The Image in Form:

Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes

Durham, 1902-1972

Edited and with an introduction by Richard Wollheim

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Introduction

Adrian Stokes was born in 1902. He was brought up in a London that has now largely vanished, and he has lived, for years at a time in Italy, in Cornwall, on the North Downs, and, since 1956, in Hampstead in an eighteenth-century house, where he paints and writes. His life and his work have always been intimately entwined, and he has cultivated privacy in both. He has been unconcerned with reputation, and the sources of his inspiration have lain in the progress of his own ideas and in the physical environment. In 1925 he first came to live in Venice, and he has described to me how he immediately fell under the influence of the city and its lagoons and of d'Annunzio's passionate novel *Il Fuoco*, in which the poet not only recounts his affair with the Duse but also makes many references to the Renaissance and to Pisanello. The months that ensued, absorbed in a city and its architecture, in buildings and the life they house, in painters of the past, in what another man had made of these things and how he had invested them with feeling, above all in his own shy intense reactions, epitomize, if in a heightened form, the interplay of reflection, art, and place so characteristic of Stokes's work.

This volume deals only with Stokes's critical writing and with what is necessary for the understanding of that. Though the body of this writing, which now amounts to some eighteen volumes, is not familiar to a wide circle of readers, its influence, direct and indirect, has been considerable. There are certain painters, sculptors, poets, philosophers, critics and historians of art who are profoundly indebted to him. And, increasingly, some of the earlier volumes, with their thick paper and their velvety old-fashioned photographs, have become eagerly sought after.

Of those aspects of his childhood which concern us in that they

have contributed directly to his work, Stokes has given us a description, included in this volume, in which he retains throughout the child's perspective. In the fantasies of the young boy, exercised daily in a London park under a succession of governesses, we discover much that is later to assert itself either in the motivation or as the content of his writing – two things never far apart in the work of an original artist. Fear, concern, the sense of loss, a feeling for order, the desire to restore and to put everything right – first experienced most poignantly in relation to the objects and events of the childhood round, to the drained bed of the Serpentine, the rough boys who infested the Park, the Magazine by the lakeside in which dangerous explosives were stored, the red-coated soldiers, the big horse-chestnuts in candle, and the myth of the Park returned to an eighteenth-century grandeur – to which must be added a powerful capacity to find in the outer world intimations of the inner: these things later manifest themselves as the motive force behind Stokes's work, but they are also what he is eventually to write of, more eloquently, more directly than any other writer I know of, as the perennial subject-matter of art. In the autobiographical pages, mostly to be found in *Inside Out* and *Smooth and Rough*, we find representations, unexcelled in our literature, of the artist and the aesthete in the making. We see the child hungry for experience, and hungry also for the understanding of experience. These passages recall the best of *Praeterita*, and they are the equal of Pater's strange confessional fragment, 'The Child in the House'. But, if in sensibility Stokes has much in common with Ruskin or Pater, in intellectual culture or the degree of self-consciousness there is the difference of a century.

The love of art was of slow formation in Stokes's life, and in its development the first visit to Italy, where he arrived on New Year's Eve 1921–2, was a crucial event. From then onwards, the craving for sensuous experience, which had so stirred the young boy on his daily walks, gradually turned towards painting, sculpture, above all architecture: for with Stokes the experience of art has always proved most profound, most satisfying, when art finds expression in a corporeal form or in a

form sufficiently approximate to the body for us to make the assimilation. Hence, it was only a natural step when, under the influence of the great Diaghilev seasons, Stokes extended the range of his aesthetic interest to take in the dance, and he later came to write some of the best accounts of traditional ballet in the language. More generally, the connection between art and the body, the corporeal nature of art as we might think of it, has always figured centrally in the subject-matter of Stokes's criticism, though, as this criticism evolves, the connection receives at different times a different elaboration and a different explanation.

But to talk of the evolution of Stokes's criticism inevitably brings us to the second major theme of his writing. For at much the same time as the love of art asserted itself, he began to sense the fascination of psychoanalysis. It was early in the 1920s that Stokes read *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. From the very beginning he experienced the attraction of the new ideas, and they slowly began to exert their influence over his thinking. The crucial event in this process was still several years off, as we shall see, and even then it was some time before the two themes of art and psychoanalysis were explicitly brought together in the critical writings. Nevertheless, if Stokes's early work can be read much as though it belonged to the tradition of nineteenth-century aestheticism, it is to be observed that, throughout, there is a place reserved for psychoanalytic theory, at which it can be introduced when the moment is right. For from the beginning the notion finds acceptance that art is a form of externalization, of making concrete the inner world, and the evolution of Stokes's criticism can largely be accounted for by the increasingly richer view that is taken of the inner world and of how and by what means it works its way out.

Stokes's first book, *The Quattro Cento*, appeared in 1932, though an article on Rimini and the Tempio Malatestiano, which was to be the subject of his second book, had already been published in T. S. Eliot's *Criterion* some two years earlier. In point of fact, *The Quattro Cento* and its successor *Stones of Rimini*, the

repositories of much intense observation and reflection, represent the work of several years. Throughout the 1920s Stokes revisited Italy on a number of occasions, sometimes making his home there, sometimes travelling extensively. Often he was by himself, and in some of his most memorable descriptions we seem to discern the reverie of the young man, as he stands alone, absorbed in the temple façade, or wandering through the courtyard of a Renaissance palace, or the crowded piazza of a small country town. At other times he was in company – for instance, with the Sitwells, met by chance in Italy, who were (he has said) 'the first to open my eyes', though their aesthetic interests and his were and remained very different. A closer affinity of taste was established with Ezra Pound, whom Stokes first met as a tennis partner in Rapallo in the autumn of 1926: for the two men soon discovered that they shared not only a common admiration for the Tempio Malatestiano and the sculpture that adorned it, which Pound had already written about in the *Cantos*, but also a community, or perhaps a complementarity, of response.*

* Of recent years the literary relations between Stokes and Ezra Pound have been the subject of speculation by a number of literary critics. In Donald Davie, *The Poet as Sculptor* (London, 1964), much is made of the connection, and *Stones of Rimini* is talked of as a commentary on, or an elaboration of, Cantos 17 and 20. The truth would seem to be that Stokes and Pound became independently interested in Rimini, and that it was this common interest that they discovered at a chance meeting. There seems little reason to think of Pound as an influence on Stokes's visual aesthetic; though Stokes profited greatly from his encouragement. Pound was the first to read in the late 1920s the article, which was subsequently to appear in the *Criterion*, about Agostino and 'stone-and-water'. In a projected volume Stokes intended to explore the purely historical background of the Tempio, and there he would have made explicit reference to the Malatesta Cantos. The volume, however, was never written, partly because, as we shall see, Stokes's visits to Italy were, at this period, abbreviated, and partly because, as he worked on the testimony, his view of Sigismondo's personality became more uncertain and, in particular, his disagreement with Pound's estimate became more marked. And, meanwhile, *Colour and Form* crystallized. Pound

From the beginning, indeed from the opening words – the first chapter is entitled 'Jesi', and it starts: 'No sign of Frederick Hohenstaufen in the railway station at least' – *The Quattro Cento* exhibits an idiosyncrasy of manner, later to become characteristic, that sets it apart from normal critical or art-historical writing. There is an obliquity of approach, long elaborate descriptions suddenly shot through with darting phrases, or an accumulation of detail, closer perhaps to lore than to learning: there is an independence, bordering on eccentricity, of judgement, and a heady freshness of observation: and there is the constant proximity of humour and depth.

In conception *The Quattro Cento* is, it is true, the most conventional of Stokes's books. For it has been endowed with an elaborate architectonic which, if it might have done something to illuminate the place of the book in some rather larger literary scheme which was ultimately abandoned, tends to obscure the thesis that it presents. The architectonic of the book is strictly geographical, divided according to the city-states of Renaissance Italy, with the central section devoted to Florence and Verona. The thesis, however, cuts across geographical distinctions and will even divide some part of the work of a given artist from the rest. For the central aim of the book is to identify and to define a mode of art, which, though it produced some of its finest manifestations in Italy in the fifteenth century, cannot be equated in any straightforward way with Quattrocento art nor even with any specific school or tradition within Quattrocento art. For this mode of art Stokes devised the label, 'Quattro Cento', from which in turn the book derives its title.

Quattro Cento art is identified through a number of characteristics varying greatly in generality and in concreteness. In *The Quattro Cento* they are allowed to emerge in course of description, and, in consequence, though I have tried to do justice to them in the excerpts I have chosen, I cannot be certain I have succeeded. Associated with the various characteristics are

was perhaps disappointed by the non-appearance of the second volume on Rimini, and the relations between the two men loosened.

certain distinctive merits or virtues, but Stokes is careful not to claim for Quattro Cento art supremacy, even within the art of the Renaissance. It is one mode amongst others – though for him at least invested with an inexhaustible poignancy and beauty.

The first characteristic is a passionate attachment to the medium, to stone: 'the love of stone'. But what Stokes means here – and the point is important to emphasize and it is one to which he constantly reverts, elaborating and elucidating it each time he does so – is the love of stone *as a medium*: the stone, that is, is treasured for its potentialities, for what can be coaxed out of it. And if, elsewhere, apropos of Agostino di Duccio or Michelangelo, Stokes talks, seemingly, of the unqualified love of the stone, the love of the block or the slab, this, it must be understood, is a derivative love. That in the first place the stone is loved as a medium is brought out, indirectly, by a kind of compliance that Stokes presupposes between artist and stone. On the artist's side, there is the outward thrust of fantasy, the projection of this on to stone, and parallel to this, there is (as an observed effect, I take it) the way in which the stone, in the hands of such an artist, pushes itself forward on to the surface. The stone blooms, there is 'encrustation', or 'exuberance'. The art of the Quattro Cento is, in one favoured phrase, the art of 'stone-blossom'. And if we are uncertain what are the visual conditions on which these descriptions rest, or in what precisely the effect consists, it is best to turn to the various detailed accounts that Stokes provides of what are for him clear examples of the Quattro Cento: the courtyard at Urbino by Luciano Laurana, or certain works of Verrocchio. In such passages, where we can set the description against the object, the terms begin to explain themselves.

The second characteristic is mass, where this is contrasted, variously, with massiveness, typical of Roman architecture and the Baroque, and with a rhythmic or linear treatment of space, such as we find in the work of Brunelleschi. The third characteristic is immediacy. And it is by design that I group these two characteristics together, because the former is best understood through the latter. For 'mass-effect' can be thought of as that

awareness of space which arises (or can arise) instantaneously, or from 'the quickness of the perceiving eye'. It does not require a process of synthesis, taking place over time, in which successive impressions are first accumulated and then pieced together, but it is an immediate response to the tension, or inner ferment, expressed on the surface of the wall. Conversely, the kind of architectural space that engenders this kind of awareness is not cumulative, nor does it appear to be built up out of discrete spatial units. (Stokes, it is true, introduces the notion of mass-effect rather differently, though, I think, nothing I have said is inconsistent with his intentions. For the definition of mass-effect he invoked the theory, still current at the time, according to which our awareness of space is ultimately derived from the sense of touch and there is no more than an analogue to this awareness in the visual field. This theory, which was first systematically laid out by Berkeley, died hard in aesthetics: witness the vogue enjoyed, around the turn of the century and then later, by Berenson's notion of 'tactile values' as a vital component of the Florentine achievement. It was then in keeping with this tradition that Stokes defined mass-effect as that awareness of space which is peculiarly connected with the sense of sight and hence is to be contrasted with the 'normal' awareness of space. However, nothing that Stokes says commits the notion of mass-effect to the Berkeleyan theory irrevocably, and, indeed, freed from its theoretical trappings, the idea of a treatment of space distinctive in its appeal to the eye or to visual cues can only gain in plausibility or clarity.)

The fourth characteristic is the most difficult to pin down. Quattro Cento art is, we are told, 'emblematic', it has 'the power of emblem'. The concept of the emblematic, which disappears from Stokes's later writings, though not without a trace, falls into two parts, which are evidently if elusively related. The first is that the signs or symbols recurrent in the art render up their meaning readily: they are transparent to the eye, or at least translucent, and are what a whole school of aesthetic philosophers have called 'iconic'. The second is that the process of making the signs or symbols becomes itself symbolic or meaningful – perhaps, indeed, it is the only source of meaning in the

conceptual innovation, and one permits the other. In the first book, in the course of trying to identify Quattro Cento art and to distinguish it from other contemporary trends, Stokes had written:

> The distinction I am making is laborious. I might have simplified it into a distinction between carving and modelling, between the use of stone and of bronze, were it not for the fact that the bronze can well convey an emotion primarily imputed to the stone, while, on the other hand, stone can be carved, as it was by Lombard sculptors, to perpetuate a conception not only founded upon the model but inspired by modelling technique. (*The Quattro Cento*, p. 28)

In this passage the concepts of carving and modelling are, of course, being used literally – in such a way, that is, that they are tied unequivocally to specific techniques or physical processes. And as such the concepts are, he finds, restrictive, or positively misleading. However, once the aesthetic theory comes to be restated from the standpoint of the artist, it seems plausible to reconsider using these concepts and possible to consider using them in an extended or metaphorical sense. Carving and modelling are now thought of as the two most general attitudes that the artist might adopt to his medium – attitudes derived from, but not confined to, the techniques or processes after which they are named. So adjusted, the two concepts move into the centre of Stokes's aesthetic. More specifically, the notion of the Quattro Cento gives way to that of carving: the Quattro Cento artist is recognized as *par excellence* the carver.

The dichotomy of carving and modelling has a longish history not only in artistic practice but also in aesthetic theory. However, in deciding to employ the terminology that he had rejected in *The Quattro Cento*, Stokes would seem to have been influenced less by intellectual precedent than by the painters and sculptors whom he was seeing in England at this time: notably Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. For in the work of these artists and their associates the sense of direct engagement with the material was a highly self-conscious element, and in this respect they thought of themselves as in deliberate reaction against both the academic and the 'fine art' or Rodinesque traditions, in which the making of models which were then sent to

Italy to be cast by fine craftsmen still played a significant role. Writing around this period, Henry Moore, who was much involved with this new aesthetic, referred to Donatello the modeller as 'the beginning of the end'.*

It would, however, be wrong to think of the prominence now afforded to the notions of carving and modelling as simply a conceptual innovation: or – perhaps a better way of putting the matter – it would be wrong to think of the conceptual innovation involved as simply a change of vocabulary. On the contrary: the introduction of concepts that applied, in the first place, to actual techniques, and then, by extension, to generalized ways in which the artist might regard his relation to the medium, coupled, as we have seen, with the adoption of the artist's viewpoint as that from which aesthetic description or analysis is formulated, allowed Stokes to present a clearer and more far-reaching view of the kind of art with which he was still centrally concerned. I shall, by and large, leave Stokes to speak for himself on this point. For, by including most of the central section of *Stones of Rimini*, with its description of the Tempio reliefs, I have, I hope, allowed the reader to see for himself how much the aesthetic gained in lucidity, in depth, and in subtlety through the changes that had occurred since *The Quattro Cento*. There are, however, one or two observations worth making.

In the first place, it is to be observed how the characteristic that Stokes had spoken of in *The Quattro Cento* as 'the love of stone' is clarified within the new conceptual context, and how, in particular, the point to which I drew attention – that it is love of stone *as a medium* that Stokes is talking about – comes out very sharply. The point is now made by resolving this characteristic into two components. There is, on the one hand, the artist's resolve to project his fantasies and emotions on to the stone, while yet preserving the integrity of the stone. Accordingly, the surface of the stone acquires differentiation, and yet the various layers or facets into which it is resolved contrive to be related without abrupt transitions or emphasis. And

* Quoted in John Russell, *Henry Moore* (London, 1968), p. 19.

the potential life, or the 'vitality', of the canvas as the bearer of colour.

So far I have spoken of the concept of carving, how it takes over from that of the Quattro Cento, and how this allowed the tradition picked out by this latter notion to be clarified and generalized – its aims to be more sharply formulated, and its presence in history more widely recognized. But no less important, though less evidently so for the reader of *Stones of Rimini*, is the introduction of the contrasted or antithetic concept of modelling. In *The Quattro Cento* we read of values alternate to those of the preferred tradition: there are references to massiveness, plasticity, the scenic, the pictorial, emphasis, 'finish' – sometimes involving the subtlest uses of these terms. (As, for instance, in the description of Ghiberti included in this volume.) Nevertheless, the nature of these values is not always defined: and apart from the seemingly accidental fact that they, or groups of them, happen to have been brought together within the great historical styles, it is left unspecified whether they have any principle of unity. With the introduction of the concept of modelling this changes. Subsumed under a single concept, which in turn associates them with a specific attitude or relation of artist to medium, these various values no longer seem to be merely deviant, but interlock to form a counter-tradition. And if the immediate sequel to the conceptual innovation effected in *Stones of Rimini* happens to be that the carving tradition is upgraded and is now given – as it was not in *The Quattro Cento* – supreme status, in the long run this is not how things are to remain. The characteristics of modelling – once it is recognized that they too constitute a tradition – are to be reconsidered, and in Stokes's later writing they are acknowledged not simply as something of which art will never be free, nor as something which forms an inevitable substrate of carving, but as possessing their own significance and value, as 'a vital and irreplaceable constituent' of art itself. But to understand this reassessment and to see how it comes about, we must take a broader view.

I have talked of the two large themes that go to the making of

Stokes's criticism – art and psychoanalysis – and I have already said that, if the second of these themes remains latent throughout the earlier writings, there is, as it were, a place reserved for it, which it can, when the moment is ready, come forward and occupy. In this connection I referred to the idea, present from the beginning, of art as a form of externalization or projection. In a moment we shall see that there is more to it than this: that there are other ways in which the later criticism is anticipated in the earlier. Meanwhile we might discern, even in the earliest writings, but markedly in *Stones of Rimini*, both a reference to and a reliance upon such connections or associations in the mind as psychoanalysis would assume to be not merely present but operative. Assumptions are made about the mind of the artist and about the mind of the reader, how one is to be described and the other addressed, of a kind that would seem natural to anyone exposed to Freudian theory. But for the explicit appearance of psychoanalysis we have to wait.

The significant date in all this is, we might imagine, the beginning of Stokes's analysis with Melanie Klein, which itself ran on through the 1930s; and it is this that I have referred to as the crucial event in the process in which the psychoanalytic colouring to Stokes's criticism becomes more saturated. In point of fact, the immediate consequence of the analysis was the interruption of those leisurely, protracted visits to Italy upon which the first books depended. Life, we must assume, changed. And it should be observed that the earliest attempts to draw upon the findings of psychoanalysis or to bring these findings into connection with the experience of art occur in the autobiographical volumes, where they are carried out on a purely subjective or personal level: as though Stokes felt, in keeping with the tenor of psychoanalysis, that it was only when he had worked out these links or connections for himself, that it was only when he had tested them against his own experience and found them compelling, that he was prepared to generalize them, or assert them as part of a critical theory. It is the greater pity that the very complexity, that the intricate workmanship of *Inside Out* (1947) and *Smooth and Rough* (1951), make them comparatively unsuitable for excerption. I have included what I can.

For Stokes psychoanalysis has much of the imaginative richness and vitality of art itself. He has experienced its charms, and he is deeply immersed in its literature. However, that part of psychoanalytic theory which he has taken up and deployed in his criticism and which is therefore relevant to its understanding is restricted, and it falls within the extension effected to Freud's theory by Mrs Klein. More specifically, we can identify it with her account of the two 'positions' which she postulated in trying to characterize the early history of the individual.

The starting point for Mrs Klein's work was Freud's account of infantile development. For Freud infantile development could be reckoned in terms of comparatively distinct phases, or, as he was later to call them, 'organizations'. Each phase is dominated by a particular part of the body, which currently enjoys primacy in the sexual constitution of the infant, and from which the phase takes its name. By primacy Freud meant more than that for the infant, during any given phase, the dominant part of the body is the infant's sexual organ, and pleasure derived from that part of the body is the infant's sexual activity. He also meant something to the effect that the whole, or a great deal, of the infant's emotions and relations to objects outside itself are coloured by thoughts of, or feelings about, that part of the body. The parts of the body that enjoy or can enjoy primacy are the mouth, the anus, the penis or its counterpart, the clitoris, and, more generally, the genitals. Primacy passes from one part of the body to another, in accordance with a sequence that is by and large biologically determined, though it can be upset or modified by environmental circumstances or the infant's perception of them. In normal circumstances, the infant passes from the oral, through the anal, and the phallic, to the genital phase, and this cycle is completed within the first five or six years of life.

Each of these phases marks, in the first instance, a stage in the infant's sexual development. Or, to put it the other way round, the infant's development is initially calculated in terms of sexuality and its transformations. Freud, however, never thought of this as the whole story, and he was keen that it should not be

thought of as such. For him any totally adequate account of infantile development should correlate the sequence of libidinally distinguished phases with phases in the emergence of the ego. Instinct and that which controls, moderates, or deflects instinct evolve concurrently and not without interaction. In Freud's thought, an overall or integrated account of infantile development, in which the course of the two evolutionary currents would be traced, remained something of an ideal; though, for a number of specific infantile situations, such as those from which paranoia or melancholia derive, he provided vignettes, worked to some considerable degree of detail, of the total psychological structure and condition.

It was to fill out Freud's account of infantile development that Mrs Klein postulated her two positions which the infant is said to adopt. The very term 'position' discloses this, for by 'position' Mrs Klein meant something considerably more complex than a stage in libidinal or sexual development. She expressly meant it to include, for instance, the mechanisms of defence to which the infant, while it adopts a particular position, characteristically resorts in dealing with anything painful in the outer or the inner world. Mrs Klein called her two positions the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. These names, however, are not to be taken as indicating that the positions are in themselves psychotic. On the contrary, they are part of normal development, though they are related (like the phases of sexual development that Freud identified) in several significant ways to the disturbances of adult life.

There are, it might be said, three distinct ways in which Mrs Klein's account supplements what Freud found to say about infantile development. In the first place, it is to be noted of both positions that they are initially adopted by the infant at an earlier period than any in which Freud took a close interest: in and just after the oral phase. In this way, Mrs Klein's account contributes to the prehistory of that part of the infantile development which Freud laid bare. Secondly, though we can date the first appearance of the two positions, or their original adoption by the infant, they are not confined to this or to any other of the phases identified in Freud's chronology of the libido. Indeed,

the temporal relations between the two positions themselves are not secure, for the movement backwards and forwards between them is superimposed on all infantile development. The transition from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position and the overcoming of the latter – crucial moments, according to this account – are never achieved completely, beyond all danger of regression. In this way, Mrs Klein's account furnishes a counterpoint to Freud's account. Thirdly, the two positions are identified primarily by reference to the ego and its structure, and only secondarily by reference to the libido. Indeed, in so far as reference is made to the libido in defining the two positions, it is impure or oblique, in so far as what is referrred to is the libido as channelled or directed by the ego: in other words, to the kinds of relation that the ego establishes with objects or elements in the external world. In the paranoid-schizoid position, the ego lacks integration, the objects to which it is related, both outer and inner, are part-objects, and the characteristic defences to which it resorts are splitting and denial. In the depressive position, the ego has achieved a measure of integration, even if this is not securely established: the objects to which it is related are conceived of in their integrity, which means, significantly, as both good and bad; and instead of the unrelenting attempts to distort the world, typical of the earlier position, it allows itself to experience guilt, regret, and longing.

Against this background it is now possible to formulate the basic project of Stokes's later writings: *Michelangelo* (1955), *Greek Culture and the Ego* (1958), *Three Essays on the Painting of Our Time* (1961), *Painting and the Inner World* (1963), *The Invitation in Art* (1965), and *Reflections on the Nude* (1967). Very roughly – and for anything even approximating to the subtlety and ingenuity of Stokes's criticism there is no alternative to a return to the writings themselves – what Stokes has endeavoured to do is to associate the two modes of art that he had identified, the carving and modelling traditions, with the two positions that Mrs Klein has postulated. Of course, the associations are both multiple and complex, and in many cases they are mediated by a number of intervening factors or run through chains. The overall point to be made is that in each

case, the mode or tradition of art is held to reflect or to celebrate the kind of relation to the outer world that is typical of the corresponding position.

The connection between the carving tradition and the depressive position is the more readily grasped. The carver, we are to imagine, in respecting the integrity and the separateness of the stone, celebrates at once the whole object with which he characteristically enters into relation and also the integrated ego that he projects. In a single sentence in *Greek Culture and the Ego*, Stokes brings the two aspects together: 'The work of art is esteemed for its otherness, as a self-sufficient object, no less than as an ego-figure.' (*Greek Culture*, p. 50.) In talking of self-sufficiency, of aesthetic detachment, of the rejection of taste and smell as constituents of the work of art, Stokes is drawing together characteristics that have often been insisted on in the drier or more academic forms of aesthetics as essential to or as definitive of art itself; he then connects these characteristics with others, more immediately linked to observation, which he had described and analysed in his earlier writings: and he is then able to offer this new amalgam as equivalent, for him, to one, but only one, of the great traditions in art.

For perhaps the most intriguing element in Stokes's later writing is what he makes of the modelling tradition. What up till then had been comparatively neglected, at times indeed despised, is systematically reconstructed, and then in its reconstructed form is brought into association with the earlier of the two positions. What underlies this is the realization that, in the last analysis, the 'modelled' work of art can be thought of as the mirror-image of the 'carved' work of art. Examine the characteristics of each, and we see that they are those of the other in reverse. So, in the 'carved' work of art there is a lack of any sharp internal differentiation: the individual forms are unemphatic, and the transitions between them are gradual: there is, to borrow the phrase in which Stokes described Piero's figures, a certain 'brotherliness' in the composition. And the reward for this is that the work of art as a whole asserts its distinctness or otherness from the spectator. By contrast, in the 'modelled' work of art, there are sharp transitions and considerable

internal differentiation: the forms are distinct and individuated, they billow out from, or burrow their way into, the background, and in the overall composition, either the parts remain quite separate and their effect is cumulative, or else they are somewhat intemperately or arbitrarily brought together by means of some overriding device. And the price that is paid for this is that the work of art as a whole tends to merge with or envelop the spectator. Just as a lack of sharp internal distinctions produces separateness from the spectator, or self-sufficiency, so an insistence upon internal distinctions produces a loss of separateness, or a dependence upon the spectator. In this loss of separateness, which is also called the 'incantatory' element in art or art's 'invitation', we can see how the tradition to which this effect typically belongs enables its objects to epitomize both the part-objects of early relations and the still inchoate ego which enters into such relations. With the expressive value of the once depreciated modelling tradition securely established, it is no surprise that the tradition should be recognized as a rightful partner in the development of art. Earlier reservations fall away. 'For many years now,' Stokes wrote in 1961, in an essay not included in this volume, 'I have no longer regarded an enveloping relationship to be foreign to the intention of art; on the contrary I have thought of it as a fundamental attribute when associated with the opposite relationship to an independent object.' (*Three Essays on the Painting of Our Time*, p. 28)

It would be vain, in this introduction, to take further the summary of Stokes's views as these are to be found in the later books. All I should like to do is to point out one feature, already present in the earlier criticism and to which I have made implicit reference, upon which so much of these developments depends.

In discussing the transition from *The Quattro Cento* to *Stones of Rimini* I said something about the way in which perspective, which seemed a discrepant element in the earlier volume, falls into place in the later book. The discrepancy arose, I suggested, because the mention of perspective seemed to introduce a characteristic that belonged to content amongst so many

characteristics that were purely formal, and the discrepancy was resolved by a shift to a unitary, and hence an internal, point of view. In this resolution we may now see the presage of much that is to come. For if we consider the bulk of criticism that has been written under the influence of psychoanalysis, we can see that it deliberately models itself upon those parts of psychoanalysis which are concerned with the discovery of a hidden or latent content inside a public or manifest content: and the parts of psychoanalysis I have in mind are, of course, the analysis of symptoms, the theory of parapraxes (errors, etc.), and, supremely, the interpretation of dreams. And in pursuing this particular course, psychoanalytically oriented criticism has only been following the lead (or so it has assured itself) set by Freud in his famous essays on Leonardo and the Michelangelo *Moses*. By now the methodological inadequacies of this kind of approach have been fully exposed. Most substantially, the point has been made that art criticism framed in this way is likely to leave out of account the 'art' aspect of the work of art. From the beginning Stokes's criticism, even as it began to feel the influence of psychoanalysis, has struggled to avoid these dangers, and to do full justice to that aspect of art for which we esteem it. In part, this has involved bringing certain formal aspects of the work of art under interpretation. But in part, and more significantly, it has meant dismantling somewhat the rigid distinction between form and content on which much traditional art criticism and art theory has indolently rested. It is the first steps in this process that we observe in *Stones of Rimini*, in the discussion of perspective, or in much of what is written in the early books about art and the body; and it moves forward at such a pace that, by the time we reach the later writings, it becomes for the reader the most natural thing in the world – in the world of art, at any rate – to assimilate a shape to a feeling, or to equate the use of a specific material with a fantasy. In these works we catch the unmistakable voice of psychoanalytic culture.

If this last observation does not already take us there, it is time to turn to another aspect of Stokes's writing: the style. I have

referred, explicitly and implicitly, to a number of transformations that take place in the criticism over the years. As a concomitant, or perhaps a consequence, of these transformations, there goes a no less remarkable transformation of style.

Affected somewhat by Ruskin, Stokes's early style was formed upon that of Pater, a writer whose influence, once experienced, is never totally shaken off. Stokes read Pater when he first began to visit Italy, and he was, he has told me, 'bowled over'. Stokes's prose exhibits a number of characteristics that we find in Pater: many of the same phrases, the same use of inversion, and some of the same cadences. Above all, Stokes derived from Pater a certain precision in the use of language which no one earlier had attempted in the same fashion. For the precision I have in mind does not consist in the exact setting down of observable features: it is a precision not of description, but rather of presentation, as though the critic's task was to offer up, along with the object, those associations and sentiments which determine its place in our understanding or appreciation. To many of Pater's characteristics – Stokes has not the sureness of ear of Pater, and he is happily free of his whimsicality – Stokes adds things of his own: a certain strength, and a wry oblique humour which is certainly not to be found in the older writer.

But with the increasing influence of psychoanalysis upon the content of the criticism, the style is modified. The old sensibility to associations is retained, but something has to be done to accommodate the intellectually more complex framework within which the consideration of individual works of art or individual artists comes to be set. The style becomes more aphoristic. And the ultimate critical task is now felt to have been incompletely realized unless all the related thoughts, all the relevant sentiments, have been gathered in – as they might be in a psychoanalytic interpretation. One result can be, perhaps, a certain lack of focus, and sometimes it is not easy for the reader to determine which is the central idea, and which are the reservations or the qualifying thoughts. But then this too can be a form of precision: the finding of a precise equivalent to the ambiguities, to the fluctuations of feeling and perception, which

are inherent in art. Delicately, abstrusely, magically I would say, the struggles of the artist for unity, for some kind of unity, his triumphs and reverses, are recreated for us by someone who knows. '*Poeta che mi guidi*': I can think of no better words, the words of Dante about Virgil, to describe Stokes as a critic of the arts.

Some seven or eight years ago in contributing a Preface to *The Invitation in Art* I argued that it was wrong to think of Stokes as narrowly an aesthete, to the exclusion of being a social critic. Indeed, I argued that there is a natural connection between these two roles, and that it is the cases in which they do not coincide, in which the aesthete is indifferent to the conditions of his society, that require explanation. I shall not repeat what I said then, but I should like, in conclusion, to add an observation.

In the intervening years, much has been written about the gap between art and life, and how it might be bridged. Most of what has been written has been absurd. And in part the fault lies in a confusion or uncertainty in the minds of those who have pontificated. For they have failed to distinguish between a conceptual issue and a purely practical issue. That is to say, they have identified the gap sometimes with the essential difference between art and what is not art, and sometimes with the many different devices, generally oppressively or enviously conceived, by which art has been segregated from those for whom it was made and turned into a preserve of the rich and the arrogant. In decrying the latter, they have fallen into denying the former, and accordingly they have railed against both indiscriminately. In objecting to the ways in which art has been exploited and degraded, they have come to assert that there is no such thing as art, that there is only life. To read Stokes's writings on these issues is to be recalled to a fresh sense of their significance and their urgency. For his work has been a sustained attempt to defend, to justify, if need be to sharpen, the conceptual distinction, and also to narrow, perhaps to close, the cultural divide.

Richard Wollheim