Synthesis

It would be premature to begin building theories of the interaction of aesthetic forms and the role of aesthetics in daily life on the basis of a single ethnography. Clearly this kind of study needs to be multiplied many times before generalization can become meaningful. Nonetheless, I shall attempt some conclusions that remain faithful to the data gathered in Tidewater. These conclusions may point the way for continued investigation and broader theory.

My analysis at the outset shares views with established theory in anthropology, and these commonalities are noted where appropriate. My indebtedness, in particular, to semiotic and semiological perspectives should be evident. But symbolic approaches to aesthetics cannot be the end-point of analysis, even though their methods may prove useful in the process of interpretation. Not all that is aesthetic is symbolic, and not all that is symbolic is aesthetic, although the areas of overlap are considerable and the analysis of the one can often be applied fruitfully to the other. But ultimately I must confine myself to the issue of why aesthetic forms are particularly suited to do what they do, whether they function symbolically or not. I return to the issues I raised in dealing with the definition of aesthetic form, namely, that aesthetic forms are sensual, affecting, matters of taste that may be appreciated disinterestedly. In this context I consider aesthetic forms not as systems of expression, communication, or symbolizing but as forms with properties that must be understood in terms of aesthetics.

I also hope to make it clear that my analysis rests on the local understanding of Tidewater's social world even though the terms used are strictly my own. Much of what follows picks up threads from different chapters and weaves them together. As occasion arises, I
repeat pertinent aspects of the field data to demonstrate the foundation of the analysis on elicited or observed materials, and I also add new data. These tidbits stand primarily to refresh the memory and recall lengthier disquisitions and descriptions in earlier chapters; they are not meant to substitute for them. My aim here is to reintegrate data pulled apart in the previous four chapters, in the process ascending to a higher level of abstraction. In Chapter 1, I showed how aesthetic forms were related on a personal level; now I shall do so on a theoretical level.

Extended analysis of the complex and dynamic opposition between "inside" and "outside" as it pertains to a variety of social spheres makes it possible to understand a great deal about the functioning of the aesthetic realm in Tidewater. This opposition applies both spatially and culturally, and in both domains its applications are complex. The opposition is also positively correlated with others, such as female/male, controlled/uncontrolled, civilized/uncivilized, bounded/ unbounded, that together help define social relations in Tidewater. My method for the creation of these complementary oppositional categories derives in general from the seminal work in structuralism by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963, and commentary in Leach 1976) and in particular from the essays in Right and Left edited by Rodney Needham (1973), notably those by T. O. Beidelman, Clark Cunningham, John Middleton, and Needham himself.

The simplest inside/outside opposition is that between inside and outside the home. Inside the home is the woman's domain and outside, the man's. Aesthetic control of the interior of the house is the prerogative of the woman and that of the outside of the man. The interior space of the house, the woman's realm, is highly bounded, ordered, structured, controlled, and artifactual. The house itself is clearly defined by external walls, and spaces within the structure are rigidly marked. Decoration, furnishing, and appointments announce the respective functions of the rooms. Each room has a clear purpose, and when one wishes to change tasks a necessary movement follows from one room to another.

A good-looking house interior is clean and orderly. Even though the space is carefully divided according to function, the whole has a clear unity. Some aspect of the owner's personality is stamped on the space, making it evident that the place is not some neutral ground but the home of a particular individual. Those aspects and areas of the home which are open to scrutiny from the outside are especially ordered and controlled. Public rooms must be kept orderly at all times, so they are
the first and most fastidiously cleaned. Quilts for guest beds are highly ordered in comparison with the quilts for the private use of the house-holders. The former are regular, symmetrical, repetitive, and labor-intensive—displays of the appropriate skills of the woman at home.

I conclude that even inside the home there is an inside and an outside dimension. That is, some spaces and artifacts are for insiders, others for outsiders. Kitchen, sitting room, work room, and guest bedrooms and bathrooms are set up for public view, whereas the occupants’ bedrooms and bathroom are not. A great portion of the house, therefore, is to be defined not exclusively in its own terms but in relation to the outside world. It projects an image to the outside and is judged in terms of its capacity to affect people from outside.

The exterior sections of the home, the man’s domain, are less bounded, controlled, and confined than the interior. On the outside there are few rigid boundaries. There are no fences in the entire town, so one property blends with those adjacent. Because the land is so flat, and no landscaping or use of plantings creates separate spaces, all parts of the yard can be seen from all others. Different parts of the yard, it is true, serve different functions—lawn, garden, work space—but they are not neatly delineated, and some of the functions can overlap. The functions of spaces in the yard are determined and expressed by cultivated plants rather than artifacts (as is the case inside the house). Order resides in the careful domestication and control of natural products.

Whereas the walls of the home rigidly define the woman’s domain, the man’s appears to extend ever outward. The choice to stay at home or to venture beyond it for work and leisure involves a concomitant choice among aesthetic domains. Work inside the home bears many of the hallmarks of the home itself. Stores, for example, are located in the storekeepers’ homes. The internal space is highly bounded and organized. Shelves and aisles delineate spaces for specific functions: one area for food, another for laundry products. Within these spaces items are further divided and subdivided in bureaucratic order. But also in the home, a space is set aside for “visiting.” A trip to the store or to a house often has an underlying purpose, but it is rude to transact business without the graces of visiting. Because services are dispensed from homes, in a homelike ethos, it is appropriate for women to have a hand in their operation. At one store the woman takes care of transactions inside, such as purchase of groceries, and the man handles transactions outside, such as oil and gasoline sales. When the owners want time off they hire a woman to work inside, a man to work outside.
Farming is the work equivalent of gardening. Fields and spaces on farmlands are not demarcated by tangible barriers or boundaries, even though they are distinct. Areas are defined in terms of domesticated plants, such as a cornfield or a beanfield. Farm fields are near the homes of the farmers. They are in many ways like extensions of the garden space, and their aesthetic dimensions are quite similar.

A yet larger dimension of the work space may be characterized by the inside/outside opposition, and it is one of fundamental importance for understanding many kinds of social relations in Tidewater. The distinction is between inside and outside the town (yet still within the traditional boundaries of the “section” or community, that is, not beyond the traditional fringes of work space). This distinction sets up the important opposition of land workers and water workers. The water work space is the least bounded, least cultivated, least controlled environment of all. Tidewater Sound is deemed uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and its attraction lies therein. In recent years the state has sponsored several pilot projects to alter the composition or nature of the sound. One involves an attempt to salinate the sound, thereby providing more productive fisheries for local watermen. Another is the investigation of ways to reduce or eliminate the milfoil that chokes the waters and fouls propellers and motor intakes. Watermen never hide their scorn of these projects, not because they do not see their benefits but because they do not believe it possible or proper to change the sound.

The sound is self-governing and self-regulating. Watermen enter this domain with due respect and understand the consequences of failure to take adequate precautions. The necessary skills are those of knowledge, not of mastery. One learns the ways of the sound to protect oneself from it, not to dominate it. Such knowledge requires attunement with the elements. Unlike other spaces, the sound is superficially undifferentiated. No location is designated as suitable for a particular function. Fish and crustaceans wander under the surface, and the waterman must follow them. He cannot organize and demark the submarine life, nor in any way bureaucratically delimit and structure it. As a consequence of becoming attuned to his environment the waterman sheds many of the attributes of the landsman's world. He strips off his clothes when he wishes, he urinates and defecates where he pleases. The waterman is a freebooter, and the aesthetics of the world that draws him are as wild and unpredictable as he. This opposition of land and water, landsman and waterman, is the foundation for much social interaction in Tidewater.

One further outside domain lies at the greatest cultural distance
from home, the world completely outside the community. Before the main road was put through the town the "outside world" was a place for cautious and rare visits. In a sense, everything beyond the bounds of the community was foreign and everyone from that world was labeled a "foreigner," whether he or she came from the next county or across the country. Ventures into that world were viewed with suspicion, distrust, and distaste, as the following anecdote clearly shows: "They had an exposition in Philadelphia and my grandfather left home to attend that exposition—eighteen and seventy-eight I think it was, or seventy-seven. He was thirty days making his trip with sailboats and steam transportation up to Baltimore, and then a train from Baltimore up to Philadelphia. He was thirty days making the round trip. When he came back home after making this trip some of 'em said to him, says, 'Well Captain, what'd you gain out of your trip,' to kinda throw up on him." The coming of the road made the outside world more readily accessible for regular visits, but, more important, it made it possible for the men of Tidewater to find jobs beyond the traditional frontiers of the community. Such a change required a degree of resilience in the men who undertook it. Foreigners are beyond the bounds of traditional tastes, and their world is incomprehensible and uncivilized.

Characteristically, men now work outside the community in their middle years, when the necessities of raising a family force them to seek a regular income. None of these men wishes to work outside the community, and they have little intercourse with the world beyond except in connection with their employment. In the towns and cities outside they are called "hicks," and their ways are labeled "country." Their customary dress, verbal style, and outward manners all serve to identify them to others, and to themselves, as away from home.

Because of the possibility, and often the necessity, of taking outside employment a man's working life is often cyclical. As a youth he may work sporadically with a kinsman as a waterman, often taking on the least rewarding jobs because of his low status and lack of equipment. He may guide hunting and fishing parties for an older relative, he may assist in haul seine fishing, or he may fish a small number of pots and gill nets. None of these occupations brings in a steady wage, and because he is essentially extra help, in times of thin profits his labor is sacrificed first. Still, most youths are content with this position. They are usually not married and live at home. Their cash needs are limited, and when no money comes in they can still survive.

Youths and young men may begin to work more steadily as they

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progress in the fishing world and as they inherit equipment or earn enough to buy more gear for themselves. Indeed, they may rise considerably up the ladder outlined in Chapter 5. But no matter how far they climb, the fishing business cannot support them if they choose to take on the responsibilities of a family. A very small number opt out of marriage and are thereby able to maintain their freewheeling lifestyle. Most choose marriage and children. At first the married waterman tries to preserve his ties to the water. But soon he realizes that the two worlds are inimicable, and most water-based activities cease.

On retirement the Tidewater man can return to the water. At this stage in his career, however, he occupies a different position from when he first began. Chances are that his older relatives have died or become infirm, so that their gear, the unaffordably expensive components, are now his to use. Thus he takes on the position of benefactor to his own junior kin. He can enter limited partnerships with youths, adopting again their outlook on life, which he set aside on marriage.

The cycle of work has attendant cycles in the realm of leisure and the church, although several different paths exist. All male youths and young men enjoy the pleasures of hunting, fishing, and hanging around with the store crowd. Most boys begin fishing and hunting as soon as they are physically capable of using the equipment, and in appropriate sports they learn basic skills. A ten-year-old boy can take a .22 caliber rifle into the woodlands at any spare moment to hunt squirrels. He needs no other equipment, not even transportation. In the woods he learns patience and marksmanship. As he matures he can progress to hunting doves, which provide more of a challenge than squirrels because they fly, swoop, and dip in the air to avoid being shot, and because they must be hunted with a shotgun, a far more ponderous firearm than a .22 rifle. Eventually a relative will take him duck hunting, the supreme sport, where he can put together all that he has learned in the field with the additional skills taught him in the blind. If he is fortunate, he may inherit the use of a blind from a family member when he is old enough to accept the responsibility. If so, he may use the blind for pleasure only or, more likely, will combine pleasure with guiding to help finance the costs of hunting equipment.

At night boys and young men are anxious to hang out at the store, which provides them with many opportunities. They can listen to the tales of the older men and in the process learn local lore and acquire knowledge that may be useful, as well as simply be entertained. They may also strike deals with older men about working relationships. In the informal atmosphere of bull sessions the older men test out the
verbal skills and mettle of the younger. An older man looking for a partner wants someone he can get along with. He wants a quick learner and someone he feels comfortable talking to. At nightly sessions at the store the older men are able to create tentative relationships that can later be put to the test.

Boys also have their own group business to transact at the store, so they spend as much time away from the bull sessions as in them. They frequently meet girls at the store and use walks and dark corners in the environs for their courting. They may also experiment as a group with taboo or illegal activities such as drinking beer and whiskey or chewing tobacco. The older men watch these experiments with benign amusement.

When a man takes up employment outside the community he gives up not only paid water activities but most or all of the attendant life. Hunting requires much of the same gear as other water activities, such as a skiff and motor, and it is not practical to keep these things if they are not making money. Furthermore, hunting takes great amounts of time away from home which most family men cannot spare. Similarly, hanging around at the store at night becomes a burden on spare time, and the store associations and the deals struck there have less importance.

For leisure the man in his middle years has several choices. Some choose home activities, such as working in the garden, woodworking, or general house maintenance. But many decide to ally themselves with one of the town's formal associations. Many join the Masons once they have organized themselves sufficiently to be able to set aside the necessary time. The lodge demands a degree of loyalty and time away from the family, but it is time that is circumscribed and rigidly delimited. The Masons also organize events that involve wives and children, so that a man may be an active member yet still fulfill obligations to family. The officers and general membership of the Masons are predominantly men in the middle years who have regular outside employment. As men reach retirement age they fall away from the strictures of the society, although they maintain some ties, and return to more informal associations and activities.

The American Legion is open only to men who have performed military service, so the choice to join is not entirely open. But not all men who have been in the military join. The act of joining is in many ways a signal quite opposite to that of joining the Masons. The bar is open every night and all weekend, so that participation in the group is unstructured and potentially unlimited during leisure time. An eve-
ning meal is served also, so that a man may absent himself from the family circle for the most important meal of the day. Many women liken the Legion to the store crowd and do not hide their disdain for men who are “down at the hut every night.” As in Masonry, so in the American Legion the most active men are in their middle years, but there is less falling away as the men approach retirement. However, the Legion does not draw its members in large numbers from the old families of Tidewater. Legionnaires are mostly from new families in town and from families in surrounding towns. As such the Legion is less of an “inside” institution than the others discussed. I explore the tension between outsiders and insiders within the community later.

On retirement men return to the leisure activities of their youth. They begin to hunt and fish as they see fit because they have both the time and the equipment. An older man may take a younger work partner with him if he enjoys his company and, if they are kin, may eventually bestow a blind location on him. Older men also form the core of the storytellers at the store.

Finally, the man’s participation in church has similar cyclical qualities. Most boys in the community attend Sunday school for a few years. Some stop attending at a relatively early age, in their early teens; a small percentage continue into their late teens before finally dropping out. Those who stay on past sixteen come forward at revival time and are baptized. But sooner or later, baptized or not, boys leave the church and take up other associations. Hanging out at the store and going to church do not mix as far as youths are concerned.

Few men in their middle years attend church. Any man who does is marked as being especially devout and an oddity. A man is expected to have a few roustabout, godless years as a young man. The church sees its main mission as wooing men back to the fold after those years are over. But the transition is not immediate or certain. Married men find their energies in great demand, and time is precious. Services on Sunday take up half a day’s free time, and many men feel that this commitment is too great. They may, however, flirt with attendance from time to time. They may be seen with their wives on one or two nights of the revival or at special services, such as those at Easter and Christmas.

Those men who return to the church begin serious, regular attendance as their retirement approaches or upon retirement. Most attend church for several years before they take any steps to commit themselves. They join the men’s bible class and sit at the back with the men during regular services. But at some point they make an active deci-
Lord I'm Coming Home

sion and come forward during the invitation at a regular service or a revival. Those who have not been baptized become members and go through the rite, and those who have, rededicate their lives to the church. In either case the metaphor of “coming home” is applicable. The hymn of invitation pleads with them:

Come home, come home,
Ye who are weary come home;
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
Calling, O sinner, come home!

Jesus is tenderly calling thee home,
Calling today, calling today;
Why from the sunshine of love wilt thou roam
Farther and farther away?

Or the retiree may sing:

Coming home, coming home,
Never more to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love
Lord I’m coming home.

The preacher too will admonish him that he has wandered away from God and must come home. The related metaphors of wandering far and coming home are the mainstays of the invitations and emphasize that the man has indeed spent much of his life away from home, outside the community, in a strange and unaccepting world—an unsatisfying, unrewarding, unaesthetic world of labor:

I've wandered far away from God,
Now I'm coming home;
The paths of sin too long I've trod,
Lord I'm coming home.

The man who comes home has a safe and secure place in the church. Soon he will take up one of the offices held in his family—deacon, treasurer, Sunday school director—and he will have a solid position of power and prestige.

Traditionally, then, the man is an “outside” person. He works and plays outside the home, and as life progresses he moves farther and
farther away from home. But at the point when his ties to the inside are at their most attenuated, he returns home. The full complexity of this return can be understood more fully by examining the aesthetics of the home and the church, and the roles that women play in both.

The woman's life is not cyclical like the man's. A girl remains bonded to her mother and mother's home as long as her mother is living. In growing up she helps her mother with household tasks, and even after marriage she spends a considerable portion of the day with her mother preparing the evening meal. The woman does not wander far away from home, nor does she wander far from the church. Girls are baptized at about sixteen years of age, and they continue their association with the church throughout their lives. A few girls fall away temporarily in their late teens prior to marriage, in a manner similar to but shorter than a boy's rooster years. This period is followed by marriage and establishment in a house in the community, however, not by taking employment out of town. The inexorable move away from home of the young man is not replicated by the young woman. As women marry and have children they may have periods of sparse attendance because of home needs, but the church is prepared to meet every eventuality. During Sunday school a nursery is provided for babies, and from preschool upward an appropriate peer group exists for children of every age. Thus a woman is encouraged to bring her children to church as soon as she feels able, so that after a brief hiatus she becomes a staunch member.

In her middle years a woman begins to take on responsibilities in the church. The commonest jobs are teaching children's Sunday school and assisting in the food preparation involved with fund raising. Some women, who get tagged as particularly active, develop formal and informal youth organizations and activities. The Baptist church sponsors many youth auxiliary organizations, such as the Sunbeams, Girls' Auxiliary, and Royal Ambassadors, which may have local chapters if a local woman is prepared to take on the job of organizing them. Generally a mother with children of the appropriate age volunteers. In similar fashion mothers run the youth choir, youth fund raisers, and the youth Christmas play. It is at this point also that some women become members of the choir.

As her mother becomes infirm the woman must increasingly take on the duties of the head cook. An aging mother may continue to supervise household operations, but her daughter slowly takes greater command. If, as is common, her mother is a widow at this stage in life, a woman may move her family into the old home place, which allows
her to direct her attention to the care of her mother without ignoring her family in the process. On the death of her mother she becomes the head cook.

Once a woman has reached the status of senior generation in her family, she takes up new roles in the church. She will, at some point, cease her teaching jobs and join the women's Bible class. She will also take on committee posts and may assume an officership if a suitable one, such as church secretary or music director, is available. Eventually she will also succeed to one of the directorships of fund-raising activities, because as a head cook she now has the experience needed to direct and supervise others.

Thus whereas men hold many significant offices in the church, women dominate its management and development because of their lifelong dedication, and there are many more women's auxiliary groups than men's. Women run the choir, youth groups, and Missionary Union, they plan and coordinate all fund-raising activities, and they have a leading hand in church aesthetics. They also form a simple and very large majority of the church membership and attend services more frequently than men, and with more evident interest in the proceedings. Older women sit at the front of the congregation and are lovingly called the “angels” of the church, whereas the older men sit at the back in what is sarcastically labeled “amen corner.”

Whether because women control the organization of the church or because of broader religious principles, church aesthetics are akin to those of the home. Spaces are clearly and rigidly defined, and the whole is thematically unified. Each room has a special function, and each clearly defined peer group has its own room (except, significantly, the men's group, which uses the sanctuary as its meeting room). Group business is closed off and isolated from that of others. There are also public and private spaces. The sanctuary is a public space where all are welcomed, the choir room and Sunday school rooms are private and not for general view. Just as at home, these two kinds of spaces are decorated and kept differently. The public space is kept fastidiously clean and orderly, with everything in its proper place. The private rooms vary in orderliness and reflect the personal tastes and creativity of the occupants. Decoration varies according to the peer group, but much is ephemeral, creations of one week's lessons.

Yet in some ways the church is even more highly structured than the home. Proceedings are carefully orchestrated and demarked by aesthetic forms. The space is delineated by static aesthetic objects,
such as the architecture and the furniture, and time is delineated by temporal or lively aesthetic forms. The service starts and ends with choral formulae that mark the interval as a highly structured sacred time but also indicate appropriate behavior and its consequences:

The Lord is in His holy temple;  
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.  
(Call to Worship)

Grace, love, and peace abide, now, with you:  
Through Jesus Christ our dear Redeemer.  
(Benediction Response)

Business meetings, similarly, are marked with a temporal aesthetic form that indicates appropriate mien:

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.

Once the aesthetic markers have established the sacred time at regular service, the order of events is rigidly controlled. As the overall structure of the service is controlled, so are the individual elements that compose it. That is, the order of service is printed ahead of time and distributed to the congregation, so that all follow a prescribed and unchanging structure. But just as important, the aesthetic forms that are part of the structure are highly controlled. The choral music is marked by well-rehearsed singing with clear enunciation and practiced restraint. Freedom and individual expression are not called for. When a preacher and music director introduced antiphonal, uncontrolled music into the services the result was an inevitable schism in the church body. This music was believed to promote spontaneous and emotional responses from the congregation, which was entirely at odds with the traditional aesthetic of calm and order.

The sermon should also be aesthetically in keeping with the other aesthetic forms in the sacred time and space. It should not be over-emotional or delivered in a manner suggestive of uncontrolled absorption in its message. It should be planned, structured, coherent. Vo-cally it should be well-modulated, but the modulation should be considered and stylized, not unrestrained and highly emotional.

Finally, the act of coming forward itself is not a spontaneous, emo-
tional act but a controlled and considered one (although it may be initiated by an affective change). The preacher almost always knows when someone plans to come forward. Men and women discuss the act with him and with friends and relatives before proceeding. At the revival the youths were stirred to come forward on the Wednesday night by the direct and blatant appeals of the evangelist, but they did not come forward under those stirrings. They discussed the matter with parents and preacher and then came forward. One of these youths had come forward several years earlier and had been forbidden to proceed further with baptism by his parents. All acts of coming forward are considered and planned. They are acts that, although ostensibly concerned with spiritual conversion, are as much public displays of unity with the body of members, statements of intent to be on the inside, as they are acts of personal faith.

The ritual complex of coming forward and being baptized, described in Chapter 6, is of course the rite of passage par excellence of the Baptist church as its eponymous nature indicates. Thus I have taken broad hints on how to approach the subject matter from the general Durkheimian tradition concerning ritual and social solidarity (Durkheim 1915, Mauss 1924, Douglas 1966 and 1970) as well as studies aimed specifically at rites of passage (Van Gennep 1960, Turner 1969, Gluckman 1962).

The rites attendant on coming forward have a particular relationship to the aesthetics of space. I noted earlier that as one proceeds farther from home, spaces are less well-defined and structured. The most structured and controlled space (excepting the church) is the interior of the house, and structure and control decrease as one moves through gardens to farms and finally to the open water. Work and workers share the qualities of their respective environments in a homologous continuum: services are highly controlled, farming less so, and fishing least of all. The church’s space is even more rigidly defined than that of the home: it is “home” aesthetics taken to extremes.

In the sanctuary each group has its own space. Men, older women, family groups, youths, and strangers all have their own special places to sit. Similarly, the choir and preacher have sections that denote their special functions. To be out of one’s place has particular significance. Older couples who sit together are marked as unusually devoted. When the choir music was the subject of controversy, choir members began to sit in the congregation. And, of course, leaving one’s seat to come forward is of central importance.

The nonmember who leaves his seat to be baptized leaves the space
of his peers and enters the preacher's space. The preacher is an outsider; among other things he is a representative of the other world beyond the community, the world that entices men away from the community, the world that is full of material temptations. The rite continues with a farther removal from the structured, controlled space of the sanctuary to the most uncontrolled space within the community: the sound. The candidates are dressed in old, ragged clothes, as is the preacher. The congregation is disorganized and not formally dressed. They pay scant attention to the ceremony but talk and visit in separate groups. Attempts at orderly ritual, such as singing appropriate hymns ("Shall We Gather at the River"), have failed. Each candidate walks out into the water with the preacher/outsider, and the candidate alone is totally immersed in the uncontrollable element. After baptism candidates are reunited with their families and on the following Sunday return to their customary places in the church.

For men this rite has particular significance, because it mirrors their passage through life: the journey away from home to the outside world and their subsequent return and reacceptance. But the symbolic rite of baptism is also spiritually opposite to the journey to the outside world. The journey to the world outside is defiling and full of cares. The baptismal journey to the sound is cleansing and relieving of cares. The sound and all in it are natural products, made by God. Though wild and uncontrollable it is a natural world, and it is inside the community. The world beyond the community is not natural, it is a human artifact. Its disorder and uncontrollable ethos are the products of human artifice.

The preacher occupies a powerful position because he may play the roles of insider and outsider. His outsider status is clearly marked. He occupies a special, solitary space at services, a space separated by a considerable gap from other people in the church, and he has a raised platform to speak from. Simple comparison of his use of space with that of the Sunday school director is instructive. The director stands on a level with the congregation, and people fill the pews up to the front row. The director is an insider. In matters of management and governance the preacher has no control, as is evident from a tale narrated by the church clerk: "We had some problems when we put the air conditioning in. The contractor, he made such a mess of it. And he came here to be paid, and several of the members told me not to pay him until he got it right. So he came and he got so mad with me because I wouldn't pay him. He said 'Well, I'll go see the preacher.' I said 'Go right ahead. He's got no authority whatsoever.'" The preacher does
not serve as a member of committees but may choose to sit in as a nonvoting observer. Suggestions that he makes in committee or general meetings are usually considered interferences. A regular member of the church can speak at length on any issue and will at worst be called long-winded. Preachers who attempt to talk at length are privately condemned.

Yet the preacher also has some of the rights and privileges of an insider. He is a registered member of the church, duly elected, and conventionally he belongs to the men’s Bible class and attends as a regular member. He has the right to vote on any matter coequal with other members. Despite his ambiguous position, however, he is decidedly more outsider than insider.

It is in the best interests of the church to have an outsider as preacher, because he can then act as a scapegoat when problems arise. A local-born preacher cannot be expelled from the community, but an outsider can be sent on his way when there is discord in the church. By firing the preacher the church symbolically purges itself of bad, that is, outside, influences and is made whole and unified again. Also, a local preacher would have kin ties in the community. Should he be at odds with parts of the congregation, his kin would be bound to stand behind him. Such a schism could not be healed by firing him; indeed, firing him would certainly make matters worse.

Three of the last five preachers have resigned under pressure, and it is reasonable to wonder whether there is so much bad influence in the church that it needs constant purging. Rather, do unresolved and long-term problems plague the church? It may be that, paradoxically, the events that led to the establishment of a full-time preacher’s position are also responsible for the constant dissatisfaction with the men that fill the role, so that a cycle of rebellion and repose is now built into the system. The general analysis of social unity in the face of deep conflict was explored by Max Gluckman and his students, so that their case studies and theoretical position can be compared with the analysis that follows (Gluckman 1954, 1955, and 1963, and Turner 1957).

Until the modern road system was put in the church was not large enough to support a full-time preacher. The roads brought a gradual influx of people from outside, and many of these outsiders joined the church. By settling in the community and becoming members of the church they did not, however, become fully integrated. Outsiders usually rented property from the old families in town and had no kin ties with the old families. But landholding and kinship are the foundations of power and prestige in the community. They provide individ-
The main oppositions between outsiders and insiders in the church are summarized in Table 8. The organizing principles may not be obvious in these oppositions, but they are very important. Superficially the oppositions might be put down to different approaches to Protestantism. The outsiders appear to favor a more spontaneous and emotional religion where the judgment of what is right comes from the heart. The insiders favor control and reflection. This superficial reaction makes sense of the division that lines up conservatory singing and Robert’s rules on one side and camp meeting-style singing and rule-of-thumb democracy on the other.

But at a deeper level the division is a split between the forces of conservatism and those of change. The insiders seek to maintain the status quo, the outsiders seek to change it. It is politically and socially easy to understand part of the reason for these positions. The insiders hold their positions of power and prestige by virtue of long-standing traditions of inheritance and have nothing to gain from changing things. The outsiders are shut out of these positions and so have nothing to lose, and possibly a lot to gain, by opposing the established order.

For the insiders plain walls, oak pews, and temperance all represented continuity with the past, and parliamentary procedures would ensure the preservation of these links with the past because old fami-
ilies hold a simple majority of the church membership. Old families control the key political offices, so there can never be an effective direct frontal challenge to their position. The officers can be trusted to see that parliamentary procedures are strictly enforced.

To counterattack the outsiders have adopted a beguiling approach: they try to be better Baptists than the insiders. They invoke the spirit of revival with all of its attendant desires to throw over complacency and tradition and replace them with moral fervor. The preachers are their natural allies and leaders for two reasons. First, the preachers are outsiders themselves and gain a measure of power by being in the vanguard of this moral faction. Second, they are generally fresh from the seminary and so filled with zeal to convert the world. The battle of revival versus tradition is a natural one for them to take up. All of the sermons preached on the old covenant and abstinence in the battle over church music and alcohol policy pitted what was "right" against "tradition."

Theologically the moral stance adopted by the outsiders is difficult to challenge, and the insiders do not attempt to marshal arguments against it. Nor do they attempt to vote on points of religious principle. Instead, they use their numbers to block debate, so that complicated issues, when they come up for discussion, are either tabled or sent to committee. This avoidance of conflict is, in turn, symptomatic of more general relations between insiders and outsiders in Tidewater and reflects tensions in the larger community.

It is possible to divide social relations into two styles or modalities: aesthetic-incorporative and material-transactional. (Although these categories and their use are mine, some of their attributes are to be found in previous scholarship. See, for example, Sorokin 1957, Geertz 1957, Parsons 1951, Tönnies 1887, Redfield 1941, 1947, 1956, Peacock 1968, 1975, and Douglas 1970). Aesthetic-incorporative relations are those which operate primarily in the aesthetic sphere; their ethos is one of cohesion and cooperation. Material-transactional relationships are based on the material worth of items or services exchanged and are founded on the rule of strict reciprocity. This opposition is by no means clear-cut, nor are its poles mutually exclusive. It is best seen as two ends of a continuum of types of social interaction. I draw the distinction at this stage primarily for heuristic purposes.

Cases considered in previous chapters serve to show that the people of Tidewater traditionally prefer aesthetic-incorporative relationships to material-transactional ones. The annual chicken supper at the church is supposedly a fund-raising event, but as such it is not par-
particularly efficient. Basic computation plus observation shows that the
women and men of the church contribute the materials and labor to
make the meals, which they then buy back at suppertime. The church
takes as profit the five dollars per head charged for the meals, but the
members have contributed more than that. They have spent money
making cakes, cornbread, and potato salad or buying chickens as well
as the five dollars they each pay for a meal. Some local cynics occasion­
ally argue that it would be cheaper and quicker to pay five dollars to
the building fund. Indeed, my calculations over one year show that an
annual contribution of twenty dollars by each member would raise as
much as all the special events combined. But the members adamantly
oppose such ideas when they are raised periodically by preachers who
oppose fund-raising events. The majority argue that there is no sub­
stitute for the fellowship of a church supper and that the financial
rewards are a distinctly secondary consideration. Fund raising, an
obvious candidate for material-transactional relations, is deliberately
placed in the aesthetic-incorporative sphere.

Since Tidewater's founding food production has been at the core of
the local economy, and food sharing has been a major force in the
creation and maintenance of social relations. The traditional occupa­
tions for men are fishing and farming. In addition, older men have
kitchen gardens, and sport fishing and hunting are regular leisure
activities. Thus it is an everyday occurrence for men to give food to kin
and friends. Before the advent of modern roads all that was eaten was
caught or raised locally, and for many contemporary families this is
still the case. The distribution and redistribution of food follows pre­
dictable paths because of the character of meals as social institutions.
The people of Tidewater live in nuclear family households. The oldest
woman in the matriline cooks for her daughters and their husbands
and children. Meals are not planned for a fixed number of participants
but are flexible within generous limits. Friends of the family are al­
ways welcome, and a stranger in the house at mealtime is expected to
stay to eat.

When a man has meat, fish, or vegetables to share he takes it in its
raw, unprepared state to a family cook, usually kin. It is her job to
prepare the food in some way, and then she is at liberty to redistribute
it to her family (at the table) and to other family cooks if there is
enough to share. Between the food producers and the food preparers
the town is united in a complex food-sharing network, a web of aes­
thetic-incorporative relations.

In recent times this aesthetic-incorporative ethos has been chal­
lenged by supermarkets whose material-transactional nature undermines traditional values. Modern roads foster these innovations in two ways. They give access to wage labor jobs in far towns for men, who in turn do not have time to grow their own vegetables. The roads also provide women with access to supermarkets in other towns where they trade using the wages earned outside the community. But the whole orientation of supermarkets does not suit the needs of Tidewater cooks. Supermarket foods are prepackaged in small quantities designed for nuclear family-sized meals. It is difficult and expensive to buy the quantities once grown for distribution throughout the community.

All women in town dislike supermarket shopping because of its ethos of impersonal, strict reciprocity. To lighten this necessary burden they shop in groups of three or more. In this way they may inject some aesthetic-incorporative feelings into a generally alienating experience. When men retire they take up food production as fishermen and gardeners in order to relieve the necessity of using supermarkets and to preserve as much as possible of the traditional networks of food sharing.

Whereas the out-of-town supermarkets cut across traditional behavior, the in-town general stores preserve their old-fashioned character. Of all the social spheres in the community the general store could most easily fall into material-transactional ways, but it remains, even in modern times, aesthetic-incorporative. In the past the general store was a vital link in the economic lives of all families in Tidewater, because it provided credit. A commercial duck hunter could buy essential supplies, such as powder and shot, from the store on credit and then settle up with the storekeeper when he was reimbursed by poultry buyers at the end of the season. Farmers and fishermen filled their seasonal needs in the same fashion. Even though there is less need for credit in the contemporary world, local families keep accounts at the stores and use these accounts to buy items even when they have enough cash to pay for them outright. Such behavior is anomalous when viewed in material-transactional terms. The reliance on credit unnecessary from a purely monetary standpoint secures the relationship between buyer and seller. The transactional is transformed into the incorporative, and other activities involved in trading reinforce the socially cohesive nature of the act.

No one conducts business hastily if he or she can avoid it. Most men sit at one of the benches provided and chat for at least a few minutes. It is also polite to sit before purchasing goods, which gives the ap-
pearance of coming to visit and then buying something as a secondary matter. What is more, at night the store is the scene of as much socializing as purchasing. Many men come to talk and leave without buying anything. Even though the store is a commercial enterprise, its ethos is fundamentally aesthetic-incorporative.

These examples could be multiplied, but they establish the points that aesthetic-incorporative relations are preferred over material-transactional ones, and that material-transactional relations, where they encroach, come from outside influences. What we have is the seed of an explanation of much of the social interaction, particularly conflict, in Tidewater. The old order is changing because of the outward movement of men in search of work and the influx of foreigners bringing new lifestyles with them. The old families are trying to preserve their status in the community by holding on to the old ways, but the new families are beginning to challenge the power of the old families. At heart it amounts to a clash between aesthetic-incorporative and material-transactional philosophies. The next issue to explore, then, is why the old families deal in aesthetic-incorporative terms, that is, what aesthetic-incorporative relations have done for them in the past and why they continue to rely on them.

Even though times are changing, virtually all power within the community still resides with the old families, each of which is governed by a senior generation. Power resides in three broad socio-economic categories: landownership, inherited titles, and inherited offices. The senior generation controls all three spheres.

Almost all of the land in Tidewater is owned by the members of three or four families. The significance of this single fact cannot be underestimated when considering lines of power and authority in the community. First, identification with the land is extremely strong. The old house is occupied by successive generations who add their own character to it by slow accretion in structure and furnishings. When it becomes too dilapidated to be habitable the house is vacated, not torn down, and a new house is built in its shadow. Somewhere on the land is the family burying ground, so that in death the family remains united on the land. Second, the land provides employment or access to employment. Each family has a farm that provides work for one or two men. But landownership also includes control of water access for fishing and other water-based jobs. Third, family land titles include juniper swamp, woodland, and saltmarsh, which are prime hunting grounds for waterfowl and deer. And, of course, arable fields may be hunted for quail and dove. Also, the swamps and woodlands
provide timber for house- and boatbuilding and other necessary equipment, such as oars. In sum, key activities are closely tied to landownership.

New families in town do not have rights over land, and they are beholden to the old families. They rent houses and occasionally farm land from the old families. New families pay for docking privileges at water-access points, otherwise they must drive miles to public access locations, loading and unloading their boats each day. They may also rent or exchange services for hunting grounds. Thus new families have set up basic material-transactional relations with the old ones. The young members of the old families are equally beholden to the old members, but they do not establish material-transactional relations with them: their relations are aesthetic-incorporative.

Older men take on younger male kin as limited partners, not as wage-earning employees. A commercial fisherman, for example, takes on two partners who share in the proceeds of the catch. The owner takes half of the income—one quarter share for him and one quarter for the equipment—and the boys take a quarter share each. Young married couples are given the use of a house on family property or land on which to build or place a house trailer. They do not rent property from the older generation. All family members, young and old, have use of hunting grounds and water access. Younger families eat at night with the older generation and are not expected to contribute money in return for a meal. What is required is that younger women assist in food preparation and keep the family cook company. Younger men keep the company of their older relatives and their friends at the store at night.

Although young men must succumb to the authority of the older generation, they can confidently expect to rise to positions of prestige in the community over time. Members of the new families do not have the same expectations, and in consequence their lifecycle differs from the traditional one.

A complete understanding of the difference between old and new family workstyles requires us to review the most important occupations in the community, those that are water-based (see Table 7, p. 105).

The young man starts out somewhere near the bottom of the ladder, and his goal is to rise as quickly as he can. But such ambitions do not make clear sense from a purely material or pragmatic point of view. Guiding for hunters and fishermen provides a steady, reliable income. Foreigners pay between thirty and forty dollars per day plus tips. The
chief outlay is gasoline. Crabbers may gross more, and sometimes their day's haul is considerably more, but in the course of a season they may not make profits much in excess of the fishing guide's. The main difference is that guiding jobs are onerously transactional. The guides complain that they spend all day arguing with their charges to behave properly. Some fishermen treat the guides as paid servants and expect them to bait hooks, release fish, and other menial tasks. The relationship between guide and guided is a subject of constant negotiation. At the end of the day the guide is paid and tipped in accordance with his capacity to negotiate an agreeable relationship.

Guiding involves constant dealing with outsiders and is, therefore, material-transactional, whereas fishing and trapping, which are individual or small-group activities by insiders in an aesthetically pleasing environment, are in some measure aesthetic-incorporative. (All water activities have a material-transactional aspect, discussed below.) It is highly desirable to get away from material-transactional jobs with outsiders, but to climb the hierarchy requires more equipment. It is not financially possible to buy new all of the gear needed to be independent of outsiders. A man must inherit some or all of his equipment from older relatives. But usually before he inherits, other circumstances arise that worsen his position vis-à-vis the outside world and material-transactional relationships. He takes a factory job that pays a standard hourly wage, though he can be confident that this exile in the outside world will end.

When the retired man from an old family "comes home" he can to a considerable extent withdraw from material-transactional relations. He does not have to guide because he has the equipment to fish. He may join the church as public display of his new status. He has left the world of sin, that is, the outside world of money and exchange, and returned to the cohesive, nontransactional little community. The church, with all of its aesthetic elaboration and emphasis on salvation through grace alone, is the epitome of the aesthetic-incorporative. By coming forward the retired man reaffirms his commitment to the aesthetic-incorporative. But this decision emphatically does not entail his becoming "holy" or "spiritual." He is affirming his faith in the community and its values, not in the theological doctrines of the church. He sits with other such men in "amen corner" and quietly assents to the proceedings. These men do not become great proselytizers and evangelists, because what they have attained is not freely available through evangelism.

Men and women from new families live, whether by choice or force
of circumstances, predominantly in the material-transactional realm. They work at wage labor and shop at supermarkets. They do not keep accounts at the general stores, nor do they stop to chat when they buy items. They rent homes as individual family units and take their evening meals as nuclear families. Everything they require must be bought, they have no land or gear to bestow or inherit. In the three areas of traditional power—land, traditional occupations, and key offices—they are permanently disenfranchised. As the old families hold such power, however, it remains to be understood why these newcomers pose a threat to the old aesthetic-incorporative order.

The old families could force their will in all community and family affairs on a strictly financial basis. For example, it is no secret that the Sunday school director keeps the church solvent. Whenever there is a monthly or annual shortfall, he makes up the difference out of his own pocket. At times when the preachers have become argumentative he could simply have withdrawn his support, which among other things provides the preacher's salary, and conflict would have ended abruptly. An unruly young man could be refused fishing partnerships or access to water activities. Troublesome newcomers could have their leases revoked. But the members of the old families never behave in this fashion, they never invoke their material-transactional powers to get their way. They avoid material-transactional power for two main reasons. First, the Protestant ethic is a powerful force opposing the material-transactional; second, material-transactional relations are used by outsiders and so to use them is to identify with the wrong people.

The Protestant work ethic is clearly one of the dominant themes in Tidewater life. Examples of its effects are legion. One woman confessed she had taken only one bank loan in her life. She hated the thought of paying interest because someone was getting "something for nothing." She could hardly sleep nights at the thought of the burden of the loan and was driven to take paid jobs sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, until the loan was repaid. An older man condemned television as "the worst vice in the world. It takes your time from you and gives you nothing in return." One young farm worker was chided by other men in the town for being lazy because he worked from ten in the morning until eight at night instead of the customary eight to eight.

The nub of the whole matter is that the Protestant sees material wealth as the result of a good life, not the cause of it. The Protestant leads a good, hardworking life for its own sake, and prosperity comes
as a natural corollary. It is quite inappropriate, even sinful, to see money as powerful or as an ingredient in happiness, and this message is reinforced from the pulpit (see Weber 1958 and Peacock 1971). Therefore, it is not possible to fight battles or live life in the material-transactional arena, because to do so is to admit that money does indeed have power in its own right. A father wishes his son to be loyal and obedient simply because it is good to be so, not because the father can take away the son’s livelihood. A fisherman shares his catch because it is good to share, not because he will get something in return. To resort to material power to get one’s way is to admit defeat.

In addition, when the people of Tidewater are forced to enter the material-transactional sphere they generally lose. In particular, farmers and fishermen sell their products to dealers, mostly from the North. When selling these products they are almost entirely at the mercy of external forces. Farmers must take the price they are given for corn and soybeans and have no personal power to change it. That power resides at the commodities exchange, which is driven by national and international politics and economics that the local farmer scarcely understands. Fishermen sell their catches to buyers from Northern cities, and prices fluctuate wildly from catch to catch. Big hauls cause an immediate lowering of prices, and arguments usually result in the buyer refusing to buy. Such brutal transactional relations cause divisions among the fishermen which are considered distasteful but unavoidable. Pot fishermen keep quiet about catches and placement of their lines, and net fishermen race each other to market to get the best prices. The transactional nature of the buyers encourages “bad” behavior among the fishermen.

Fishermen know that such behavior is not necessary. Before the modern roads came buyers did not journey to the South to buy the watermen’s catches. The watermen salted down fish, crabs, wild game, and so on, and sent it up North in barrels made in a barrel factory in Tidewater itself. The Northern buyers published seasonal price lists and settled up with each waterman according to the same rates, either monthly or at the end of the season. There was no need to race to market or to compete in a cutthroat way. But when the roads came, the buyers came too. It was easy to draw the conclusion that the buyers had imported these disruptive material-transactional ways.

A general survey of the dealings of the people of Tidewater with the outside world leads to the ineluctable conclusion that in these proceedings they lose power or have none. They work as wage laborers for, or sell their goods to, capitalists who hold the upper hand. Lobby-
Lord I'm Coming Home

ing by the local church at the state legislature to prevent passage of liquor by the drink laws failed. Lobbying at the Southern Baptist Convention concerning the racial composition of congregations failed. In the latter case Tidewater’s own delegate, the preacher, betrayed them. He was sent with a specific mandate from the congregation but nonetheless voted with his (outsider) conscience and against their wishes. Although the locals are drawn to the outside world for financial or ideological reasons, the frequent result is defeat and subsequent withdrawal back into the comforts of the aesthetic-incorporative little community.

Because the outside world represents material-transactional relations and, thereby, defeat and loss of power, the influx of outsiders into the community is deeply troubling. Tidewater was always a place to withdraw to, a safe haven. With outsiders coming in and staying, the town’s status as haven is diminishing. These outsiders must be resisted as much as possible. But they cannot be resisted by material-transactional means, even though the old families would most likely win if they used these methods. The locals are caught in a bind created by the Protestant ethic. If they use material-transactional methods they lose in a double sense, even though they might technically win. Their aim is to keep the material-transactional out of the community, and so it is illogical to use material-transactional power to do so. By adopting material-transactional methods, moreover, they would be asserting the power of that which they wish to deny has power. But by relying on the aesthetic-incorporative they run the risk of losing out to the material-transactional, because in their dealings with outsiders they have tended to lose.

There is no better example of the insider/outsider clash than the “row” over church music and the covenant, and the way it was handled is now understandable. The battle started over church music, but the preacher shifted the ground to abstinence and the church covenant. His supporters were members of the new families and his opponents, the old families. The three sermons he preached on covenants were strictly transactional arguments. A covenant, after all, is a binding contract between two parties who come to mutually agreeable terms. The preacher’s arguments were taken from the contractual segments of Mosaic law. Even the framework he used was highly legalistic. His aim was to apply arguments and logic to turn the tide in his direction and ultimately to win a referendum, as if one’s position in these matters were subject to change by debate and verbal transactions. The response of the old families was a refusal to debate or
transact on the issue at all. Their most decisive action was a move to table discussion. The issue was not subject to transaction; if they had entered the fray using those tactics, they might have won the battle but lost the war. Instead, they avoided all action in the material-transactional realm, and the last act of the night was to vote unanimously to restore the music director to her old position. This was a clear signal for the preacher to resign, which he did one month later.

By firing the preacher the church and the town are purged of outside influences. New families continue to arrive each year, however, and the old and the new are beginning to intermarry and confuse the boundaries between them. It is difficult to know whether the aesthetic-incorporative little community will survive the onslaught. The preacher claimed he was turning their "world upside down," but really he was drawing the "outside world in." Periodic purges may stem the tide temporarily, but the aesthetic-incorporative may ultimately fall victim.

In essence, then, for the people of Tidewater aesthetics define and maintain the inside world or, perhaps, a number of inside worlds. Tidewater could be defined as an aesthetic community—a community that shares aesthetic forms and values. This sharing has a double sense because the values are held in common and the forms often are freely exchanged. That is, aesthetic-incorporative relations are so named because they are mediated by aesthetic forms that are shared and represent shared values. But Tidewater is also an aesthetic community in that, regardless of individual aesthetic judgments, the people hold being aesthetic as a value in and of itself. Their relationships are aesthetic-incorporative because they actively choose them to be so.

This analysis suggests the existence of at least two kinds of aesthetic community. In the first kind the people’s aesthetic judgments are unified or informed by similar cultural values. In such cases the aesthetic world is a unifying factor, but it may not have primacy in human interaction. It may be one among many shared attributes or one among many ways of defining the community. In the second kind the people give primacy to aesthetic value, perhaps above economic, social, and political values, even though individual judgments may differ. That is, they see the aesthetic realm as the appropriate place in which to hold human interaction whatever particular form it may take. A community might satisfy both defining criteria, and I believe Tidewater does. The locals share aesthetic values and agree on the fundamental importance of the aesthetic in daily life.

What remains to be reviewed is the issue of why aesthetic forms
should act in the ways described. To do so it is necessary to return to the attributes of aesthetic forms outlined in Chapter 2. In particular I focus on the sensual and affecting qualities of aesthetic forms, but in the process I also consider issues related to critical tastes and disinterested contemplation.

The basic sensual and physical character of aesthetic forms is of critical importance to how those forms operate and are manipulated in Tidewater. Nowhere can this point be seen more clearly than in the architectural construction and reconstruction of space. The church building has two distinct aesthetic aspects: the new brick-veneered outside and the old wood-paneled inside. Perhaps easy to overlook in the search for grand theory is the fact that this inside/outside distinction is made possible by the physical nature of the way that the people of Tidewater define sacred space, namely, with a permanent structure.

There is no absolutely compelling reason for defining sacred or any other space either visually or permanently. The smell of incense, heat of a fire, or sound of a musical instrument could define a space used for religious purposes. But the inside/outside qualities of these forms are fundamentally different from those of a building. They are ephemeral and need constant effort to maintain them: incense or fire must be fed, an instrument must be played. When the effort ceases so does the space that is being defined. Also, these forms define space by pervading, as opposed to surrounding, it. They fill up the space rather than making a perimeter around it. Smells and sounds, being airborne, flow around and into the participants in the space so defined. Finally, the margins of space defined by these forms are unclear and difficult to control. Smells and sounds drift with the wind and taper gradually to nothing over great distances.

Thus while sounds, smells, feels, and so on can be used to define space, they do so in ways that are critically different from those of a permanent visible structure. For these forms being inside or outside the defined space is marked by a simple binary feature, that is, the sensation of the form is absent or present. But the inside/outside dimensions of a visible structure are more complex. Being outside the building does not simply involve the absence of the sights of the inside. The sights of the outside can be, and in the case of the Tidewater church are, aesthetically different from those of the inside, so that people both inside and outside a building have a visual aesthetic experience of the building. In the case of a space defined by, say, smell, only those inside the space have the relevant olfactory experience, or,
rather, the production of a smell in a space does not produce one sensation for those inside and simultaneously produce another, different one for those outside.

Whereas forms involving touch, smell, and hearing cannot easily be controlled over space, a few can be controlled over time and can be used to mark time. This is especially true of sounds, whose controlled manipulation over time produces music and the modulated vocal qualities of oratory. Smells and feels are less controllable over time than sounds, although some manipulation of degree of intensity is possible. Starting up or shutting down the source of a smell or heat does not effect an immediate change in sensation, nor are small changes in intensity perceptible.

From these generalizations about the sensual and physical characteristics of different aesthetic forms it is easy to conclude that it is efficient to define sacred space with a permanent, visible structure and to define sacred time with sounds. This is, of course, precisely how services work in the Tidewater church. People congregate inside the building and behave in a subdued, somewhat orderly fashion consonant with the surroundings. But their behavior becomes completely orchestrated during the service, whose beginning and end is marked by music. The space is always sacred, but certain times, marked by temporal forms, are special. Within the temporal boundaries marked by music, regulated sounds—hymns, special music, doxology, sermon, and so on—structure the time, and because they function in this way it is no surprise that they occupy a critically important political position in the church, as the “row” over music indicates.

The relationship between architecture and sounds is not simply one of intersection between spatial and temporal variables. The physical natures of these forms interact. The building acts as a container and resonator for sounds, allowing them to be controlled and manipulated. Because walls and ceiling keep the air inside the building relatively still and reflect sounds back into the space, a greater modulation of sound is possible inside than outside. A preacher can range from low tones to loud admonitions, and musical instruments can vary in loudness.

When the people of the church moved the choir from the side to the center of the sanctuary, the change had a visual aspect, but the results were also, and perhaps more significantly, acoustic. When the choir was located to the side their voices reflected back to them from the other side wall and were only weakly transmitted to the body of the room. From a central position the sounds now radiate directly out into
the sanctuary, with strengthening acoustic effects from the back alcove, ceiling, and side walls. The choir stalls are banked so that each voice projects out, without interference from the body of the singer in front and to take added advantage of the reflective qualities of the ceiling. The organ’s speaker is centrally placed behind and above the choir so that its sound flows directly outward, and the preacher’s position on a platform directly in front of the choir allows his voice similar scope. Both use the back alcove as a resonator.

Compare the sound and space associations of worship service with those of Sunday school. In the latter a piano placed to the side where the choir used to sit leads the music, and the director stands directly in front of the congregation. Both positions mute the sound qualities of their respective sources. The director at ground level stands far from the resonating effects of ceiling and back alcove. Much of the piano’s music is swallowed up by the corner where it stands, and it is usually played with top and front closed. In other words, to say that the aesthetic forms of the regular service are “expansive” and those of the Sunday school are not is to make a direct statement about the physical and sensual qualities of those forms rather than about what they signify, symbolize, or refer to.

It is enlightening to view a regular service in the church using the sensorium as a frame of reference, to see how forms acting on each of the senses are controlled and how they influence each other. This analysis forms the basis for comparative investigation of aesthetic complexes in other arenas in Tidewater.

Several hours before the service begins the preacher goes into the church and regulates the heating or cooling system so that by the time services begin, the internal temperature will have stabilized. These systems effectively maintain an even temperature throughout the service and in consequence neutralize the skin sensations associated with heating and cooling. These sensations may be stimulated on first arrival if internal and external temperatures differ markedly, but they soon become quiescent. The heating and cooling systems use forced air that is filtered and recirculated, thus minimizing internal smells; the olfactory system is easily fatigued if new smells do not arise to provoke it. On entering the building there is usually no smell detectable, unless the flower displays are unusually large. Even in the latter case the floral aroma is indistinct and soon subsides as the nose grows accustomed to it.

The systems that regulate air temperature and smells work in conjunction with the building structure. Careful control of heat and smell
is possible because the building acts as a container for the air, thus creating a marked difference between internal and external air qualities. What might otherwise be vagrant and uncertain sensations are held rigidly in check and eliminated from consciousness for the duration of the service.

Regular worship services do not involve taste at all. (Holy Communion is a special case.) Chewing even the smallest item, such as a piece of candy, is highly uncommon, and other oral stimulants, such as tobacco, are strictly prohibited within the sanctuary. Addicted smokers linger outside until the start of the service, taking one last puff, and leave quickly at the end of proceedings to light up in front of the building. For them the denial of the service is framed by indulgence.

When the preacher turns the heating or cooling on he usually turns on the interior lighting also. These lights—incandescent bulbs in frosted glass mantles—shed an even yellow light that makes the interior woodwork glow in rich, honeyed, amber hues. Sunlight filtered through the colored glass windows makes little difference to the interior light unless the sky is exceptionally bright or cloudy. Thus during the service the basic visual aspects of the sanctuary, smells, tastes, and most touch sensations are all kept stable. Marked differences in sights, tastes, smells, and skin sensations occur on entry to and exit from the sanctuary only, making the actual moment of transition from outside to inside a multisensory experience.

Within the stable sensual environment of the sanctuary sounds are controlled with considerable sophistication. A summary of the range of these forms indicates their diversity. The full range of loudness is employed, from total silence (silent meditation), to very soft (prelude), to soft (morning prayer), to moderately loud (special music), to loud (hymns). And, of course, the preacher uses this entire compass in his sermons, making the preacher’s performance in many ways a microcosm of the entire sound range of church aesthetic performance. Some of these forms are strictly predictable—hymns and readings are taken from written texts. Some are moderately predictable because of conventional patterns and formulae—morning prayers use standard formats but change according to contemporary circumstances. And some are barely predictable—the sermons are extemporized with varying formats. Some forms involve one performer, some a select group, and some the entire congregation. Some are in unison, others involve harmony, antiphony, or counterpoint. These variations in number of performers and modes of performance produce ranges of timbre and tone quality.
Some idea of the value of the manipulation of sounds in a sacred context can be gleaned by examining the physical and sensual qualities of the sounds. Normally it is difficult to shut sounds out, and attempts to block the ears mute rather than extinguish sounds completely. Furthermore, in an enclosed space sounds are omnidirectional, so that turning the head does not appreciably diminish intensity or quality. Hearing is critically different from sight in these two respects; closing the eyes or turning the head efficiently blocks or changes sights.

It is, perhaps, these properties of hearing that associate it in English and other languages with notions of obedience. As Julian Jaynes notes (1976:97) “obey” comes from a composite Latin verb oboedire, which literally translated means “to hear facing.” An etymological digression reveals a possible root connexion between hearing and aesthetics. The Greek verb aisthanomai (to perceive), which gives rise to the adjective aisthetikos, may derive from the verb aio (to hear). Without question the Greeks understood hearing to be a deeply influential sense, as Plato’s railings in Republic against certain kinds of music, drama, and spoken poetry attest. Children, he argues, obey the sounds of aesthetic forms too willingly and without sufficient critical judgment.

Sounds are richly layered in several ways. In the church service they are often composites of many voices—human and instrumental—and they can have both musical and linguistic aspects. Communal singing produces unity out of diversity. Bass and soprano, loud and soft, coarse and mellifluous, all blend to form a whole that can be heard and appreciated as an integral unit. All participants can attend to that unity, or to their own individual contributions, through direct feedback, creating an alternating sense of whole and self.

In sum, the sounds in the church service are strictly controlled, they call for obedience, and they create unity out of diversity. All of these aspects of the sounds of the service are basic to a cultural understanding of religious behavior in Tidewater: religion involves control and obedience; it requires unity. But this analysis comes from a direct understanding of the physical and sensual nature of sounds, not from a symbolic analysis. Control, obedience, and unity are physical and sensual aspects of the sounds themselves rather than what they refer to or signify.

Even aspects of the music which have referential or symbolic meaning do not signify in an unambiguous way. Much of the music has words sung to it and, as already noted, the semantic import of these words is often related to expected action. But the curious thing about sung words is that they can be, and frequently are, treated disinter-
estedly, that is, they can be sung or heard without conscious attention to what they would mean if spoken in a nonmusical or nonaesthetic context. This phenomenon is well attested in the ethnomusicological literature (see, for example, Merriam 1964:187–208, Tracey 1954, and Devereux and LaBarre 1961), and most Westerners know the experience of suddenly attending to the words of a favorite song, seemingly hearing them as words with literal meanings for the first time. The music director in Tidewater occasionally asked the choir to “listen to the words” of the special music to assist in interpretation, the admonition indicating that otherwise they might not listen. Sung words, therefore, give the singer and listener a choice as to how to attend to them: cognitively or affectively.

This ambiguous quality of sung words is complemented by the often subtle relationships between words and music. Take, for example, the classic hymn “All People That on Earth Do Dwell” (# 13). Here words denoting the call to be blissfully content and to sing cheerfully—“Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice” and “Come ye before Him and rejoice”—are paired with a slow, heavy tune. Or consider the old favorite “We’re Marching to Zion” (# 308), which, despite its constant allusions to marching, is not a march. Such contrasts allow singer and listener some latitude in attention and interpretation: giving concern to one or other aspect, shifting between the two, or taking in the complex whole at once.

Sung words also have poetic form by themselves, so that they may be viewed affectively or cognitively irrespective of the music. This component of the words can be subsumed under musical analysis in part, because many poetic qualities, such as meter, pace, and tone, have analogues in the music. For example, most of the church music is syllabic, meaning that each syllable in the text has its own note in the music. Therefore, the meter of the music is necessarily the meter of the words. But many qualities, such as rhyme, word order, and diction, do not rely on the music. These poetic aspects of the words are distinguishable from, and may contrast with, the literal meanings.

The church service at Tidewater depends very heavily on the aesthetic qualities of sounds. These sounds have various layers of complexity which complement the values inherent in the service. The layers also interact with one another to produce composite, textured wholes. But certain aesthetic forms are deliberately excluded, and to understand why this is so it is necessary to examine the sensual and physical qualities of these forms and their role in Tidewater social life.

The conspicuous absence of food and taste at most church services
seems to me of particular importance, because food and taste are of overwhelming significance in other church activities and in all arenas of social life in Tidewater. Food occupies a central role in all spheres of everyday life. Men produce food at work from farming and fishing, at home in kitchen gardens, and in leisure hours through sport fishing and hunting. Women process and redistribute food in networks that reinforce ties of kinship and neighborliness, and the role of family cook is of special social significance. The church mobilizes all of its active members to prepare and participate in feasts that are designed to enhance ties of fellowship as well as make money. Food is exchanged and shared in daily acts of friendship and cooperation. These facts might suggest that food should occupy a key position in a church whose purpose is, among other things, to foster unity, sharing, and harmony. Yet contrary to these expectations, food plays no role in regular worship.

The sensual and physical qualities of food help explain why under some circumstances it may foster unity whereas under others it is forbidden. The foods of Tidewater run the gamut from dishes that contain many ingredients all boiled and mashed together to those in which components are kept strictly separate. For compactness of analysis I compare two meals prepared as part of church fund-raising events. These descriptions of food and cooking apply to home cooking as well and should not be thought of under a separate (nonexistent) rubric “church” cooking.

Brunswick stew contains meats and vegetables simmered to a disintegrated pap. Each bowlful, spoonful, or mouthful contains particles from all the original ingredients, and however the whole is divided, the parts all taste the same. The texture and temperature are homogeneous. Because of this sensual uniformity, eating the stew quickly leads to taste fatigue, which further reinforces the sameness of each bite. By contrast, the chicken supper served by the church consists of discrete units that have individual sensual qualities. The basic meal of fried chicken, boiled green beans, potato salad, and cornbread is almost a microcosm of Tidewater cooking styles. The three basic cooking methods and media—frying/oil (chicken), baking/air (cornbread), and boiling/water (beans)—are used. The textures include crisp, crumbly, chewy, and soft. The temperatures range from chicken straight from the fat, almost too hot to touch, to potato salad that has been refrigerated. The chicken coating is spicy, the beans are salty, the cornbread is sweet, and the potato salad is milky bland. Each plateful is composed of different quantities and types of components.
Each diner can make choices based on personal tastes: breast or leg meat, corner or middle piece of cornbread, and more or less of each of the vegetables. These components can be eaten in any order or combination, producing a range of individual taste sensations that prevent sensory fatigue and so highlight the variety in the meal.

The differences in sensual and physical qualities of these two meals, representative of extremes on a continuum, result from radically different styles of cooking and create different affective states. The preparation of fried chicken, cornbread, and potato salad is specialized and deeply personal. Each cook has her own special recipes, handed down from her mother, but to which she has added her own special touch. The complexities of frying chicken serve to illustrate the point. Every ingredient and action is considered crucial to the success of the final product. Do you soak the chicken before you flour it? Do you bread or batter it? What spices do you add to the coating? Do you shallow or deep fry? What fat do you use? What temperature do you fry at? How long do you fry? These and many other variables lead to end-products that are widely different and immediately recognizable as "Libby's chicken" or "Elsie's chicken." Each cook pays scrupulous attention to the proceedings because a false move at any stage can ruin the enterprise. One spice missing or a minute too long in the fryer often spells disaster.

Brunswick stew has no such critical variables. The ingredients can vary in type and quantity, and the cooking time and method are extremely flexible. There is no formal recipe, and only the most general rules of thumb apply. Yet no matter how freely a cook plays with the process, the end-product turns out just about the same every time. An hour more or less cooking or a quart more or less corn does not appreciably alter the final taste. Therefore one cook's stew is the same as another's, and this year's stew is the same as last year's.

What is intriguing is that both kinds of meals, seemingly at opposite ends of the culinary spectrum, have pride of place in the community. Both are the talk of the town for weeks before and after the church events at which they are served. From the structuralist's perspective this observation might appear odd. Lévi-Strauss's analysis of cooking methods (1965), for example, seems scarcely able to accommodate such facts. His distinction between cooking methods and what they represent is too general to apply to Tidewater cooking practices. For example, he classifies roasting as a wasteful process because meat juices are lost and boiling as economical because all of the juices are retained. Roasting is, therefore, aristocratic, prodigal, and suitable for
elaborate entertaining, whereas boiling is plebeian, thrifty, and suitable for humble family meals. But the people of Tidewater relish both boiled Brunswick stew and roast Thanksgiving turkey as festival dishes.

The idea of wasteful versus conservative cooking styles can be preserved, but not by classifying methods generally under one or the other rubric. Rather, I am inclined to believe that when women cook they tend to conserve, but men are wasteful. Men cook outside, and their commonest method is charcoal grilling. In this process the fat from the meat is rendered by the heat and falls on the hot coals to be converted to aromatic smoke that wafts away. As the preference in Tidewater is for very well-done grilled foods, a substantial amount of fat and juices escapes in this manner. And because it is customary to eat indoors even when the cooking is done outside, diners cannot even minimally appreciate the vagrant aromas of cooking. Women, on the other hand, conserve the rendered fat and cooking juices from direct dry-heat cooking methods. A drip pan collects the juices from roasting or broiling, and these are turned into gravies to be served with the meat. The smells of cooking that escape from the oven pervade the kitchen, where diners can savor them before sitting down to eat. Excess fats are stored in dripping cans for later use in gravies, bastes, or thickening roux. Equally, long slow boiling in the kitchen conserves juices and smells, with the latter being immortalized through slow incorporation into the fabric of the room, giving it a permanent seasoning.

Just as the church building controls sound by containing it and reflecting it back inward, so kitchens contain and magnify smells. The humidity, warmth, and stillness of the atmosphere intensify olfactory sensations. Because smells, like sound, are carried through air they can mix and harmonize into a complex whole, so that the individual components of a meal blend to form new aromas. Each night people entering the kitchen are greeted with a different aroma, even though certain elements, such as the smell of boiled greens, are constantly present.

Although intrinsically less controllable than sounds, the smells of the evening meal indicate the passage of time and change over time in controlled ways. An evening meal is prepared in stages so that items which take different lengths of time to cook will all be ready at the same moment. The skill to work in efficient manner so that, say, fried fish, boiled greens, boiled potatoes, corn dumplings, and hushpuppies are all hot and ready to be eaten at the same time marks the experi-
enced cook. As each element in the meal begins to cook the complexity and intensity of the total aroma grows. When the meal is served up the general aroma starts to diminish because the sources of heat and humidity are eliminated. The unified aroma of cooking is replaced with the specific smells of individual items as they are passed around the table and sampled. At the end of the meal the smell of coffee marks a terminus and revives fatigued olfactory sensors with its sharp tang.

Such control of aromas is absent when men prepare the Brunswick stew for the church, because the cooking takes place outside. Certainly the slow simmering of the stew is a more conserving method than the customary outdoor grilling, but the slow buildup of complex aromas is completely absent and cannot serve to frame the meal. Moreover, there are surprisingly wasteful aspects in the cooking process. For a start the outdoor cooking causes any smells to disperse quickly. Also, the stew takes two days to cook in distinct stages, so the smells of one phase cannot blend with those of another. Even when the pot is full of finished stew and bubbling gently one has to lean over the top to catch the full deep scent, as some people do with evident satisfaction; the aroma does not pervade the outdoor space. As a final indication of the wastefulness of this cooking method in the hands of men, in the year I observed the process, on the first day when the men had finished stewing up the meats they dipped them out of the cauldron in order to separate out the bones and threw the cooking liquid away. When made at home by women this “pot liquor” forms the liquid base for the stew. (As an aside, it should be clear by this point that the relationship between inside and control and outside and lack of control is not simply a useful analytic tool that makes sense of the data. It is rooted in the sensual and physical nature of the aesthetic forms under discussion. Sounds and smells can be better manipulated when they are enclosed.)

Rather than look at cooking methods like a structuralist, I prefer to look to the sensual and physical qualities of specific dishes for an understanding of affective states associated with them. For example, in my experience in Tidewater such concoctions as Brunswick stew induce feelings of nostalgia, warmth, and unity among participants, and I believe that the sensual qualities of the stew are responsible for these feelings. Because the stew has a complex but homogeneous taste and texture, all diners of necessity share a basic common taste experience. (There is a potential philosophical problem here concerning the comparability of subjective states, but in practice it does not apply
because it is clear that the people of Tidewater see the fundamental experience of taste as broadly similar from person to person. The discussion of good food, particularly that concerning good fish in Chapter 4, establishes this belief.) Each mouthful a person eats is the same as the next mouthful, the same as each mouthful for other people at the table, the same as mouthfuls eaten in previous years, and so on. A sensual, subjective link is created between all those present at the meal and between all those who took part in similar meals in earlier years. Thus the physical and sensual link between stew eaters is responsible for the feelings of nostalgia and unity.

This thesis is strengthened by examination of foods that are like and unlike Brunswick stew in their physical qualities. Haslet stew, which is a little less homogeneous than Brunswick stew but still basically all mushed together, evokes nostalgia and sentiments of fellowship. This comparison might lead one to believe that all old-fashioned foods evoke nostalgia, but the notion cannot be true except in a very general way, because fried chicken is considered a traditional dish yet it does not evoke the same sentiments. Fried chicken is highly variable, and the way a meal including it is composed is subject to individual tastes. It therefore creates individual subjective states and associations. Eating it is likely to elicit critical discussion and commentary about individual tastes, such as “This is better than the batch you made last week” or “What did you think of Mabel Jean’s chicken?” or simply, “That was the best chicken I ever tasted.” Similar discussions are held over the Thanksgiving turkey, so that even when the occasion or context might predispose diners toward nostalgia and fellowship, the food prompts critical discussion instead.

The sensual and physical qualities of fried chicken and Brunswick stew are consonant with the overall ethos of the church activities of which each is the centerpiece. The chicken supper takes place in spring, before the revival, and one of its principal functions is to attract new members to the church. In line with this function prospective members are encouraged to contribute and participate, and considerable effort is made to reach all members of the community. For example, a large contingent of volunteers take prepared dinners to households throughout the town. The October festival at which the Brunswick stew is served is a fall event, after the revival, and the weekend of the proceedings is designated as the church’s homecoming. Contributions and help come from church members, and the occasion draws people to it. There is no delivery service.

The chicken supper, then, has an air of individuality about it, with
prospective and old members getting to know one another. Matched with this ethos is the individual nature of the contributions: cornbread, potato salad, and cakes are made to individual recipes so that each can be identified as to its maker. Some women specifically ask to try “Janet’s chocolate layer cake” or “Jeanette’s cornbread.” In this gently probing atmosphere critical tastes can be compared to see whether newcomers and old members coincide in expectations. Participation in the chicken supper involves critical discussion and appraisal.

By the fall of the year prospective members have either become actively involved in church affairs or quietly dropped away. All present at the October sale are committed to the church or are old members and kin returning to visit from afar. It is a time for remembering old associations, strengthening fellowship, and drawing the church body together. To match this ethos the contributions to the stew are all tumbled in the pot together so that no individual item stands out or can be recognized. The warm, nostalgic affects produced by the meal are undisturbed by critical analysis. There is nothing to analyze: Brunswick stew is Brunswick stew.

Now we can contrast the aesthetic forms in two types of church activity, fund raising and worship service, and draw some conclusions about the roles of each. Smells and tastes are deliberately excluded from the worship service, but at fund-raising events they are star attractions. It is perfectly acceptable to draw new people to the church through the enticements of a pleasant meal, and members are unselfconsciously open about this motive, but once these people are involved the aesthetic foundations shift from taste to sound. An understanding of this shift lays bare much that is fundamental in Tidewater aesthetic values.

In simple terms a root difference exists between the affective and cognitive potential of sounds on the one hand and tastes and smells on the other. Sound is the basic channel of language and, as such, has the potential for all manner of symbolic, referential, and descriptive communication in addition to the affective states it may engender. Smells and tastes do not have such a split personality because their capacity to convey referential and descriptive meanings is extremely limited. What is more, the role of food is simple and direct: it satisfies a basic bodily need. Any elaboration of food beyond its status as human fuel is necessarily aesthetic and affecting. This basic contrast is exploited by church members in Tidewater.

It does not compromise basic religious values to invite nonmembers
to partake of a pleasurable meal as the first step in integrating them into the church, but it would if the same meal were offered to those who come forward to be baptized. In the first case the offer is in line with the conventional value placed on food in all spheres of social activity. Food and fellowship are natural companions in Tidewater. Invitation to the family table is a normal, everyday sign of welcome and friendship. Even though the food can cause critical discussion bearing on aesthetic tastes, the food itself does not have in addition referential or descriptive qualities that require assent or discussion on the part of diners. Using food as an enticement beyond initial involvement in the church would create complications because of the meaning of the call to baptism.

The act of coming forward to be baptized is not simply an expression of willingness to join the church community; it is an act of faith stemming from a spiritual conversion. Conversion is a complicated, mysterious, subjective affair. Even so, the church body must endorse each conversion by a vote to accept the new convert as a full member of the church. To do so in good conscience each member must be sure the person who has come forward has had a genuine conversion experience. Generally the members are not given to questioning the validity of an individual's conversion experience, and such unquestioning faith is made possible by the context in which the conversion appears to take place. That is, it takes place following a direct appeal to do so which invokes linguistic and symbolic references to Baptist doctrine. It explicitly does not take place during a meal or when the senses of taste and smell are being stimulated.

Baptist doctrine, as interpreted by the preacher and Sunday school teachers of Tidewater, draws a basic distinction between the material and spiritual worlds. Favorite and often quoted biblical passages make it evident that this split locates concern about food squarely on the material side and conversion on the spiritual side. Some pertinent quotations include sections from the temptation of Jesus by the devil to turn stones into bread (Matthew 4:1–4, Luke 4:1–4), the miraculous feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:30–44, Matthew 14:13–21, and Luke 9:10–17), Elijah at the brook (1 Kings 17), and sayings on care for the morrow (Matthew 6:25–33 and Luke 12:22–31). All of these passages assert that food satisfies the body and should not be a concern; God will provide enough for survival, as he does for the animals. What matters is the state of one's spiritual being.

Food, being material, feeds the material body, but sounds, being nonmaterial, feed the nonmaterial spirit. Sounds can feed the soul
because they can be used to express spiritual concepts through a variety of linguistic modes, such as biblical readings, sermons, the words of hymns, and so on. But the crux of the matter is that plain language alone is insufficient to provoke spiritual conversion. Appeals to logic and cognition are of limited utility because some fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine are paradoxical—death is not death, God is one and three at the same time, Jesus was fully man and fully God. These are simple mysteries, and affirmation of them is an act of faith that arises as a consequence of conversion.

A direct appeal to affect might be a solution, but it carries problems too. First, men are wary of aesthetic forms that are openly and elaborately affecting. Second, an appeal to affect may be a moving experience, but without some information on what to do as a result it remains inchoate or unchanneled. Third, spiritual conversion as understood by Tidewater Baptists is not a monolithically affective experience. It has a rational component, as evidenced by the youths at the revival who consulted with parents and preacher before coming forward.

The various ambiguities and complexities of the sounds of the service resolve these dilemmas neatly. They contain symbolic, linguistic, cognitive aspects as well as aesthetic, affecting ones, so that they provide both direct information as a context for action and an affective foundation for it. Both jostle for attention so that neither has primacy, lest one or other aspect become dominant and disturb the sensibilities of the congregation. When the music of the service became too strongly affecting under an overzealous preacher, it had to be curbed. This dual aspect of the sounds of the service also gives participants a choice as to what they focus on or appear to be focusing on. The men, for example, need not appear to be concerned with aesthetic elaboration, and their failure to participate in the singing of hymns reinforces this appearance.

Some of the complexities of the sounds of the service help explain or exemplify the mysteries of Christian doctrine. Contradictory beliefs, such as “death is not death,” may seem illogical when cast as simple cognitive statements, but nothing is apparently troublesome about singing a hymn such as “All People That on Earth Do Dwell” (# 13), which is solemn and joyous at the same time. In this case the musical and linguistic aspects of the hymn counterpoise. The three-in-one aspects of the Trinity can be interpreted by analogy with choral singing, where many voices create a unified sound. The whole is simultaneously both many and one.
Thus the setting for spiritual conversion is deliberately ambiguous, and the ambiguity exists because certain aesthetic forms are used and others are excluded. With both affect and cognition stimulated in a balanced manner, participants are free to construe their experiences in different ways. Those like the men, whose public posture only barely tolerates aesthetic experiences but whose private lives involve complex aesthetic forms such as Masonic ritual and decoy making, can appear to be stimulated by the simple message of the service while being privately moved by its affective qualities. Others, like many of the women, can take pleasure in creating and participating in aesthetic forms largely for their own sake. Were aesthetic forms that relied on taste to be employed, they would severely limit these ambiguities and the ranges of behavior they tolerate.

It is fitting to conclude with a brief discussion of the one church service where taste has a role: Holy Communion. In crucial ways the acts of this sacrament are like and unlike regular eating, and again the ambiguities involved are important if we are to understand the event. Eating and drinking routinely satiate hunger and thirst, but at communion the portions are so tiny that such considerations are virtually eliminated. Nonetheless, the morsels partaken of are real food—bread and juice bought from the store like regular groceries—with no indications beyond size of portion that they differ from items eaten at any meal. They are simultaneously food and not food.

The act of eating the sacramental foods is highly controlled and of particular importance. The bread and “wine” are distributed to all members, and all eat at precisely the same moment. The taste experience, which is minimal and in consequence transitory, is momentarily shared by all present. The taste experience is also the same as in past communions. In some ways the experience resembles eating Brunswick stew in that the affective feelings of warmth and unity derive from the uniformity of taste experiences between people past and present. But the level of control of the two taste experiences is diametrically opposite, as is to be expected from the different contexts. Sensually, then, communion links the affective qualities of worship services with those of communal meals sponsored by the church, unifying the aesthetic experiences of the church community.

This extended analysis of the aesthetics of the church barely scratches the surface of a complex world, but it sets an agenda for continued interpretation. Aesthetic analysis, it is clear, is a pursuit with its own framework, terms, and questions distinct from other
established concerns in anthropology such as symbolic structures, kinship systems, economic models, and the like. But it should also be evident that aesthetic forms dynamically interact with these other concerns as well as with one another, so that they can no longer be relegated to secondary status or subsumed under other branches of inquiry. The aesthetic forms of everyday life are central to all human experience; their study should be central to any discipline with pretensions to understand our shared condition.