light and unpredictable forms gives the image an impression of momentary coalescence. In support of the strong diagonal, a foreground slope to the left runs parallel with the contiguous rocks of the upper 'step', and is differentiated from it by falling more deeply into shadow. Overlapping this slope is a long, thin triangle of undergrowth that completes the foreground to the right while above the diagonal some pines seem to fall away from the rocks, as though receding into a blue oblivion.

Movement has a considerable significance in our response to this image. The cadence of descending rocks is given a strong feeling of potential movement by the heightened suspension created by the space between the groups of rock. This feeling is intensified by the greater luminosity and solidity of the lowest rock, created by lustrous paint and a closer interweaving of the touches of primary colour that model the contours. But against this dominant tendency there is also a feeling of movement running across the other diagonal from the bottom left corner. In this section the patches of colour are divided between vertical areas that give support to the contiguous rocks above, and diagonal areas that tend upwards in the direction of the pines, and carry the movement towards the top right corner. This counter-rhythm is strengthened by the spare growth in the lower section which imitates the entangled branches of the pines. A further link integrates the descending rocks with this upward tendency, where the outlines within the contiguous group are echoed in the foliage that is directly behind them to the right. Thus in terms of movement, the lower section is connected to the upper background by both association and rhythmic impulse.

Before turning to the psychological implications of movement in the painting, I should mention another aspect of the aesthetic impression which is relevant to the psychological intention of the work. The heavily defined outline of the rocks, which moves diagonally down the image, marks a division between the significantly different ways in which the colour blue is used in this painting. In the lower part cobalt blue acts as a moderating centre for darker and richer blues at one end, and light grey at the other. This blue shadow affects much of the foreground, including the rocks, and has the combined effect of giving life to the contrasting yellows and reds, which also enlivens the modelling, and creating the impression that the rocks have emerged out of the depths. In this respect luminosity and solidity are closely related to another sense of movement, the movement of an object as it arises out of its underlying medium. The upper part of the image also emerges from this underlying medium, by virtue both of colour and of its being explicitly identified as background. However, in this case the blue is deeper, and its depth and richness give it a very different significance in relation to the composition of the image. Therefore, while the sky corresponds to the medium from which the rocks have emerged, and into which they will fade, it also dramatizes their emergence by heightening the sense of their evanescence. Enhanced by the strong outline which interrupts the sympathetic integration of opposite hues, the rich cobalt blue of the sky creates an even stronger luminosity in the rocks. The only movement that is possible from

this heightened intensity is relaxation, and so the colour relations create a feeling of imminent decay in the objects. Correspondence between the sense of emergence in one part of the image and of fading in the other becomes a setting for the close association of heightened realization with evanescence, and implies a release of the experience.

The unifying theme for this image lies in the idea of movement in its various forms, especially where they act as inferences for the psychological movement at its heart. Everything begins and ends with the massive diagonal descent of the rocks, and the feeling of instability that is created by the spaces in their descent. As the beginning of a circle of destabilizing balances, this motif expresses the sense of attachment to life with a particular force and conviction. In configuration and contour, and in their minutely sensitive realization by colour modulation, and shape and weight of touch and outline, the rocks and the movement of light across their descending forms are extraordinarily alive. Moreover, the sense of instability that is created by the spaces between them is an integral part of the visual impact; we can appreciate this by imagining the forms joined together. Thus, we can see that the basic imagery suggests that instability is necessary to the emotional depth in our experience.

The cogency of this work is therefore bound up with our making an adequate response to the movement that is suggested by the broken rhythm of descending rocks, and this implies an exploration of the psychology of sensory perception that is true to its inner life. Hence a need to balance the image is evident in the opposite diagonal, leading from the lower left corner, which both supports the contiguous rocks above it and is given a rhythm which aligns it with the pines in the upper right background. The balance, however, is only partial, as it clearly possesses its own tendency to destabilize the image. For, while it is loosely integrated by echoing the branches of the pines in the foreground plant and their foliage in the contiguous rocks, this diagonal is much less convincing, and introduces its own sense of instability in the trees themselves, which incline disconcertingly away from the descending rocks and towards the top right corner. The movement which seems to be intended to correct a provocative imbalance at the heart of the image has the effect of creating a partial solution and an imbalance of its own.

However, it is also on this diagonal that we find the most definite indication of colour as a means of uniting the image in a way that creates order and harmony. The cobalt blue-based shadow of the foreground can be seen as spreading from the lower left corner and reaching across the rocks above and to its right. As a medium from which the rocks appear to emerge, this shadow also acts against their instability, by creating a unified field beneath

them. It is also associated by colour with the sky, which acts as a counter to the bending of the trees away from the centre of the image. But as the colour of the sky increases the luminosity of the rocks across the heavy outlines that separate them, it also creates a heightened intensity in the completion of their descent. Thus colour plays a role similar to that of structure, in that its tendency to balance the elements of the image is accompanied by a tendency to destabilize them. Where a sense of movement is so pervasive the heightened intensity foreshadows dissolution. Instead of producing a reassuring image of stability, the painting exposes the illusion of permanence in our sensory perception by interfusing a strong aesthetic realization of experience with the realization of its evanescence. This completes the transformation of various kinds of physical movement, involving objects, structural rhythms, colour and light, into an underlying and unified psychological movement.

Conclusion

In this discussion I have presented a theory of art as a form of knowledge in opposition to the idea of mimesis as it is expressed in Plato's *Republic* and the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Reference to *The Republic* has been concerned with the idea of resemblance in relation to the representation of objects of experience, while my interest in the *Poetics* has dealt with problems surrounding the representation of human actions. Thus we have seen that the representation of a physical object, such as a table, cannot be regarded as sufficient in itself to account for the intentions of an artist who includes a table in his or her painting. In being concerned with physical objects, or objects of any kind, physical, psychological or metaphysical, the painter or sculptor is involved with the interaction between object and our experience of things, including experience of oneself. In the sense that the artist represents an interaction of this kind we can say that he or she paints not an object but reflective life in action.

I have shown how Aristotle's concept of mimesis implies a form of revelatory resemblance. In drama this requires an elaborate complex of resemblances that goes far beyond the image of a physical object and could never be encountered in our experience outside the work of art. However, by turning to human actions as the focus of artistic insight, I have been able to challenge the idea that such insight has its foundations solely in resemblance. Specifically, Aristotle's use of this concept fails because a theory that is based primarily upon the idea of resemblance may be sufficient for the portrayal of a human action, but this does not make it adequate to the complex nature of human life. Thus my opposition to the theory of mimesis is based upon a conception of reflective life.

In Chapter 1 I show what is intended by the idea of reflectiveness. Reflective life is something that is valued in itself, over and above any of the particular things for which it is valued. This implies that for a reflective being it is

necessary to consider its life, and to give it, or allow it to take, a particular form. This in turn implies that it must engage with the forms that define the life of a community and by means of these life-defining forms give shape to its life and experience. Inevitably these conditions have consequences for our understanding of ourselves and the world. Intentionally giving a particular form to life disposes us to value life in one way rather than another, and so our understanding is determined by the kind of life we choose or accept. To put it another way, we can only acquire an understanding of life by using the resources which are put at our disposal by living reflectively and deciding to live in one way rather than another. Hence the experience of a reflective being must be given its form by personal inclination, and this will be present in mental activity like judgement and understanding, memory, imagination and intuition, and such inner experience as emotions, moods, feelings and sensations. In this essay there has been an emphasis on the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding, and sensory perception.

Aristotle's theory is tied to appearances in a way that precludes the possibility of showing how personal inclination affects judgement and understanding, and other forms of apprehension. His conception of the portrayal of a human action in *Oedipus* therefore disregards a fundamental aspect of reflective life. My discussion of the play shows how Sophocles' mastery of form enables him to create a portrayal of great penetration and insight because his thought is analytical in nature, and not simply devoted to the assembling of appearances. Hence the elements of tragedy such as characterization, plot and the representation of a human world are organized in accordance with a deliberate opposition of the genres of tragedy and the riddle. We have seen how this opposition makes it possible for this drama to reveal the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding, pre-eminently in the characterization of Oedipus.

This already suggests a line of thought that is important to the nature of aesthetic enlightenment, since we have also seen that an artistic genre should be seen as a life-defining form with its own rhetorical purpose. In many cases works of art are rhetorical by virtue of the circumstances in which they are created and their social intention. Thus a church cantata composed by Bach for a Lutheran service cannot be seen simply as an attempt to represent things as they are, in a spirit of disinterested enquiry. Here meaning is tied to the liturgical purpose of preparing the congregation for the sermon that is to follow; this means that the ideas and beliefs that are conveyed in the words and dramatized in the music must conform to the understanding of the pastor and his congregation. The music makes an appeal to the belief, for

example, that there is a deep connection between penitence and redemption (as in Cantatas 46 and 78), and so rhetorically confirms the congregation in its conception of the world. I have also suggested that the artist has no alternative but to rhetorically impose a particular vision of life upon those who receive the work, since the representation of reflective life depends upon the abstraction of certain features of life that are perceived in a particular way.

So, in tragedy, love poetry, elegy, satire, the mass, picturesque and sublime landscape painting, and all other genres and forms of art, the artist employs a rhetorical form in order to create a vision of the life to which he or she belongs. The genre is inescapably an expression of our inclination to see life in accordance with beliefs and feelings and attitudes. However, the many examples that I have chosen to illustrate this theory show how the analytical elements of abstract thought make it possible for the artist to see through the rhetorical intentions that are implicit in a genre, and so see into the effect of personal inclination on cognitive experience. Even in the absence of such analysis we can take a view of the work of art that is contrary to its rhetorical purpose. The meaning and significance of a church cantata can be turned inside out; we can see the music as a dramatization of psychological inclinations in the congregation for which it is intended. In this respect the creative act is an expression of reflective life in action which can run counter to the ostensible intention of the work.

I have mentioned that Sophocles unsettles the conventions of tragedy by opposing them to the riddle, and this is given particular emphasis in the central portrayal of the king. The sonnets of Shakespeare represent reflective life in action by dramatizing the 'poet's' assumption of the roles of mentor and love poet in relation to a young aristocrat. Here the effect of personal inclination on judgement and understanding is revealed in a conflict between poetic ambition and psychological realism in the relationship between the 'poet' and his subject. The use of multiple personae, or 'voices' within a persona, enables Shakespeare to achieve a subtle and complex drama in the poetry.

Bach's Prelude and Fugue in B flat minor challenges the conventions of mourning and their significance by transforming the funeral march into an everted lullaby in the Prelude, and then by rejecting the desire for a transcendental healing in the Fugue. In Beethoven's Quartet in A minor, understanding is tested by the composer's attempt to reconcile the Promethean purpose of his art with failure in life, and to do so through the power of his art. This provides the framework for a profound and disillusioned self-portrait in which personal inclination is acutely exposed. Moreover, in music we

have seen how the form of subjective experience is conveyed in the sensitive integration of feeling, sensation and mood with psychological impulses such as desire, despair, contorted affirmation, satirical humour and self-mockery. Finally, in Chapter 4, we have seen how Turner and Cézanne take certain conventional forms of landscape painting as an occasion for showing the effect of personal inclination on sensory perception. In the paintings which I have chosen to discuss we have seen how the object depicted in the image is a means for the investigation of sensation and its inner life. In many different ways the form of subjective experience is revealed in the sphere of our visual experience.

At times it has been necessary to bear in mind the organization that lies behind our general experience and understanding. The insistence upon personal inclination as fundamental to all of our thinking may seem to cast doubt upon the possibility of any true insight into the nature of character, experience, and our lives as reflective beings. Hence, in order to remove any suspicion of a hidden contradiction in this theory, I should conclude by recalling that the need to see things as they are is also fundamental to the experience of a reflective being. In its absence we could never form any sense of a life that can be valued, and in which we can make something of our participation and decide how to live. Concern for the truth does not simply supervene upon our nature, as being instrumental to how we create order and sustain ourselves; rather such concern is essential to the experience of a reflective being. For example, in order to experience a life that is valued in itself, and not amorphous and inconsequential, we must distinguish in many different things between what is genuinely good and what is merely a simulation or a deception. In this respect the need to see things as they are is basic to personal inclination, and so there is no contradiction in the idea of forms of enlightenment which are necessarily affected by personal inclination.

All of the interpretations in this book show how works of art portray reflective life in action, and how this makes it possible to illuminate the effect of personal inclination on judgement, understanding and other forms of apprehension. More specifically, we have been able to see how art reveals the close interconnection between inner experience, the psychology of reflective life in human life, and the life-defining forms of a particular society. By 'inner experience' I mean sensory perception, thought, reflection, memory and imagination, and the feelings that accompany them – such as sensation, mood, emotion, impulse and inhibition. They acquire their power and significance from the psychology of reflective life as it is realized in the life-defining forms of a community.

The distinctive capacity of art, as a form of knowledge, is to represent our cognitive experience (our apprehension of things in general) as this is affected by our participation in a life that we value. Such knowledge is intertwined with aesthetic experience, and an emphasis upon our response to the sensuous excitement of art is fundamental to the orientation of ideas in this book. Since art is the means by which reflective life portrays itself in action, it can only be understood by a sensitive response from within experience. In the absence of this we could not recognize the portrayal of inner experience, human psychology and the world in which we live, and therefore could not appreciate the ways in which art can illuminate the interconnection between them. Conversely, the elation of disclosing the truth of what lies within our experience of life can be equated with the aesthetic excitement that is common to many forms of knowledge. In art the pleasures of sensuous and imaginative involvement and those of illumination are interdependent; the immediate experience is realized in accordance with a revelatory purpose while the revelation itself is necessarily both analytical and sensuous in form.

Appendix

The Myth of Prometheus in Beethoven's Music

In support of my analysis of Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor, opus 132, it may be necessary to explain the weight that is given to the figure of Prometheus in Chapter 3. As Prometheus is not mentioned in the literature concerned with this quartet, it may seem provocative to insist upon his importance to the meaning of the work. Hence the purpose of this appendix is to explore a vital relationship between this composition and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E major, the *Eroica*, a composition in which the association with Prometheus is widely accepted.

The main reason for this acceptance is Beethoven's use, in the finale of the symphony, of music which was originally created for his ballet, *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (The Creatures of Prometheus). It is also the theme for a piano composition, the Eroica Variations (opus 35), referred to by Beethoven himself as the Prometheus Variations. The ballet is an allegory about the creation of man, and it consists of a sequence of dances: Act 1 shows Prometheus fleeing from Zeus amid thunder and lightning, and returning with the stolen fire to two clay statues; in Act 2 Prometheus brings these statues to life by touching them with the fire and, having brought them to life, arranges for them to be civilized by several gods and goddesses identified with science and the arts. The connection between Prometheus and this process of spiritual development and self-realization is fundamental to the allegorical meaning of the ballet, and the finale brings together gods and goddesses, man and woman in a celebratory dance. In the course of the ballet Prometheus is stabbed to 'death' by the muse of tragedy Melpomene, because his 'gift' has bestowed suffering and mortality upon man; this is a symbolic killing as Prometheus is a Titan and immediately reborn.

The ballet is based upon the account of the Prometheus myth in Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum* (Bertagnolli 2008), which refers to a version of the relevant creation myth written by Fulgentius the mythographer in the sixth century (Fulgentius 1971). Although the story for the ballet is the work of the choreographer Salvatore Viganò, its theme and the association with Prometheus was significant for Beethoven at a critical moment both in his life and for the development of his music. His despair in the knowledge that deafness was inevitable underlies his turbulent feelings and attitudes at this time. The persecuted Titan provides him with a type for heroic resistance in the cause of a visionary transformation of life through the power of art. This proved to be revolutionary in Beethoven's creative life, since a Promethean model transformed his approach to composition, and this was achieved in the transition from the ballet to the symphony.

Apart from the connection between the music for the finale of the ballet and for the finale of the symphony, other music anticipating the symphony has been discovered in dances 9 and 10, which are related to the death of Prometheus and his rebirth. These are seen as providing material for the second and third movements of the symphony, its funeral march and scherzo. This has encouraged some scholars to propose a complete programme in which the symphony represents the struggle, death, rebirth and apotheosis of Prometheus (Kinderman 2009), or a conception of human life that is related to the myth (Haley 2006). Thus, in accordance with this general position concerning its origins, I offer an interpretation of the exposition in the first movement of the symphony; this will enable me to trace a development in the composer's thinking that runs from the ballet through the symphony to the late string quartets.

The *Eroica* symphony begins abruptly with two staccato chords involving the whole orchestra and marked f. Their effect is sharply penetrating, bright in sound and powerful without being in any sense heavy. Therefore, we can imagine that these chords represent Prometheus touching each of his clay statues and 'igniting' them with the divine fire which he has stolen from the gods. Since the sound is rich and penetrating rather than heavy and loud it has a magic power that is appropriate to this act of creation. Moreover, these chords form an upbeat; as such they initiate the unfolding of the music, which portrays the stirring of life in these statues.

In this music magic is related to momentum; its rapid transitions are a function of the lively tempo (allegro con brio) combined with a 3/4 time that turns pulse into a continuous renewal of spiritual impulse, and conveys the idea of awakening through various phases. Thus the first statement of

the theme is accompanied by a pattern of quavers in the violins and violas, a counterpoint which recurs throughout the exposition. Hence the opening phase of awakening is represented in the strings as a shimmering 'flame' of spirit or sensation, and this underlies the developments in experience and awareness which define the inner realization of life in the emergence of the Promethean 'creatures'. The theme, first stated in the cellos (bars 4–8), suggests a gentle 'wave' of feeling, and it provides a basis for the structure of the exposition as a whole. Each development in the process, therefore, takes place at the peak of a further wave, and represents a development in the life that is portrayed.

It is pertinent that every appearance of the theme is different; each change draws attention to its place in the sequence, and therefore reminds us of the earlier versions. Thus when the first peak occurs (bars 15–18) we are immediately aware of the leap in pitch (by three octaves) and the theme is curtailed. The development from low in the strings to high in the woodwinds signals an experiential development from the obscure wave of feeling in bars 4–8 to the realization of mind, an awareness of oneself and the world. The curtailment of the theme, moreover, accentuates this experience by making it relatively piercing and clear; for example, in bar 17 the flutes are echoed in a rhythmically diminished form an octave lower by the clarinets and trumpets.

This development is also related to more general ideas that are expressed in the work. For in representing inner experience the woodwinds allude to the theme of awakening in the ballet. Beethoven's use of contrast between the first and second appearance of the theme associates awareness of oneself and the world with evolution into a civilized being. And, since for Beethoven music is especially important to this process, he also identifies Prometheus with the act of composition. The musical evocation of divine fire makes the emergence of inner experience musical and thereby suggests a continuation of the composer's renewal of vision with the Titan's creative action. This is enhanced by our knowledge that the allegory of the ballet is now concentrated in a few bars of symphonic writing.

The second peak builds up immediately upon the relaxation of the first, and so conveys an inexorable force of inner evolution in the life that is represented. A long climax begins at bar 20 and is extended to bar 45. The stages in this climax are created by rhythmic variations which depend upon duration and syncopation. Stress on minims alternating with stress on crotchets and the tying over of notes from one bar to the next in order to displace the beat create a sense of spiritual forces being controlled and integrated at the same time

as the excitement of the music increases. This passage flows into ascending staccato quavers in the woodwinds invigorated by semiquavers (bar 35) and then tremolo in the strings (bar 36) before the theme returns triumphantly in the whole orchestra. With great force and rapidity, like blood circulating around the body, the music has moved from an awakening touch to the new creature's sense of itself and the world, in which sensation, feeling and a self-conscious mind are co-ordinated aspects of its inner experience. Our perception of a continuous evolution from the initial stirring of feeling, through the awakening of the mind to a integrated experience of life, is made possible by Beethoven's use of a simple fragment of melody as the basis for this complex representation.

The brevity of the climax is in keeping with the dramatic character of the music, and at bar 45 the full force of the orchestra gives way to the single line of woodwinds alternating on a three-note figure above the shimmering strings. This floating figure echoes the main theme in a manner that changes the perspective. Having portrayed emerging life from the inside, the music now steps back to create a space in which the same process is briefly indicated as more and more figures are brought to life. Specifically, the woodwinds here echo the return of the theme at bars 15–18; bars 45–54 therefore represent consciousness in a growing number of human beings. In the ebb and flow of this development the self-realization represented by the main climax is also briefly echoed in the staccato crotchet chords of bars 65–69.

At bars 84–99 the flow is interrupted by a reflective passage in which the return of the theme at bars 15–18 is echoed with a further significance. Now consciousness is associated with the growth of community, and an awakening of social involvement is highlighted by alternation between the floating woodwinds and the lower register of the strings. This moment, in which consciousness becomes an expression of attachment and affinity to others, is preliminary to the second climax of the exposition (from bar 109). Here the theme returns with syncopation on the second note in the bar. Thus intimations of dance in the rhythm of the exposition as a whole are now released with ecstatic energy, confirming the necessity of social engagement to experience for the creatures of Prometheus.

This development implies an integration of social perspective with inner experience, and the dance of life – as experienced in the life of fellow creatures – is dramatically affirmed in the abstraction of a general shape from the theme in bars 124–131. Here the syncopated repetition of staccato chords heralds a triumphant conclusion to the exposition, and this has important implications for the meaning of the symphony as a whole. The note of affirmation not

only refers to the experience of the 'creatures' but is also a vindication of Prometheus as the source of this form of life. Moreover, we have seen that a musical Prometheus is identified in this music with a Promethean composer whose renewal of our understanding of human life affirms the importance of aesthetic experience.

In the other sections of the first movement and in the other movements this affirmation of what Prometheus has created is tested against our experience. It is particularly intense in the second movement (Marcia funebre, adagio assai) which is focused upon our mortality, and therefore refers back to Act 2 of the ballet and the 'killing' of Prometheus by Melpomene. The symphony as a complete work, however, does not diminish the attitude of optimistic self-assertion conveyed in the exposition of the first movement. Rather the inner conflict and impermanence of our lives are seen as essential to its value; it is only by having something to resist that we acquire the inner strength that is necessary for our lives to possess any substance. Thus Beethoven's title for the symphony refers to the attitude that is required for a true understanding of this life.

My discussion, in Chapter 3, of the String Quartet in A minor, opus 132 interprets the opening as an awakening to a sense of disorientation and estrangement. Since the exposition of the *Eroica* represents the stages in a process of awakening experienced by the creatures of Prometheus, we may consider the possibility of a connection between the two pieces. My discussion in Chapter 3 makes a strong case for a significant allusion to Prometheus in the quartet, which can be supported by showing how ideas that are central to the *Eroica* are implicit in the late quartets. Therefore, I will examine two examples in which these pieces are related to each other in terms of musical expression and meaning.

Allusion to the energetic and joyful awakening of the symphony can be seen in the tortuous awakening of the quartet. We have seen how, in the *Eroica*, the theme is first stated in the cellos, and repeated a few bars later three octaves higher in the woodwinds. A highly compressed and sombre revision of this is suggested in the opening bars of the quartet. The motive consisting of semitonal and sixth intervals in the first two bars is immediately imitated (moving from the tonic to the dominant) two octaves higher in bars 3 and 4. Thus the opening of the quartet is pointedly strenuous and uneasy, as opposed to the spontaneous freedom of awakening in the symphony, which leads into an exuberant succession of awakenings. Whereas here the pulse of the music expresses a continuous renewal of spiritual impulse, in the quartet a continued ascent in the first violin is countered by a return to the original

motive, with the bar order reversed, in the cello. The sense of an inarticulate inner conflict is sharpened by the intensified dissonance of bar 7, until the sense of disorientation is dispelled by the energetic V-shaped motive that launches the first subject.

It is well known that the opening motive of the quartet is crucial to the structure of the work as a whole and my discussion in Chapter 3 refers to its appearance in different forms at climactic moments in the unfolding of the piece. I will call this music the Prometheus motive, and justify the term in the following observations. As I have implied in the previous paragraph, the sense of disorientation and estrangement in the opening bars is created to a large extent by the intervals of the Prometheus motive, which is inclined towards chromaticism. However, the second and fourth notes of this motive also make a perfect fifth, and in the tonic this chord affirms the harmonic centre of the music. Thus we can hear in this motive, as it occurs in the opening bars, intimations of inner resistance; a fortitude associated with Prometheus is felt within the music. This is confirmed by the harmonization of the motive. In the first version A is in the tonic while E is in the dominant; in the second version both E and B are in the dominant; in the third version both A and E are in the tonic. Thus the inner resistance of a tonal centre to disorder is intensified as the Promethean subject of this awakening becomes more aware of his circumstances. In this detail too the quartet can be seen as shadowing the symphony.

The opening of the quartet makes a more specifically musical allusion to the opening theme of the *Eroica*. The six bars of this theme are clearly divided into two parts so that bars 3 and 4 are balanced by a counter-phrase in bars 5–8. Though the phrases are not equal in length there is an interesting symmetry between them; the effect is akin to that of an object and its shadow. The counter-phrase foreshadows a psychological conflict that is represented later in the piece; it ends chromatically on a C sharp that does not fit naturally into the key of E major. In its general shape, especially in its free and upward expansion reversed in the chromatic E flat, D and C sharp ending, the counter-phrase closely resembles the first subject of the opening movement of the quartet. Not only does the ending of this motive (in A, A and G sharp) look similar, the motive itself appears to be a deliberate contraction of the counter-phrase; four bars in a major key are reduced to two in A minor, the intervals are closed up, and the crotchets and minims in 3/4 time are compressed into dotted rhythms in common time.

The similarity in form between the two phrases and the many ways in which the quartet motive appears to be a contraction of the counter-phrase suggest

that Beethoven is making a deliberate allusion to the symphony in order to clarify his intentions. His reshaping and compression of the counter-phrase has the effect of intensifying the sense of disquiet. Thus we can see how the reference to Prometheus in the symphony is darkly echoed in the quartet, and how this reference can be interpreted as Beethoven's self-dramatization as a Promethean artist.

Further confirmation of this position is found in the opening bars of the fifth movement of the quartet. Bars 3 and 4 are a variant of the first subject motive of the opening movement, and another echo of the counter-phrase from the symphony. Significantly, however, the rhythm is smooth and a return to 3/4 time strengthens the affinity between this variant and the original source. As I have shown in Chapter 3, the last movement of the quartet mocks the composer's attempt to achieve a universal dance in which a Promethean vision of renewal is gloriously vindicated. The most prominent reference point for this in the symphony is the second climax (bars 109–115).

Hence both the Prometheus motive and the central theme for both the opening and closing movements of the quartet can be compared with the *Eroica* exposition in ways which support the argument that is presented here. We can contrast the effortless spontaneity of the unfolding of music and ideas in the symphony with the disruption, fragmentation, miraculous recovery and disillusioned self-mockery which dominate the quartet. In this respect we can appreciate the opening of the relevant movements in the quartet more precisely in relation to the opening of the symphony. The V-shaped motive, which leads into the first subject of the quartet's opening movement, replaces the opening phrase of the symphony, and the same phrase is replaced by a minim (with grace note) in each of the first two bars in the last movement of the quartet. This both removes the noble opening phrase of the symphony and disrupts the balance of the theme, so that the music of the quartet becomes essentially angular and asymmetrical. Thus, in the first and fifth movements there is a constant search for equilibrium, and the seemingly innocent opening bars of the fifth movement can be seen as ironically self-effacing, a sardonic recollection of Prometheus bringing his creatures to life in the opening chords of the symphony.

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This book offers a new approach to our understanding of art as a form of knowledge. In opposition to the ideas of mimesis that we find in Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*, it presents a theory of art as the portrayal of reflective life in action. This theory is demonstrated by reference to works by Sophocles, Shakespeare, Bach, Beethoven, Turner and Cézanne. A new approach, combined with sensitivity to the particular characteristics of different art forms, generates an original view of *Oedipus*, the Sonnets of Shakespeare, the Prelude and Fugue number 22 from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Book 1), Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor opus 132 and a number of landscape paintings. Interpretations of twenty-seven works of art explore the meaning and significance of each complete work as a representation of life. Reflective life is defined as a life that is valued in itself, and the analysis of art in this book shows how the portrayal of reflective life in action reveals the interconnection between inner experience, the form of reflective life, and the life-defining forms of a community.

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