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THE OTTERBEIN MISCELLANY

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH IN THE
BOOK OF QOHELETH AND ALBERT CAMUS',
MYTH OF SISYPHUS

Paul L. Redditt

HISTORY AS DRAMATIC REINFORCEMENT:
VOLTAIRE'S USE OF HISTORY IN FOUR TRAGEDIES
SET IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Sylvia Vance

TO DWELL:
NOTES AND REFLECTIONS UPON A TRIP TO ITALY

Earl Hassenpflug

FOREWORD

The *Otterbein Miscellany* is published once or twice a year as an outlet for faculty writing on a wide variety of topics. The college underwrites this publication in the belief that it will help maintain a genuine community of scholars. Papers are accepted, therefore, on the basis of their interest to the whole academic community rather than to members of a particular discipline. Editorial responsibility rests with a committee of the faculty.

Contributions are considered from the Otterbein College faculty and administration, active and emeritus — others on invitation only.

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OCCASIONS

I once knew an eminent teacher and author who insisted that he would never have written anything if it were not for "occasions." Writing, he asserted (paraphrasing Dr. Johnson), is an arduous task, and nobody but a "blockhead" would write if he were not reasonably certain of an audience.

A main function of *The Otterbein Miscellany* is to afford an *occasion* by which writers in the Otterbein community might attain an audience. Often writings that appear in this journal find their way into other publications, but the editors and editorial board preen themselves on the knowledge that those writings first appeared here.

Of the selections which comprise this edition of the *Miscellany*, two deal with sabbatical experiences, two deal with literature, and one deals with local history. Several of the selections are poems. This edition marks the beginning of the second decade of publication of the *Miscellany*. And we wish to thank all those persons in the past who have made this *occasion* a success: editors (especially Professors John Ramsey, Robert Price, Sylvia Vance), financial-supporters, proof-readers, type-setters and printers (especially Mrs. Margie Shaw and Mr. Forest Moreland).

The Editor

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**TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF FAITH IN THE BOOK OF
QOHELETH AND ALBERT CAMUS', *MYTH OF SISYPHUS***

There is a story – probably apocryphal – that Alfred Lord Tennyson was once asked: what is the most significant question in the world? To which he replied after some thought: “Is the universe friendly toward me?” This is simply a different way of asking the question: can I bear to live; do I dare to live? It is also the question which agitates Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes) in the Old Testament and the modern Algerian Albert Camus. Qoheleth was a professional educator noted for his wisdom. He plays the role of the gadfly, asking stinging questions of his disciples, challenging their assumptions and ill-conceived theories and theologies. Basing his teachings upon his one assumption – the omnipotence of God – and his observations of the world, he asks a series of questions. Why work, he wants to know, since the chores will just be repeated tomorrow and generation after generation (1:3-4)? Why look or listen since we cannot see or hear enough to be satisfied (1:8)? Why train in wisdom since we will never know all we need to know (1:13)? Why laugh when we will merely turn sad again (2:1)? Why earn money, when we will just want more (5:10), or lose it (5:13-17), or someone else will spend it (2:18, 21; 6:1-6)? Indeed, why live at all, since we will all die sooner or later (3:16-21, 9:2-6 and especially 4:1-3)? By the same token, Camus wants to inquire whether he could stand to live in a world which had no meaning in and of itself to offer him. The greatness of these men lies in their courage to ask such questions and the profundity of their probe for answers. These questions, apparently negative in import, actually function to drive both men to look intently for the significance of life. Whether their answers are right or wrong is also important, but of less importance than the facing of the questions.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the questions asked by Qoheleth and Camus and to assess briefly their answers. The paper is an exposition of the following statement: both Qoheleth and Camus build similar philosophies of life based on an unwaveringly critical investigation of the world and man's place in it, resulting as well in a wager affirming the value of an individual's life.

An Analysis of the Book of Qoheleth

R. B. Y. Scott calls Qoheleth the strangest book in the Bible because instead of articulating a religion of faith, hope, and obedience, the book expresses its author's mood of disillusionment and resignation. "The author is a rationalist, an agnostic, a skeptic, a pessimist, and a fatalist (the terms are not used pejoratively). In most respects his views run counter to those of his religious fellow Jews."¹ Scott contends that Qoheleth along with Job and the words of Agur represents an unorthodox wing more in opposition to than dialogue with the conservative wise represented in the Bible by Proverbs.² Gerhard von Rad appears to go even further. The difference between Proverbs and Qoheleth are for him so striking that he maintains: "Qoheleth is turning against not only outgrowths of traditional teaching but the whole undertaking."³ These statements are representative of scholarly opinion, which often goes on to dismiss Qoheleth as an aberration on biblical faith. While not wishing to minimize the differences between the "conservative" and "radical" poles of the wisdom movement in Israel, I do not accept the contentions of either Scott or von Rad. Rather, I hope to show that Qoheleth evidences considerable harmony with the wise before him, that some of his so-called "skepticism" is shared by the rest of the Old Testament, and that in his most radical positions he is merely providing a realistic corrective to certain assumptions of the more conservative wing of the wisdom movement. I will do this first by studying the nature of Qoheleth's relationship to the wisdom tradition, and, second, by summarizing his basic theology. Where possible I will use the insights of Scott and von Rad themselves to build my case against them. By deliberately raising the issue of Qoheleth's skepticism, I hope to build a platform for viewing him as a man of faith.

That Qoheleth deliberately positions himself in dialogue with the developing wisdom tradition is to me quite clear from the exegesis of Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg and Robert Gordis. The former points to no less than a dozen instances⁴ in which Qoheleth puts forth a generally accepted view and then follows with his own viewpoint in contrast. Robert Gordis has argued cogently that Qoheleth frequently quotes and/or composes proverbs, and Gordis has classified the ways Qoheleth uses these proverbs.⁵ (1) Qoheleth approvingly cites proverbs to buttress an argument in 7:3, 10:18, and 11:1.⁶ Sometimes he even cites a proverb *in toto*, while only a part of it serves his purpose: 5:2-3 and 11:3-4.

Obviously Qoheleth is employing traditional material in such cases. In addition, Qoheleth preserves without comment whole collections of proverbs (10:2-4, 8-20; 11:1-6), which, though possibly written by Qoheleth, would be perfectly in place in the book of Proverbs. (2) Qoheleth also quotes proverbs, only to give them an ironic twist.⁷ (3) Qoheleth, like the book of Proverbs before him (cf. Proverbs 26:4-5), uses opposing proverbs back to back, the second contravening the first (Ecclesiastes 4:5, 6; 9:16, 18). The question to ask now is clear: what is the nature of Qoheleth's dialogue with his tradition? Commenting on Qoheleth's technique of citing and composing proverbs, Gordis draws a conclusion that expresses the position of this section of the paper.

His speculations on life did not lead him to abandon his interest in the mundane concerns of the lower Wisdom; he merely went beyond them. As he continued to teach the practical Wisdom to his pupils, he doubtless contributed to its literature, most of which was couched in short, pithy maxims of a realistic turn. Hence, maxims similar in both form and spirit to those in the Book of Proverbs are common in Qoheleth. These are not interpolations by more conventional readers, as had been assumed. They belong...to the author's method of keeping connection with the past while leaving it behind.⁸

That is, Qoheleth neither accepts his tradition blindly nor rejects it completely, but tests it against his own experience, employs it, modifies it, and sometimes contradicts it. I shall attempt to demonstrate this dialogical, even dialectical, relationship between Qoheleth and the older wisdom tradition by assessing further the teaching of Qoheleth in comparison with Proverbs and in a few instances other parts of the Old Testament.

On the one hand Qoheleth accepts a number of wisdom tenets. Of the first of these tenets Scott writes about Israel's wise men in general:

The wise men...have almost nothing to say about institutional religion, or about this special relationship of Yahweh and Israel, past or present. They do not address Israel as such, at all. They make no direct appeal to the authority of a revealed religion, though their occasional exhortations to piety toward Yahweh (e.g. Prov. XVI) presuppose an accepted belief. They speak to and about men primarily as individuals. The authority to which they chiefly appeal is the disciplined intelligence and moral experience of good men.⁹

Even though Qoheleth shows little or no concern with special revelation and makes no mention of Israel's special history, by these very omissions he stands firmly within the wisdom tradition. When he does turn to the question of behavior, his concern moves beyond Torah in the sense of right and wrong to the questions of whether moral righteousness (1) is possible (7:20), and (2) guarantees financial success (7:15-18, 8:10-15).

Moreover, the concept of Heilsgeschichte is replaced in Qoheleth's thought with a concern for the appropriate time to do things. Von Rad admits that this subject is "from the very beginning in the center of ancient Near Eastern wisdom"¹⁰ and that Qoheleth is in agreement with these ideas in the didactic poem of 3:1-8.¹¹ But, von Rad asks, of what value is that knowledge to the wise man if he cannot discern for himself the underlying order which makes the most divergent modes of behavior appropriate in their own time. For von Rad, 3:9-15 represents a clear-cut example of the abandonment of the wisdom endeavor by Qoheleth, an example of his pitching his camp "at the farthest frontier of Jahwism."¹² Yet the book of Proverbs reads in two places:

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit (Prov. 16:2);

A man's steps are ordered by the Lord;
how then can man understand his way (Prov. 20:24)?

Other proverbs which indicate either the difficulty in finding wisdom or God's human actions could be quoted, but von Rad's own comments on these two texts will serve my purpose.

These two sentences do not speak of something experienced or even evident, but of something unknown, that is of something which escapes human calculation. In this way the teachers take a man out of the security of his perceptions and values.... These are not, of course, general dogmas with which the wise men confront human stubbornness. On the contrary, behind these warnings there lie, once again, specific experiences which, although against the usual run, may not for all that be suppressed. Nor did they simply stand as exceptions on the perimeter; it was not a question of isolated crossshots with which one had to cope as best one could. These unknown factors could be encountered at any time or in any place in life...¹⁴

That is, according to von Rad himself, traditional wisdom recognized its own limits. In my judgment Qoheleth merely makes a

virtue of the necessity of this recognition. He says:

For in much wisdom is much vexation and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow (1:18).

He seems to be saying that the price tag of wisdom is the death of naiveté and the assumption of a human task utterly incapable of completion. To say, though, that wisdom has its price and its limits is not to mention what Qoheleth has to say about those limits. In 3:10-11 he sets them out.

I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Qoheleth is saying that man participates in the times God has ordained for the world, yet he transcends the world. Man can trace the duration¹⁵ of the world, but cannot uncover the limits of God's work. The wise man can at most discern that there are underlying patterns of the universe established by God, but cannot comprehend, cannot organize them for himself into a coherent whole. Nevertheless, man can be sure that the universe is not capricious, even if he cannot master all its rhythms. Similarly, in 8:16-17, Qoheleth seems to say that man can observe God at work, but that very observation gives birth to the recognition that something in turn transcends man.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night one's eyes see sleep; then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out; even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

The awareness of God's transcendence by no means turns Qoheleth into a theological skeptic or drives him to despair. The knowledge that man uncovers about God can never satisfy man; it always leaves him awed and wanting to know more. Qoheleth, then, ever remains open to the fact that he will never know all about God. This insight is at the heart of biblical faith. One can only be amazed when any twentieth century theologian interprets this kind of sensitivity to the problem of theology as antithetical to Old Testament Yahwism.

From the above, it seems safe to say that Qoheleth stands

firmly in the wisdom tradition when he assumes rather than proclaims the divine commandments and shows more interest in "times" than in *Heilsgeschichte*. In addition, he sees some advantage to wisdom despite its limits; the advantage, though, does not necessarily come in the form of fame, fortune, and long life. Many proverbs¹⁶ found in Ecclesiastes affirm the practical value of wisdom. Qoheleth says, for example, in 9:16, 18:

...wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heeded....Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

More problematic, however, is 2:13-17.

Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness, and yet I perceived that one fate comes to all of them. Then I said to myself, "What befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity. For of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise man dies just like the fool! So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and striving after wind.

This text stands in the midst of a chapter which opens with the resolve to make a test of pleasure and closes with the conclusion that to eat and drink and follow one's vocation is to employ God's gifts to man which make him happy, with the reservations that man and his deeds are ephemeral, the pursuit of those deeds for their own sake is unfulfilling, and the heir of one's fortune might be an incompetent fool. The performance of deeds for the purpose of making one happy is doomed to frustration and leads to bitterness. It is in this connection that verses 12-17 were composed.

In this text Qoheleth affirms the comparative value of wisdom over folly. But his real question is whether wisdom will make him *happy*. His answer to that is forthright. No, the thirst for wisdom is unquenchable and drives one to uncover uncomfortable truths, such as the common mortality of all men, wise and foolish. On the other hand, wisdom enables him to learn what does make him happy, the living of life for its own sake — eating, drinking, toiling — and prevents his being so attached to these ephemeral qualities that he is crushed by their loss. Wisdom teaches him that true happiness is never found except as a by-product of

living one's life to the fullest. Since happiness is a by-product, Qoheleth concludes that it too comes from the same God who gives man his abilities and role in the world.

Qoheleth shares at least one more tenet with other wisdom teachers, a tenet which does not necessitate the conclusion that Qoheleth is a skeptic.¹⁷ Qoheleth has no hope for an individual resurrection.

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath [ruach], and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit [ruach] of man goes upward and the spirit [ruach] of the beast goes down to earth? So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, for that is his lot; who can bring him to see what will be after him. (3:19-22, compare also 6:4, 9:1-6)

But in his this-worldly emphasis, Qoheleth *shares* the opinion of his "religious fellow Jews." Only in Daniel 12:2 and perhaps Isaiah 26:19 does the Old Testament proclaim an individual resurrection.¹⁸ Qoheleth is no more skeptical at this point than almost any other figure in the Old Testament.

If on the one hand Qoheleth accepts a number of wisdom tenets, there is no doubt on the other hand that he rejects certain assumptions in the tradition. Particularly does he reject the concept of retribution expressed by one line of traditional teachers that wisdom and righteousness always gain their records.¹⁹

The fear of the Lord prolongs life,
but the years of the wicked fall short.
(Prov. 10:27, see also 15:24, 16:22, 19:8)

Be assured, an evil man will not go unpunished,
but those who are righteous will be delivered.
(Prov. 11:21; see also 11:8, 12:21, 13:21, 14:11)

Qoheleth by contrast is as skeptical as Job of individual retribution. In one verse he summarizes his observations.

There is a vanity which takes place on earth, that there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. (8:14, see also among other verses 1:3, 7:15-18, 8:10-13).

The concept of retribution in Israel has an uncertain history, the barest outlines of which can be sketched here. It apparently grew up from the conviction in the earliest wisdom circles of various types that there is an underlying justice in the world. Upon reflection, the wise recognized that certain kinds of conduct are destructive to society and family; hence the *general* conclusion was established that proper, orderly conduct issued in good fortune for a society and its subgroups and that disorderly conduct was evil, destructive, and foolish. As long as Israel thought in terms of collectives rather than interpreting events with regard to individuals, the concept of retribution seemed viable. But in time the principle was rigorously applied to individuals,²⁰ and certain of the Proverbs and the comforters of Job show how insistent could be the defenders of this application. Qoheleth, however, came to realize²¹ that the assumption of individual retribution is fallacious because it does not take into account all the variables.

Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the man of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man does not know his time. Like fish which are taken in an evil net, and like birds which are caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them. (9:11-12).

Qoheleth realized that misfortune, untimely death, and a failure to discern the times properly (to whatever limited extent Qoheleth thought discerning the times was possible) all negate the work of the most righteous and wise. Even so Qoheleth nowhere counsels unethical conduct or the rejection of life.

I find Qoheleth, then, not the pessimist of the Old Testament, but a sober critic of his own developing wisdom tradition within the larger context of Old Testament Yahwism. It appears to have been his objective to establish wisdom on a more solid experiential basis than was some of the material he inherited. With this in mind, one can appreciate more fully the affirmations Qoheleth did make.

Hertzberg has summarized Qoheleth's theology in three basic affirmations.²² The first is the uniqueness (*Ausschliesslichkeit*, exclusivity) of God. Hertzberg appears to mean by this term God's transcendence over his world and his determination of the structures and events of the world. "From birth to death, through

every detail of existence, everything is determined by God."²³ This is something of an overstatement. Qoheleth does not hold to an absolute determinism. He seems to say in 6:10 only that man's limits are set by one stronger than he.

Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.

This need not, I think, rob man of his decision-making ability or his responsibility for his decisions; rather, Qoheleth only says that man is born into a world he did not determine. In 9:1 he tells us that the deeds of the wise and the righteous are in the hands of God. That is, their final resolution rests with God. None of us can predict or control the outcome of our deeds. Qoheleth is convinced of two things: (1) God sets the limits of man (such as his span of life and abilities) and the conditions within which he works, and (2) men acting for even the best of reasons may in ignorance do the right thing at the wrong time with disastrous results.²⁴

The second fundamental of Qoheleth's theology is the vanity of everything earthly (*Eitelkeit alles Irdischen*). The book opens and closes on the same note:

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity! (1:2, 12:8)

The idea that all is vanity appears like a refrain throughout the whole book.²⁵ The Hebrew term employed is *habel*, which literally means vapor or breath. The translation "vanity" was employed already by Luther as a derived meaning. Perhaps we would do better to translate it "transient" or "ephemeral." In any case, the emphasis in Qoheleth is on the idea of the qualified nature of all things earthly over against the absolute nature of their creator. Scott, then, is simply wrong to call Qoheleth a skeptic or an agnostic. Hertzberg correctly writes: "For him God is no problem, neither in his essence nor in his activities, but the single incontrovertible and incontroverted fact."²⁶

From the first two elements of Qoheleth's thought derives the third. If God sets the limits of man's existence and man and his deeds are thereby ephemeral in comparison, there remains only one sensible course of conduct for man: take the present world as it is as a positive gift of God and make the most of it. No less

than four times²⁷ Qoheleth affirms that man's lot is to eat, drink, engage in the toil given to him, and enjoy life with the wife God has given him.

Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white, let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your [ephemeral] life which he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. (:7-10)

To summarize what has been said about Qoheleth, it will suffice to say that he wants to ask whether life is worth living, whether man can be happy, in an unfathomable but ephemeral world created by an even more unfathomable but eternal God. His answer is no less courageous than his question: yes, life is worth living if one approaches it without false assumptions and embraces it despite the risks involved. In the next section of this paper we shall see that Albert Camus' vision of life in "The Myth of Sisyphus" appears similar to that of Qoheleth.

An Analysis of Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus"

Sisyphus was the wisest of the ancient mortals, one so wise he could steal secrets from the gods, chain Death in the underworld, and persuade Pluto to release him back to life to punish his overly obedient wife. Eventually, however, his impudence provoked the gods too much, and they consigned him to the underworld to the seemingly futile task of eternally pushing a huge boulder to the peak of a mountain, whence it would roll to the bottom on the opposite side. To Camus this man is heroic, and his heroism consists precisely in his conscious embracing of his pointless, unceasing task. By so doing he finds that the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. "One must imagine Sisyphus happy."²⁸

Camus' argument in "The Myth of Sisyphus" is straightforward and easily summarized. The essay begins: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy."²⁹ Camus immediately rejects any hope of discovering an overarching "meaning"

to the world; rather, the world confronts man as baffling. Certain "walls" bring the analytical mind to its limits in its desire for unity and in the scientific attempt to seize phenomena and enumerate them. In short, the world in and of itself is not explainable.

Philosophers of all ages have been confounded by these "walls," and Camus is strongly attracted to modern existentialist writers who have tried to deal with the world as absurd, such as Heidegger, Jaspers, Chestov, and above all Kierkegaard. Yet, he claims, these men have committed "philosophical suicide," for they have made a "leap of faith," laying hold of the Eternal, to overcome the wall against which their logical minds have driven them. Indeed he writes, "...the most paradoxical and most significant irrationality is certainly the philosophical leap that attributes rational reasons to a world it originally imagined as devoid of any guiding principle."³⁰ Camus wants nothing to do with that leap. Rather, he fastens to the doomed struggle for meaning, contending "that that struggle implies a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a continual rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation) and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to immature unrest)."³¹ According to absurdist philosophy, man finds himself confronted by a paradoxical universe. Philosophical suicide capitulates to the paradox by eliminating the irrationality of the world, and physical suicide capitulates by eliminating the human caught in the paradox. Therefore, neither is a *solution* to the problems of absurdity, and both are but attempts to escape the problems. Camus intends, therefore, to be true to the entire absurd situation. Indeed, he maintains, that the world is absurd is the one dictum of which he can be sure.

This dictum raises for Camus the question of man's freedom, a subject which he separates from the question of man's stance over against God. "For in the presence of God there is less a problem of freedom than a problem of evil. You know the alternatives: either we are not free and God the all-powerful is responsible for evil. Or we are free and responsible but God is not all-powerful. All the scholastic subtleties have neither added anything to nor subtracted anything from the acuteness of this paradox."³² Hence, man aware of the absurd lives without conventional metaphysics, aware that his freedom has no meaning except in relation to the limits of his certain fate of death. Individual ethics depends, then, not on an external principle, but

upon one's experience, and the quality of his experience depends upon oneself rather than on one's circumstances. One makes those circumstances meaningful by a passionate, liberating revolt against the certainty of death (rejecting suicide along the way), and thereby gains the power to wring the most out of life. The goal of the absurd man is to expend all he has so that the inevitable death becomes negligible.

Camus gives us a battery of absurd heroes to emulate. "To the destructive transgressors – Caligula, Jan, and Maria – Camus opposes a gallery of truly 'absurd' heroes: the actor, Don Juan, the conqueror, the creative artist, and finally, subsuming all, Sisyphus."³³ In all of these figures there is an "element of glamorous titanism,"³⁴ a zest for life in spite of life. All of these figures are constantly consuming and moving from one role to another, one woman to another, one adventure to another, one composition to another; indeed: "The rock is still rolling."³⁵ All of these figures are creating their own absurd universe. "In that daily effort in which intelligence and passion mingle and delight each other, the absurd man discovers a discipline that will make up the greatest of his strengths. The required diligence, the doggedness and lucidity, thus resemble the conqueror's attitude. To create is likewise to give a shape to one's fate... A world remains of which man is the sole master. What bound him was the illusion of another world."³⁵

With Camus' argument before us, it is possible now to begin an analysis of the essay. By beginning with the question of suicide, Camus finds far more than a mere attention-getter. He thrusts the philosophical question of man's existence precisely where it belongs – in the realm of experience and ethics. His basic thesis in "The Myth of Sisyphus" and other works is expressed by Germaine Bree: "metaphysical pessimism does not entail that one must lose hope for man, quite the opposite."³⁷ True, Camus finds no metaphysical hope and cannot imagine what metaphysical salvation would entail. Rather, he separates the question of a meaning in life in the sense of a superimposed meaning from the question of whether man can create his own meaning and make life worth living,³⁸ and he affirms the latter option.

If, then, man lives in a non-metaphysical world, how does he transcend it to find meaning? (Indeed, Camus admits that the difference between himself and a tree or an animal is his ability,

in fact his need, to seek coherence.) If he lives in an absurd universe, what value is Camus' rational analysis? (It must have some value or he would not write a hundred page essay.) What, in fact, does Camus mean by the term "absurd"? The absurd is essentially a divorce between expectation and result.³⁹ "The absurd is lucid reason noting its limits."⁴⁰ In other words, "absurd" is a synonym for non-sequitur, without denying the limited success of man's reason. As John Cruikshank defines it, the absurd is for Camus "... a relationship of nonconformity between the individual and the world. The absurd is not a 'thing-in-itself' but the confrontation of two things other than itself — existence and an individual mind."⁴¹ The word signifies "the absence of correspondence or congruity between the mind's needs for coherence and the incoherence of the world which the mind experiences."⁴² To call this world "absurd" is less to challenge physical cause and effect than it is to admit one cannot quite comprehend causality and to come to live with that admission without succumbing to it. "The absurd has meaning only in so far as it is not agreed to."⁴³ Moreover, "the absurd, which is the metaphysical state of the conscious man, does not lead to God".⁴⁴ But neither does it assert God's nonexistence; it simply finds the concept of God meaningless. Camus will base his case only on facts,⁴⁵ and these are enumerated as death, a knowledge of his wants, a knowledge of history, and the realization that he does not know any transcendent meaning.

Of these facts, only the first and the fourth are surely known to Camus, and the first by inference from other humans, not personal experience. Hence, Camus is attempting to build a system squarely on the experience of the absurd. "As Descartes derived the certainty of his existence from prior doubt concerning it (I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am), so Camus derives meaning from his existence from an original denial of the possibility of meaning."⁴⁶ He rejects Kierkegaard's view that a leap of faith represents an extreme danger which is simultaneously life-authenticating. He says: "The danger, on the contrary, lies in the subtle instant that precedes the leap. Being able to remain on that dizzying crest — that is integrity and the rest is subterfuge."⁴⁷ Here is the crux of the matter: remaining on the crest. If one is able to stand on that precipice, a new vista is opened up below. "The absurd man thus catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe

and draw from it his strength, his refusal to hope and the unyielding evidence of a life with consolation."⁴⁸

The language of this last quotation deserves comment. When Camus here speaks of the "universe," he is referring to more than physical matter. The sentence can only refer to the structures of existence as they are for him, shorn of metaphysical standing or meaning, and, hence, not eternal, but capable of sustaining a given type of existence, no matter how truncated it might seem to some. It is surely this understanding of "universe" which also stands behind the life-illuminating insight of Meursault in *The Stranger* as he awaits execution:

It was as if that great rash of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and, gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe.⁴⁹

The "universe," then, is indifferent to man, but not hostile. Moreover, man must *choose* whether to accept the universe so construed or to make the leap of faith. Camus writes: "Is one going to die, escape by the leap, rebuild a mansion of ideas and forms to one's own scale? Is one, on the contrary, going to take up the heart rending and marvelous wager of the absurd?"⁵⁰

Cruikshank focuses on the choice of term "wager": "By such revolt we wager in the opposite direction to Pascal: we assert the marvelous and harrowing wager of the absurd..."⁵¹ From one perspective Camus' wager stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from Pascal, but from another perspective his affirmative intention and commitment are very similar to Pascal. The affirmativeness of this wager becomes even more clear if we compare Camus' trilogy of revolt, passion, and freedom with Paul's faith, hope, and love. For Camus, "faith" is the abandoning of one's critical faculties in philosophical suicide, "hope" falsely robs the present in the name of the future, and "love" concentrated on one being (or one sexual partner) is potentially enslaving or at least limiting (though to live without loving is misfortune). By contrast, Camus revolts out of sheer passion, indeed anger, refusing to bow before his limitations and living defiantly of death itself. Paradoxically he argues that man is not truly free until he squarely confronts all his limitations and sees death for what it is — the inevitable end of every man, an end which no power in the universe can prevent, but which the "absurd" life can rob of its sting.⁵² This is the only metaphysic

to which Camus will admit, lucidity in the face of what negates it. Between Camus and the universe there is no quarter asked and no quarter given, no cheap sentiment, but no hostility either.

This brings one to the final matter which requires attention in Camus' system of thought, his ethic. At first sight it appears as though Camus were a hedonist. Indeed, he refuses to build a system of ethics;⁵³ he is driven to say that what counts is not the least living but the most living, and he justifies the life style of Don Juan as a seeking for liberty.⁵⁴ But to call him a hedonist is a misreading of Camus. That everything is permitted does not mean, he says, that nothing is forbidden.⁵⁵ The absurd merely reminds one of the common fate of all men. Don Juan the sensualist becomes Don Juan the hermit, not out of repentance but out of an understanding of the absurd. "The lover, the actor, or the adventurer plays the absurd. But equally well, if he wishes, the chaste man, the civil servant, or the president of the Republic."⁵⁶ The key is not in what one does, but in doing it defiantly and without illusion. In the revealing light of the absurd, the most apparently contradictory modes of behavior can be seen to be complementary.

The key to Camus' ethic, it seems to me, is the sentence "That everything is permitted does not mean that nothing is forbidden." Everything is permitted because there is no eschatological punishment, and the self-appointed judges on earth insist on proclaiming guilty those who feel only innocence. Nevertheless, he does not recommend crime, for that would be immature. In the early days of World War II, Camus was forced to make more explicit what was implicit in "The Myth of Sisyphus." In his *Letters to a German Friend*, written at the height of the war, he articulates his position.

We long agreed that the world had no superior reason and that we were stuck in an impass. I still believe this in a certain manner. But I have come to other conclusions than those about which you spoke to me and which for many years you have attempted to introduce into history. I say to myself today that if I had really acquiesced in what you think I would have to admit your good reason in what you are doing. And that is so grave that it is necessary for me to stop in the heart of the night which holds so much promise for us and is so menacing toward you.

You have never believed in the meaning of the world, and you have accepted the idea that everything is equivalent and that good and evil can be defined as one wishes....You have concluded from this that man is nothing....And to tell the truth, I,

believing as I thought you did, saw no means to argue against you, except a fierce love of justice which after all seemed to me as flimsy a reason as the most sudden passion.⁵⁷

Indeed justice, human justice, has its claims after all. Not all conduct is equivalent. Any revolt which obstructs human justice is to be shunned, not because of divine retribution, but because of human honor and life. Jean Onimus says of Camus' position: "To opt for man, that is to say for life, is to proclaim the existence of a good and thus escape from contingency, from despair — and from the cynicism that results from it.... These values [justice, honor, etc.] will henceforth play the role of the absolute; the religion of man is substituted for pious or cynical resignation to Disorder."⁵⁸ Indeed, Dr. Rieux pens his chronicle about the plague "to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise."⁵⁹ Thus even the absurd man must eventually affirm conduct productive to man and disavow that which is destructive of life, because unjust conduct, like suicide, merely eliminates the human end of the polarity of existence. This disavowal is as consistently applied in the *Letters* against a government as it was in "Myth" and in *The Stranger* against the "Christian" notion of a present-robbing hope for the future.

To summarize what I have said about Camus, let it suffice to say that he wants to know if life is worth living in an unfathomable world, which is at best benignly indifferent to him. His answer is no less courageous than his question: yes, life is worth living if one approaches it without false assumptions and embraces it resolutely, wagering that living as an absurd creator is more meaningful than living as one who looks outside the world for someone to solve all of man's self-created problems. The agreement of Camus with Qoheleth is striking, though not complete.

Conclusion

It remains now to compare and contrast Qoheleth and "Myth of Sisyphus" and to assess their insights. The points of similarity which are most striking are two. First of all, the author of each is acutely aware of the limits of man's ability to understand his world. Both agree that, theologically speaking, it is blasphemy to suppose that man can encompass God. Rationally, it is impossible

to scale the barriers which ultimately frustrate all attempts to build systems. In the second place, both men make a wager about how to live authentically. That is, both men make a virtue out of their impasse, embrace the paradox in which they find themselves, and seek to squeeze all the zest they can from life lived in the human condition in which uncertainty and frustration leer over every accomplishment.

On the other hand, Qoheleth and Camus disagree over several key issues. For one thing, Qoheleth is a theist. The existence of God is not an issue which he can bracket out of his discussion as Camus can. Yet God remains unfathomable to Qoheleth. Camus, while not denying the existence of God, has undergone what William Hamilton calls the "experience of the absence of God"⁶⁰ and has structured his world accordingly. Qoheleth sees the sequence of days, seasons, years, generations, that is, the dependable repetitiveness of many phenomena, and concludes that the universe has an underlying order. He is also aware that neither he nor any other mortal can *fully* discern that order, though assuredly God, its author, understands it. Camus sees no gain in positing a God who understands even if man does not. But the two perspectives lead to the same end for both. They counsel their readers to embrace the world in all its ephemeral absurdity and find fulfillment in so doing. There is a second difference which must also be mentioned. Qoheleth never advises one to revolt against his circumstances; the encounter is much more tender. One might almost hear Qoheleth say: "To revolt is but to engage in vain striving and miss what meaning one can find." Camus, by contrast, seems to say: "Etch your meaning by defiance, by refusing meekly to surrender to the inevitable death." Perhaps, though, we might ask if Qoheleth's readiness to believe God knows is not also a kind of defiance of things as they appear. Perhaps the only difference between Qoheleth and Camus is Camus' empiricism, his refusal to resort to or deal with the category of God.

In assessing the significance of these men, I will again discuss only two aspects. First, both Qoheleth and Camus contribute to an understanding of man's relationship to his world. Perhaps less profound than Camus is Qoheleth, who thinks the world moves in its own time and any calamity is due to man's bad timing rather than any disfunction in the world. For Camus the world offers to man its pleasures and satisfactions, its lessons and its healing. We must look outside of the "Myth of Sisyphus,"

though, to see what he says. As a youth in Algiers he learned that the world should be lived in and enjoyed, for Algiers itself is said to be open to the sky like a mouth. Men who drink from the world live wholly in the present, without myths, without solace. To place one's hope in the future is not to avoid resignation, but to resign to the present, indeed to life. "For if there is a sin against life, it consists perhaps not so much in despairing of life as in hoping for another life and in eluding the implacable grandeur of this life."⁶¹ Algerian summers thus taught Camus how to live, how to open himself to the benign indifference of the universe. In the midst of the plague Rieux and Tarrow experience the same therapeutic quality of nature. They steal to the sea one night to swim because they cannot live only to fight the plague, and they return to the city "conscious of being perfectly at one" to set their shoulders to the wheel (stone!) with renewed vigor.⁶² Camus learned, moreover, not to separate men "bursting with violent energy from the sky where their desires whirl,"⁶³ and from nude swimmers on a Mediterranean beach he learned men live among bodies through their own bodies, thereby becoming aware that the body has a psychology of its own.⁶⁴ In short, both Qoheleth and Camus insist that we affirm our basic dependence upon the world which sustains us, its grandeur, its appropriateness. They warn us against an unnaturalness which denies our physical source and against a futuristic hope which robs the present.

Finally, it is possible to draw some conclusions from the two which aid in a definition of faith. Qoheleth, by his striving for wisdom without expecting guarantees of success, and Camus, by his titillating walk along the harrowing precipice, demonstrate several of its elements. First, while faith is a gamble, even a revolt, it is not an escape from the fathomlessness, even the meaninglessness of things. Paul Tillich, aware of the "walls" discovered by Qoheleth and Camus, asks if there is

...a kind of faith which can exist together with doubt and meaninglessness...How is the courage to be possible if all the ways to create it are barred by the experience of their ultimate insufficiency? There is only one possible answer, if one does not try to escape the question: namely that the acceptance of despair is in itself faith and on the boundary line of the courage to be. In this situation the meaning of life is reduced to despair about the meaning of life. But as long as this despair is an act of life it is positive in its negativity.⁶⁵

That is, faith incorporates doubt and meaninglessness within itself and can even be reduced to a "positive despair" as a result of that incorporation. Second, such a faith is present-oriented. It does not rob the present for the sake of the future. This point has been so often made in this essay that it needs no further discussion. Third, it rests upon an awareness of an indefinable quantum (whether it is called God, the Unconditional, or the will for life itself) experienced in the very being of man. This awareness results in the convictions that life is very worth living (even in the worst of circumstances), and that man must repudiate every idol, every objectification, every system that would rob him. This is obviously so for Qoheleth, who thought man's life was a gift from God, and Nathan Scott writes of Camus in this connection:

It is true, of course, that in him a very radical scepticism had undercut most of the concrete symbolism of Christian faith, and a profound impatience with conventional religious apologetics inhibited any decisive movement in the direction of the metaphysical personalism of biblical faith. But surely it is clear that in Camus there was an equally profound sense of the "transpersonal presence of the divine" which is also an element of biblical faith; and we have, I think, ample testimony in his writings that this was for him a rich and deep source of the confidence and the courage that enabled him to go "beyond nihilism." So perhaps this was a modern man who did not altogether live outside the realm of grace.⁶⁶

Fourth, there is something profoundly anti-religious (that is, contrary to the objectification of forms, symbols, myths, dogmas, and rites) about this faith which is simultaneously the essence of true religion. Again Tillich writes: "True religion exists wherever the Unconditional is affirmed as the Unconditional, and religion is abolished through its presence...Absolute religion is never an objective fact, but rather a momentary and vital breakthrough of the Unconditional."⁶⁷ Camus himself penned this statement, which expresses as clearly as Tillich ever did the Protestant principle: "I understand then why the doctrines that explain everything to me also debilitate me at the same time. They relieve me of the weight of my own life, and yet I must carry it alone."⁶⁸

Finally, faith is not itself reducible to logic; it is not just another system leading to another "wall." As Richard Taylor writes, "Faith is not reason else religion would be, along with logic and metaphysics, a part of philosophy, which it assuredly

is not."⁶⁹ Nor is it simply an assumption or mere tenacity. Faith is in fact "an involuntary conviction"⁷⁰ which grasps one even though he cannot ultimately reason it out. So Qoheleth and Camus reject nihilism and cling to life, despite their analyses, or perhaps as a consequence of their analyses.

Karl Jaspers pictures the believer in revelation and the philosopher as men in two different camps whose fundamental convictions are mutually exclusive. He asks if there can be common ground, if the two faiths can meet. He replies that they can only cooperate and can do so precisely because each one faces his own doubts. In this cooperation the believer cannot "expect of others, as an act of will, what he has received as a gift of divine grace."⁷¹ By the same token, the philosopher must "be constantly ready to hear the other's experience and to join in all human tasks in the world."⁷² Do not Qoheleth and Camus stand as representatives of this meeting of the two camps? Qoheleth accepts his assignment from God to learn about the world (1:13) and is aware that his discovery is the gift of God (9:1), and yet this knowledge is less than the full truth (3:11, 8:17). Camus, for his part, does not take issue with Christianity, or with biblical faith *per se*. He is quite willing to join with the Christian whose hope is not a present-robbing grasping after a future life. "It is possible to be Christian and absurd."⁷³ The distance between the two writers is from my perspective attributable to the ineffability of God.

FOOTNOTES

¹R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, Anchor Bible, vol. 18 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 192.

²R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), p. 172.

³Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. by James D. Martin (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 233.

⁴1:16 versus 17f.; 2:3ff., especially 10 versus 11; 2:13, 14a versus 14bvv.; 3:11a versus 11b; 3:17 versus 18ff.; 4:13ff, versus 16b; 7:11f. versus 7 (rearranged text); 8:12bf. versus 14f.; 9:4b versus 5; 9:16a versus b; 9:17, 18a versus 18b-10:1; 10:2f. versus 5-7. Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *Der Prediger*, Kommentar zum Alten Testament, XVII, 4 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963), p. 30.

⁵Robert Gordis, *Qoheleth - The Man and His World* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1951), pp. 95-108.

⁶All verse citations follow the English rather than the Hebrew enumeration, and all biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

- 72:18ff., 4:7ff., 5:10f, 7:2, 8:2-4, 8:5f., 8:11-14, 9:4-6.
- ⁸Gordis, *Koheleth — The Man and His World*, pp. 98-99.
- ⁹Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, p. xvi.
- ¹⁰Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, p. 139.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 142.
- ¹²Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. by D. M. G. Stalker, I (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 458.
- ¹³For example, 16:9; 19:14, 21; 21:30f.; 26:12; 27:1; 28:11, 26.
- ¹⁴Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, p. 99.
- ¹⁵BDB interprets *olam* here as world age or duration and translates: "the age of the world he hath set."
- ¹⁶For example, 7:11-12; 8:1; 10:2, 10, 12.
- ¹⁷Scott, *Way of Wisdom*, p. 183, includes this passage in a paragraph which he terms "utterly pessimistic conclusions."
- ¹⁸It is not necessary to list the evidence for this claim. The topic has been frequently studied by, among others, the following: Christoph Barth, *Die Erretung Vom Tode in den individuellen Klage-und-Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947); Alfred Bertholet, *Die israelitischen Vorstellungen vom Zustand nach dem Tode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1914); Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, Trans. by J. P. Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960); Egge Simon Mulder, *Die Teologie van die Jesaja-Apokalipse, Jesaja 24-27* (Gronigen [Djakarta]: J. B. Wolters, 1954), pp. 94-110; Kurt Schubert, "Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von der nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit," *Biblische Zeitschrift*, VI (1962), 172-214; Lou H. Silberman, "Death in the Hebrew Bible and Apocalyptic Literature," *Perspectives on Death*, ed. by Liston Mills (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1969).
- ¹⁹See von Rad's discussion in *Wisdom in Israel*, pp. 77-81.
- ²⁰Scott, *Way of Wisdom*, pp. 138-140.
- ²¹This realization has an interesting result form critically. Qoheleth uses the two-line proverb, the didactic sentence, rather extensively. This *Gattung*, however, is ill-equipped for reflections on principles and variables. "Its ideas are characterized by a thoroughly static quality. Its statements try to grasp life from the aspect of that which always remains the same; they are open not to daily social problems, but to that which is generally valid and which serves no matter what the social circumstances" (von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, p. 76). So Qoheleth turned to the royal confession of Egypt, a long reflective style of didactic writing. These occur primarily in 1:12-2:26; 3:10-4:1; 5:13-6:12; 7:15-17,
- ²²Hertzberg, *Der Prediger*, KAT, pp. 222-225.
- ²³*Ibid.*, p. 223.
- ²⁴In 8:6 we read: "For every matter has its time and way, although man's trouble lies heavy upon him." This is not a declaration that man has no choices; rather, it affirms that there is an appropriate time and way to do things. If man discerns the times or is lucky, he will prosper. If not, he will fail.
- ²⁵1:14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:10; 6:2, 4, 9, 11; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14; 9:9; 11:8, 10.
- ²⁶Hertzberg, *Der Prediger*, KAT, p. 224.
- ²⁷2:24-26, 3:22, 5:18-20, and 9:7-10.
- ²⁸Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," in *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. by Justin O'Brien, Vintage Books (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 91.

- 29 *ibid.*, p. 3.
- 30 *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 31 *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 32 *ibid.*, p. 42. Camus is not a philosophical atheist, but an agnostic and a practical atheist. See especially pp. 30-31, notes 7 and 8.
- 33 Germaine Bree, *Albert Camus*, Columbia Essays on Modern Writers (New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 10.
- 34 Nathan Scott, *Albert Camus*, Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1962), p. 28.
- 35 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 91.
- 36 *ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
- 37 Germaine Bree, *Camus and Sartre: Crisis and Commitment* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1972), p. 134.
- 38 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 7.
- 39 *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
- 40 *ibid.*, p. 36.
- 41 John Cruikshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford Press, 1959), p. 51.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 41.
- 43 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 24.
- 44 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 45 *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 46 Cruikshank, *Albert Camus*, p. 62.
- 47 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 37.
- 48 *ibid.*, p. 44.
- 49 Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 154.
- 50 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 39.
- 51 Cruikshank, *Albert Camus*, p. 62. Nor can it be argued that Camus simply became carried away with his own rhetoric and did not intend the weight I am attaching to the term. In two other places he uses the same language. Don Juan is said to gamble his life against heaven itself ("The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 52). And in discussing Dostoevsky's Kirilov, who ends in madness, Camus writes: "...this is a risk worth running..." ("The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 81).
- 52 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 57: "The ultimate end, awaited but never desired, the ultimate end is negligible."
- 53 *ibid.*, p. 49.
- 54 *ibid.*, pp. 51-57.
- 55 *ibid.*, p. 50.
- 56 *ibid.*, p. 67.
- 57 Albert Camus, *Lettres a un ami Allemand* (Paris: Gallimand, 1948), pp. 70-72.
- 58 Jean Onimus, *Albert Camus and Christianity*, trans. by Emmett Parker (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1970), p. 80.
- 59 Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. by Stuart Gilbert (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), p. 278.
- 60 William Hamilton, "The Death of God Theologies Today," in *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p. 28.
- 61 Albert Camus, "Summer in Algiers," *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. by Justin O'Brien, Vintage Books (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 113.
- 62 Camus, *The Plague*, p. 233.

⁶³Camus, "Summer in Algiers," p. 108.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁶⁵Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 174-176. Tillich writes in a similar vein in his *Dynamics of Faith*, Harper Torchbooks (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 101: "Doubt is overcome not by repression but by courage. Courage does not deny that there is doubt, but it takes the doubt into itself as an expression of its own finitude and affirms the content of an ultimate concern. Courage does not need the safety of an unquestionable conviction. It includes the risk without which no creative life is possible."

⁶⁶Nathan Scott, *Albert Camus*, p. 97.

⁶⁷Paul Tillich, *What is Religion?* trans. by James Luther Adams, Harper Torchbooks (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 147.

⁶⁸Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 41.

⁶⁹Richard Taylor, "Faith," in *Religious Experience and Truth*, ed. by Sidney Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1961), p. 165.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁷¹Karl Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 362.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 83.

PATER RESARTUS

At sun-up, through the years,
Our father saw, or seemed to see,
Black texts emblazoned clear and firm
Across the banner of each dawn.

“Another day!” his knock on bedroom doors
Proclaimed. “Wake! Stir!
Get to your chores! Think well
Lest time slip uselessly away!”

The years would tell us he had dressed his words
In tailoring of another age. But the suit
Was paid for and he wore it well,
Even at the threadbare close.

There were runs of rage, though,
Let loose on days when maybe the text he saw
Was only an ugly scratching
On a crowding wall.

He must have known then that the precepts
He so firmly kept in shape
Could never save us from our own dark grovelings
After broken letters in a scrabble heap.

Robert Price

HORTUS IMPECCABILIS

“Weeds are sin,” my aunt would say
Bringing her hoe down like a thunderclap
And (so it seemed to me) a bit self-righteously.
She was always chopping away at life with some old saying
Taught by her Cambrian forebears.

As for weeds, hoeing wasn't enough. I had to yank
Shepherd's purse and dandelions out by the root
And tug at mallows till the Chinaman
At the other end let go. Wild buckwheat!
It actually had the Devil's spear-tail for a leaf!

After potatoes were in the bin and turnips pulled,
She liked to show her “clean patch” to some neighbor
And shame him for his wilderness
Of grass and pigweed. She had never heard of humus
Or thought that topsoil needs protection.

So she weeded out the evil,
And fall rains washed away the good.
I've changed my mind a lot on weeds and sin.
Both snatch up idle patches, but a weed
Usually leaves a little something for its keep.

Robert Price

THE WOMEN'S REFORMATORY AS VICTIM

As its name suggests, a women's reformatory should re-form or rehabilitate the individual who is sentenced to serve a portion of her life there. It is my opinion, having just returned from a ten-week sabbatical as observer-participant in Ohio's only penal facility for adult female offenders, that the public mandate of reformation is a futile and a ridiculous one, given the conditions which I shall try to describe.

Among the "givens" of incarceration are the goals which any penal institution is supposed to try to attain. These goals in the United States today are: (1) punishment, (2) deterrence, (3) rehabilitation, and (4) security. The greatest of these is security. It is greatest because by popular and legal opinion this is the main function of incarceration — namely to get the individual off the streets where she has been offending against property or persons and to put her in a place where her activities can be controlled and rendered innocuous as far as the rest of the world is concerned. It is my conviction, and many practical as well as theoretical penologists would agree, that security (head counts, travel passes, low-risk work assignments, etc.) are not necessarily conducive to reformation.

Punishment, the first goal listed, is psychologically and physically antithetical to rehabilitation. Since the vast majority of inmates return to society, rehabilitation is the only sensible goal. What does reformation involve that makes it so incongruent with punishment? It involves ego building, educational upgrading, emotional support and re-inforcement, and the freedom necessary to insure the vitality of the creative processes. One may argue that the modern female penal facility is not basically a place of punishment, but I would contend that for American women, at least, losing one's freedom of movement, being deprived of some of one's intimate personal possessions and routines, being subject to institutional court actions for infractions of the reformatory's rules, and being forced to live with a large group of diverse felons of the same sex in a strange rural atmosphere — all of this is indeed punishment enough!

As for the second goal, deterrence, all I need to say, perhaps,

is that the consequences of incarceration for misdeeds observed and punished are not always kept sharply in focus by an engaged individual who hopes that if and when there's a next time, "they sure as hell won't catch me!" Deterrence surely works for as long as those who are locked up stay locked up, but as far as outsiders are concerned, the sight of a prison or jail, even the sight of prisoners and their keepers, may result in the smug feeling expressed in "Am I glad I'm out here!" or "That's what may happen to the stupid, some of the desperately poor, the ignorant, the unlucky, but not to me!"

By common consent among both keepers and the kept, the goal of rehabilitation is rarely if ever realized. Why? For these reasons, I believe: Governors, legislatures, and the general public are not clear in their penal philosophies as to whether one program or another will effect real reformation. Not only this, but political figures come and go and so do programs and the public support for them. And where is the political advantage in being an advocate for "criminals"? Without even hinting at lack of official interest or the breakdown of volunteer effort or the misapprehensions of well-intentioned people, our society just has not made the simple humanitarian commitment to provide analysis, diagnosis, therapy, and long-term treatment for our locked-in fellows who may be alcoholic, drug-addicted, neurotic, or borderline psychotic. We don't even yet provide these services to all needful non-offenders in a systematic, inexpensive, and unembarassing way! It seems safe to assume that given the structure of our complex, amoral, urban-industrial society, there is no way to provide such help adequately at this point in history.

Even in normal times (to say nothing of a period of social and economic dislocation and recession) it is hard to get public tax support for "the dregs" of our society when the taxpayers conceive of themselves as law abiding, decent, honest, unaggressive, hard-working, peaceful citizens. "Law and order" is the hallmark of much of middle-class public opinion, and since one mistake may be taken to be indicative of one's life style, we don't give the ex-con many second chances. Who is likely to lobby for folks who are neither taxpayers, property owners, nor voters? If the stigma of criminality is a life-time label, as it unquestionably is, how much reformation or rehabilitation should we expect?

It has been estimated that ten percent of all criminals reach a reformatory after the filtering process has taken place. Since

those who are actually incarcerated are folks who are of lower socio-economic status, as well as being socially, educationally, and religiously deprived, how can we expect these "street realists" to be over-optimistic about their chances for rehabilitation to the values and practices of the "straight" world outside the reformatory?

If they are befriended, guided, supported, and loved by the institutional staff, possibly they may make it, but how many of them can we expect to be this fortunate? If from an early age you have had to scratch for all you have ever attained, and that "all" has been meager indeed, what will motivate you to go straight when some of those around you are doing so much better financially and otherwise at their illicit crafts? Especially is this pessimistic appraisal plausible, it seems to me, when the worst that can happen to you is to be caught, found guilty, and sentenced to good food, a small comfortable room, and sufficient clothing, at the least, and much more than this once you have become prison-wise and can make the system work for you. All this and you are actually among some of the most caring, protective, and dedicated staff people you will ever run into whose sole purpose is to keep you healthy and alive in that state-supported facility. There you may find better friends among your fellow inmates than it has ever been your good fortune to have on the streets; a psychiatrist in the reformatory hospital may soften the blows of life for you; free recreation is provided periodically; if you haven't completed your education, there are courses and labs designed to help you reach the high school equivalency standard; you may even stay long enough to learn a new useful vocation or sharpen up an old one; if you are bright, university correspondence courses are available for your diversion and self improvement. After having said all this, I do not wish to leave the impression that reformatory life is just a succession of fun and games for the poor; obviously the loss of freedom is onerous even for those whose lives are unstable, impecunious, and often fraught with hazards to health and survival itself. Being immured against one's will and forced to live among dreaded strangers who have committed all manner of crimes is no bowl of cherries!

The recent past with its Watergate syndrome lives on to haunt people who work with conventional criminals. It has helped buttress some of the common clichés about there being a "little larceny in everyone's soul," "every man has his price," "it's not what you know, but whom you know," "if you're lucky, you

get it cheap or even free," "middle class people can keep out of jail through money, influence, or clout," and "certain people are really social class, political, or racial prisoners of The System." In many ways these easy and trite generalizations have just enough truth in them to help one find "reasons" for his bad luck in being locked up when CIA, FBI, and other federal agencies, and officials are trying to "stonewall" their way through illegal past actions by using rationalizations no longer acceptable in a new era demanding open revelation and honesty in public policy and among public officials. How can a common criminal feel any sense of shame when a resigned President and his closest aides still hold onto the transparent myth of only having made "mistakes in judgment"? Mass media today reveal to the humblest citizen exactly what the emperor's new clothes are made of! These trends, plus seismic changes in societal mores in regard to human sexuality, man-woman relationships, the sacredness of contacts, the ease of personal as well as corporate bankruptcy proceedings, etc., tend to erode the old boundaries between right and wrong, between legal and illegal, between natural and unnatural, between fair and unfair, between honest and false. So how can we be surprised when the people who are most vulnerable to the shock waves of seeming post-Christian, post-capitalist, post-democratic collapse appear confused and unable to look at their own rationalizations and alibis objectively and critically?

The high turnover rate of resident-inmates is another factor in making programs of rehabilitation almost certain of at least partial failure. If the institution has little or no control over the entrance and exit of its "clients," how can sustained, well-developed, meaningful programs of reformation be carried out? County sheriffs bring newcomers in whenever they are ready to do so. The reformatory must take them into Admissions as they arrive. Since the average stay of an inmate is now about one year (1974), and since she anticipates shock probation, shock parole, furlough plans, review hearings, and/or regular parole board hearings, the average prisoner has a strong sense of tentativeness. She, indeed, often tells prison officials that the sentencing-judge has promised her that she is likely to be released early for shock probation! The intensity of desire can surely color judicial suggestions in the minds of resident-inmates whose whole inclination is toward that happy day of release from "the farm." The inmates have an uneasy sense of the transient nature of their stay in the penal facility. Consequently ephemeral mind-sets, weak morale for sustained effort, and wishful thinking (fantasies of imminent freedom) weaken and make difficult the proper use of

counseling, habit-change programs, educational upgrading, and vocational renovation.

Another word could be said about staff turnover. Both on-the-firing-line level correctional officers and some of the professionals are apt to have higher than average turnover for these reasons: (1) Working in a closed setting can be somewhat stifling for many freedom-loving Americans. (2) Having to be constantly aware of demands for security and punishment can lessen the professional's morale and commitment in practicing his art and make him wonder how he might fare on the outside with a more prepossessing group of clients whose desire for improvement might be more explicit and obvious. (3) Being a member of a great bureaucracy, such as any large state agency must of necessity be, is a sobering and at times very frustrating experience. (4) Finally, being some distance from a metropolitan area, thus necessitating time-consuming and expensive commuting, the liberally educated professionals and the intelligent and ambitious young corrections officers may wonder whether another type of employment in a city might offer more in salary, interpersonal diversity, and greater richness of cultural stimulation. Thus, localites and older employees tend to be better satisfied or at least reconciled to isolation, small-town subculture, and the hopelessness of working with society's rejects.

The hot-cold effect or calm-before-the-crisis aspect of work in a penological facility makes sustained, well-staffed, and carefully planned programs of rehabilitation very tenuous. In a population composed of (and I almost cringe to say this) life's losers, yes, *multiple losers*, it is hard to do what is relatively easy to do with eager, tuition-paying, bright, healthy teenage college students. Many incarcerated adult female felons are losers in these respects: they have had less than an average chance (1) for prenatal and early life nutritional sufficiency, (2) for lifelong adequate medical and dental care, (3) for proper educational and recreational socialization, and, (4) for the opportunity to iron out the wrinkles of adolescence before they were thrust into the maelstrom of premature adult responsibilities at the most un-supportive level of society. They are also often losers because of their socio-economic origins, their race, their sex, their residential neighborhood, their lack of knowledge of protective legal rights and services, etc. These handicaps have allowed them to drop through the criminal justice filters until finally the last one dropped them into the prison system itself. This is not to say

that all inmates are of working class origins, that they are all innocent of all legal protective devices and maneuvers, that all their families have been chaotic splintered menages, that all their neighborhoods have been hot beds of gambling, prostitution, skid row degradation, and petty and not-so-petty racketeering! Some of them have very obviously come from "good" backgrounds, but somehow, somewhere a socialization cog has slipped, resulting in ignorance, near-neurosis or near-psychosis, which helped such persons become criminalistic or involved with criminal types.

Is it Marxist to claim that our capitalistic society does have inherent in it a loser/winner corps of people? Is it subversive to suggest that our criminal justice system may favor people who are clean-cut, verbally articulate, well educated, skillful in their art or profession, well mannered and poised, etc., as opposed to those who are rough and ready, ill educated in the use of English or lurking in the shadow world of shaky bilingualism, school-dropouts, chronically unemployed, habitually inept? Is it beyond human imagination to think that judges and jurors are also frail human beings, and that in spite of a selective process, they also may be subject to community mores and societal prejudices regarding religion, race and nationality; that they too are actors in family dramas; that they worry about their reputations and their professional peer group acceptance; that they, in sum, are *not* Olympian gods who may somehow snatch objective truth from the welter of earthly and earthy subjectivity?

What I am trying to suggest is that any human system or institution is frail, weak, and subject to infirmities. Let us deal gently with each other, for God alone can discern the quality of human justice and the need for mercy or the burdens-of-office of those who are appointed to help order and regulate human society. Our society's survival demands our highest wisdom, our most merciful compassion, and our most tender regard for our fellow humans whatever their present estate, previous condition, or alleged misdeeds.

Correctional institutional populations are increasing these days and probably will continue to increase in number at least in the near future. This means essentially that even adequate reformative programs will lack materials and personnel to most effectively bring about optimum results. New programs will take time, money, personnel, and dedication to implement, whereas current programs may be outdated, cramped physically, overused,

undermanned, and completely frustrated by inadequacies and public apathy and misunderstanding. Such is the fate of the conscientious administrator who needs money, bureaucratic support and approval, trained personnel, adequate space, and staff support to mount new programs which might in some measure hit a winning number in the Rehabilitation Sweepstakes.

In conclusion, is it false to characterize some reformatories as being victims of public ignorance, or bureaucratic byzantinism, of public apathy, of misunderstanding and belligerency, of forlorn location; of having disturbed confused belligerent inmates, of pursuing mutually contradictory goals, of succumbing to fashions in criminal justice and public pressure, of experiencing some instability among correctional staff, of enduring the crisis-calm, calm-crisis aspect of institutional management and routine, of living with the fact that reformatory inmates are a strangely mixed-bag of people? Some imprisoned women are professional criminals and have not the slightest interest in ever going straight; some are societal weak-knees, easily influenced by peers living on various levels of morality and legality or immorality and illegality; some are quietly and unjustly "taking the rap" for others out of a sense of loyalty and perhaps misplaced nobility; some have found a home in the *joint* with friends, "family," food, the essentials of clothing and shelter plus recreational, educational, medical, and sexual fringe benefits. Can we not say, in all truth, that *Reformatories Are Victims* of forces and problems of such magnitude that if their inmate success rate could in fact be measured and were found to be ten percent, one would have to believe that the age of miracles had returned?

PEACE WEB

Cobweb on the evergreens in
Misty fog of an autumn dawn.

Harbinger of heat or visual afterglow
Of a cool Fall night?

Still, still friendly calm –
Non threatening to a spider's world.

Untarnished environment of peace
To an unknowing primeval creature

Far more cognizant of personal needs
Than sophisticated humans.

Seeking to pierce the fog
With puny beams of light,

Dashing to busied activity
In unaware greeting of the budding day

Sensing only annoyance with
Nature's whitened moisture

Frenetically oriented to achieve and overcome
In the presence of an insignificant creature

Who lives in quiet harmony with new hope
For each timeless moment.

Elwyn M. Williams

MULE AND MAN

I see them still:
Grandpa's lop-eared mules –
Kate and Queen –
Coming up the East Road,
Their lord in tow.

How far the days
Then thought of.
Kate, kneading her hay,
Dropped dead.

Queen, in the back twenty,
Drawing lightning.

Mule and man.

I see them still:
Kate and Queen,
Going down the West Road,
Their lord in tow,
Beyond the windy fields of ever.

Norman Chaney

DIRECTIONS

To reach 40, continue till you arrive at the T in the road.
Do not look back, but go left or right, understanding that
one is the road not taken.

Proceed, but not at all possible speed.

Enjoy the scenery!

When you come to the first bend in the road,
notice there is a Slough of Despond on the left
and a Hill of Paradise on the right.

Do not picnic! Bears are in the area.

Check your gas gauge. If you are not at least half-full,
consider early retirement. The natives are garrulous.

At day's end, keep a journal. (Think of Johnson and Boswell
in the Hebrides.)

Resist traveler's melancholia. And above all, do not try
to return to the place from which you came.

My friend, you cannot get there from here!

Norman Chaney

Earl Hassenpflug

TO DWELL:

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS UPON A TRIP TO ITALY

How the children love to play in the deep dark recess which the lower unit of the old kitchen cupboard affords them. And how many children played in this cupboard cave before our first one discovered it? For this space invites habitation. Our first child enjoyed it fifteen years ago and to it her imagination will return throughout her lifetime. Now, upon occasion, one may hear the enraptured voices of three younger children who have squeezed themselves into this fascinating abode. Yes, all three at once, for they seek not solitude but the comfort of a nest perhaps.

There are paired cupboard doors in the lower unit which provide for the comings and goings of the children. Head space is assured by pulling out the doughboard-drawer unit. The drawers may then be opened or closed at will from the inside of the cupboard. And with the drawers open the children may reach down behind them to latch or unlatch the doors through which they have entered. The meaning of dwelling is enhanced by such small spaces, drawers and niches deep with mystery and love. Here the children are at home in a very special sense.

One might cite abundant evidence which indicates that many in contemporary Western society do not feel at home in their world. To answer the question whether we are at one with ourselves, with our fellows, with nature under the vault of the heavens is to answer it in the negative. Nevertheless, belonging is intimately related to being, to what it means to be human. Perhaps as Gaston Bachelard has suggested, we belong from birth and estrangement is acquired:

Before he is 'cast into the world' as claimed by a certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle. A concrete metaphysics cannot neglect this fact, this simple fact, all the more, since this fact is a value, an important value, to which we return in our daydreaming. Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house.¹

Perhaps if we could internalize the shelters which have enclosed man's being, have served as the externalized centers

of his being, the focus of the comings and goings that mark his interactions with the world outside, we might deepen our own sense of dwelling. A recent trip to Italy with my family provided many opportunities to gain new insights into what it means to dwell.

A number of experiences confirmed in me a cosmic sense of dwelling. The first was the power and the pull of the interior space of the Pantheon. The coffered dome is a structure so huge and so strong as to echo the vault of the heavens. But this is concrete, and we are assured, yet cannot comprehend, that this majestic work was man's doing. The dome, opening through a giant oculus to the distant sky, links earthly and heavenly realms, creates a vital center. One is humbled by the superhuman scale, yet the spirit is elevated by its connection to the whole of the cosmos.

In contrast to the scale of the Pantheon, the Arena Chapel at Padua is a modest barrel-vaulted structure. In a circular plan, such as that of the Pantheon, the whole space is centered. A basilican plan is typically a path to the center, the apse. In the Arena Chapel the painted panels do indeed move the eye along the length of this path, but the more important visual link is surprisingly between the vaulted ceiling and the painted panels on the walls. It is the painter, Giotto, whose vision of man's place in the scheme of things exalts this space.

The vault is an intense blue with hard-edged gold stars and circular medallions. The ceiling symbolizes that great vault under which we dwell in awe and satisfaction. The painted scenes depicting the life of Mary and the life of Christ are separated by broad, ornamental bands. But the rich blue of the ceiling extends down and appears again in the sky areas of the paintings. Thus, each scene while remaining an entity, a composition, partakes of the cosmic significance of the whole scheme.

Giotto stands between the Gothic period and the Renaissance, the first with its other-worldly orientation and the second with its focus on man and nature. He is recognized for placing his figures in a believable space, in a natural environment, rather than against a gold background in the Gothic tradition. With few and noteworthy exceptions each scene in the Arena Chapel includes a prominent architectural motif in the landscape. For Giotto, the structures shaped by man fit within nature and the cosmic scheme.

The panel in which the architectural motif is most conspicuously absent depicts the betrayal. How appropriate the absence of this creative symbol where the action typifies the corruptibility of man.

The strong design of the individual panels is well conveyed in reproductions, and Giotto's work thus provides instructive examples for any who would become artists. What slides and reproductions cannot reveal adequately is the overall scheme of the chapel. I found here in the Arena Chapel an amazing awareness of what it means to dwell under the vault of the sky as participant in a continuing creation.

The Arena Chapel is indeed a monument to the human spirit. Yet our broader purpose in travelling within Italy led us to place as much importance upon the effort to imagine what it might be like to live in a tufa cave, an unmortared stone shelter, a white-washed hilltop community (which took its definitive shape in the 1500's) as in the viewing of monuments. Although neglected in architectural studies until recently, the forms of folk architecture are no less exciting than the forms of the monuments which a culture has produced. Vernacular architecture, because it comprises the larger part of the built environment and because it reveals more intimately the life of a people, can no longer be ignored in shaping a view of life in a given culture, and in putting into fresh perspective life in our own.

We followed the lead of Edward Allen¹ in visiting Apulia, an area with a long history of building communities in stone. From Martins Franca on a sunny morning in September we drove the short distance to Massafra. Our interest there was in communities carved into the soft tufa rock, both below level ground and into the face of a cliff. There is evidence in the museum of Taranto of occupation of natural caves in this area at an earlier date, but the first carved communities are said to date from 754 B.C. "The most intensive development" was between 717 and 843 A.D. "when the iconoclasts were in power in Byzantium" and "sixty thousand monks fled to exile in Italy---(bringing) with them their skills as painters of icons."³ By the 11th century, "the population, monastic and secular, of all the caves around Massafra grew to an estimated two thousand."⁴

First I wanted to see the underground communities consisting of units of three or more dwellings dug into the tufa around



Figure 1, Caves of Massafra



Figure 2, Cisternino



Figure 3, Signor e signora Semeraro



Figure 4, Paired trulli south of Martina, Franca

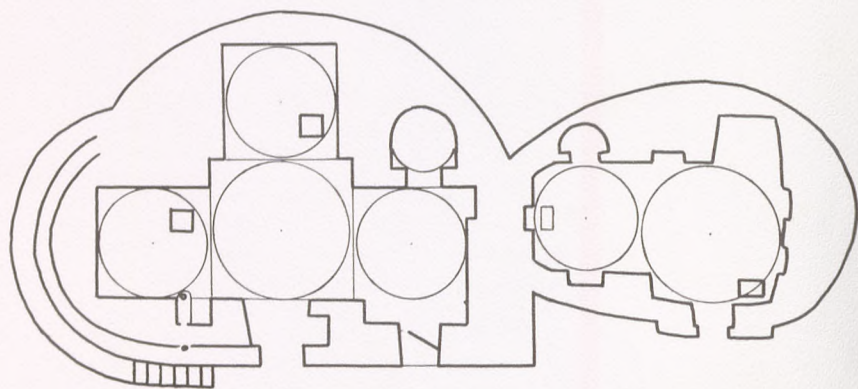


Figure 5, Paired trulli, diagram of interior

central sunken courts. We saw one such court with entrances into three of its sides. The walls of the sunken courtyard now form the foundation for above ground dwellings. The underground communities seem to have all but disappeared, but because tufa is easy to carve, they had early in the history of this area answered the human need for shelter. (There are similar communities in the loess belt in China⁵ and in the Sahara.)

Nearby, our guide unlocked a street floor door, and passing through a chamber holding water storage facilities for current use we descended tufa stairs into the past. There we discovered a sanctuary, cruciform in plan, with paintings which we were told date from the tenth and twelfth centuries. The top of the cross was opposite the stairs, and like the arms was pronounced just sufficiently to establish the form of cross and create one of the three focal areas for worship. This sanctuary is a remnant, then, of the underground community and a sister to the cave churches in the nearby gravina.

After driving beyond the edge of town we descended into the Gravina of the Madonna della Scala to the level of the two cave churches carved into the southeastern cliff. We entered first what we understood to be a tenth century church in which the frescoes are fairly well preserved. The fresh flowers on the altar suggested that the church is still visited for religious purposes. Neighboring it is an earlier cave church without paintings. The only decoration is the few crosses (of uncertain date) etched into the tufa walls. The central column of tufa is missing. The ceiling curves down to reveal the point where the column had been. Two remaining columns were apparently adequate to support the weight over the more open areas of the ceiling. These unpretentious churches seem to have afforded minimal space for congregating. Next to them is their Baroque successor, more than adequate in area enclosed but perhaps otherwise unimpressive.

On this same southeastern wall of the gravina was the monastery and beyond it the pharmacy where the great variety of medicinal herbs grown in the gravina were prepared and stored. But my interest centered in the secular dwellings carved into the opposite side of the ravine. (Figure 1)

Cave walls are several feet thick. Tufa is adequate in strength when sufficient depth is maintained in walls and between floors. The caves have flat ceilings and are generally fan-shaped, the front side being narrow, the back wide and curved. Whatever

the purpose of this plan, it served to allow the light which entered the door to reach most of the carved-out space.

The caves as they exist today reveal accommodations in design to facilitate living. Our guide carried a clump of dried grass into one cave to dramatically point out the fireplace which carried the smoke up through a chimney carved into the tufa to the slope above. Attachments for hanging lanterns were carved into the ceiling by removing the tufa on two sides and above a band of material which forms the hanger. Niches in the walls provided storage areas. One cave visited had a cistern with a square lip raised about four inches above the floor level. A pebble dropped into the shaft plunked into water below, although rain water is no longer channelled into the cistern from the ledge outside on the cliff face. The adjoining room was on a level about three steps higher than the first. It had a window opening on the outside wall, and opposite it a recess, which we were told had held a wine or olive press. Below this niche a basin was carved into the tufa floor, presumably to hold the vessel which was to receive the juices. Such evidence of dwelling is fascinating.

But again and again we were reminded that what it means to dwell is clearly to be seen in the people of Apulia today. I questioned an old woman in black outside her doorway on a Massafra street soon after we had come into town. She walked half a block to enlist the aid of two men who were engaged in conversation. One of them indicated that we should follow his car in ours. He led us to a school in another part of town where his brother who spoke English teaches. The teacher in turn directed us to the Municipio where a guide was found for us. The guide concluded a wonderful tour by introducing us to a man who had recently opened a family restaurant. It is out of a sense of belonging to the community that Italians in one place after another reached out to welcome us. The meal which we enjoyed in this family restaurant warrants description.

We were ushered into a small white room at the left of the dining area which we had entered from the street. The smaller room was well lighted through an ample window area. The atmosphere was pleasantly informal. We were, while we waited for the first course, and throughout the meal, to meet each member of the family who was present. The host and head of the family enjoyed introducing first his wife and then his girls and a son-in-law. We in turn enjoyed introducing our four children to them.

The food was prepared simply. We ate spaghetti, then veal and french fries. We drank the excellent wine of the house, mineral water, and the children had their usual aranciata. The bread, typical in Italy, had a firm crust and we found it delicious.

Before we were served our coffee we looked with the proprietor at paintings by a local artist which were hung throughout the restaurant. Clearly it was the work of an amateur. But perhaps it is of some significance that throughout Italy, in one restaurant after another, original works, often of some merit, are displayed. We seldom saw a reproduction.

We had a good meal and ate slowly. We drank our coffee leisurely. After we had paid our bill the proprietor brought out a bottle of homemade liqueur, and with the few others in the restaurant we exchanged toasts. His pride in his family and the new family venture was clear. I wished him success. A man who can transform a simple but delicious meal into a delightful human encounter deserved success.

On the day following our visit to Massafra we drove the few miles to Cisternino, up the hill to the edge of the old sector of town, and parked the car. We walked through the narrow streets of the beautiful city which had in time effectively utilized the available space within defensive walls laid up in the thirteenth century. Only a few traces of the wall remain today as a reminder that they were a factor in shaping the city. We gazed at the sculptural forms of the glistening whitewashed limestone facades, the vaulted passages and the buttresses from one building to another across the streets. (Figure 2) Absorbed in my own observations, I was unaware that we too were being observed. An elderly gentleman having approached undetected asked us to follow him. I helped him carry a large container of cooking oil, and we stopped a number of times as he pointed out the most interesting views of arches and stairs. His own dwelling was our destination and one of the most beautiful spots in town.

We entered the ground floor vault which is the kitchen where he introduced himself and his *moglie*, a gracious lady. Giovanni Semeraro is his name. We were seated on a cot and served her biscuits and his wine. He showed us his muddied shoes and indicated that he grew the grapes on a plot outside the town. This is an age-old pattern in which people dwelling in compact communities, which afforded security, farm the lands outside the town.

Giovanni Semeraro and his wife live at the end of a walkway. The kitchen is at the left. At the end on the ground floor is a storage vault. At the right and up a flight and a half is the living room. The rooms are not contiguous. The pattern of space utilization is therefore a matter of some interest.

Allen points out that, "Almost all [the dwellings] are basically single floor apartments which are stacked above or below others in narrow two or three story buildings. Most are quite restricted in floor area, so those on the upper floors avoid further diminution by having their access stairs outside the buildings in the already narrow street. Inside, the simpler houses consist of one and two rooms, often with lofts or attics."⁶ As space needs grew the flexible system of vaulting allowed one space to be built upon another or arched over the street below. The visual result is one of unity in material and color, (white-washed stone), with a maximum variety in the modification of the basic sculptural forms.

One may assume that as a neighboring space became available the Semeraros extended their occupancy within the complex of vaulted rooms. Their kitchen is a simple barrel vault. The living room is a much larger, more complex, vaulted structure, white, well lighted and airy. Heavy dark curtains divide the living area from the bedroom. As signor Semeraro pulled aside the curtain we saw the elegant headboard of dark inlaid wood and above it a holy picture.

The most important furniture in the living room was a round table. A photo album was handy. Signor Semeraro seated my wife at the table and we looked at pictures of his children and grandchildren.

After agreeing to pose for a picture, signor Semeraro changed his coat and his wife removed her apron before appearing outside their kitchen door. It was a classic pose of husband and wife. (Figure 3) He put his right hand on her right shoulder. In his left hand he held his curved-stem pipe.

Then off we went again through the old town with il signore holding the hand of our two year old daughter. We arrived at the park on the cliff's edge near where we had left the car, but, signor Semeraro seemed uneasy about our approaching departure. He led us back into town where at the entrance of a ground floor

study on one of the town squares we were very graciously welcomed by a man who spoke fluent English. Signor Vincent Scarafile is a student of languages, a translator, and for two years he taught school in the United States. After some conversation he started up a ladder for a book which he suggested I might like to obtain when back in the States. "Do you mean this one?" I asked, as I pulled out my copy of Edward Allen's, *Stone Shelters*. He did, indeed, and since he had collaborated with the author on the section on Cisternino, I asked him to autograph my copy.

Signor Scarafile was happy to practice his excellent English on the children. He was happy that they could understand without difficulty. That was for him a true test of his command of the language.

Signor Semeraro, we learned, was as frustrated as we were that we could not communicate more adequately. But thanks to signor Scarafile we were able to communicate the warmth we felt toward him. There was no end to his hospitality. He would have shown us the countryside. But with no adequate way of sharing with him I could not accept. He therefore asked us to wait until he could return home and get a bottle of his vintage wine for us.

As we waited we talked further to signor Scarafile and he with the children. When signor Semeraro had returned with his present we thanked him, said our "ariveriderci," and he was gone. Such a warm human being.

Among the varieties of vernacular architecture there are, throughout Apulia, shelters constructed of field stone laid up without mortar. Best known are the trulli of Alberobello. Trulli is the name for the developed form, stone houses with conical domes laid up in concentric rings of stone, each successive ring decreasing in circumference. Alberobello is an entire town of such structures. More often trulli are found singly or a few together in the countryside.

Because each room of a trullo is covered by a conical dome, the plan of the interior spaces is evident from the outside. Linking each domed room is an archway. The walls are low, seldom higher than the doorway. Exterior and interior walls are dressed stone. Between the two wall surfaces is a stone rubble fill. The dome as described earlier is covered with limestone shingles and

the contour of the exterior of the cone is generally steeper than that of the dome which forms the ceiling.

Two adjoining structures now abandoned in a field south of Martina Franca illustrate the fully developed trullo. (Figures 4 and 5) The smaller structure, apparently the earlier of the two, consists of two rooms which were not plastered. The second and smaller room served as the kitchen and had a generous fireplace area. This dwelling has a number of recesses in the interior walls but no window.

The larger structure has three rooms off the larger (approximately ten foot square) central space. Each of these rooms is elevated one step above the central room. Below the floor of the rear room is a storage space. Below the floor of the room to the left is a cistern. Water channelled from the roof enters through a pipe into a recess in the wall. From the bottom of the recess a trough leads the water below ground into the reservoir. (We had seen that same ingenuity in a cave at Massafra.) The room to the right of the entrance has a window with a hinged wooden door. On the opposite wall, about thirty inches above the floor, is a deep recess with a shallow dome above it. (It might have been an oven, but it had no vent, and I saw no evidence of a fire having been made there. Indeed, this larger trullo had no chimney.) Cooking is often done in a small open hearth kitchen beyond the dwelling, perhaps because cooking inside adds to the condensation of moisture on the cold walls, especially in wintertime. In this instance it could have been done in the smaller of the two adjoining structures.

The access stairway to the roof of the larger trullo is typical. Figs, fave beans, and other crops are dried on the roof. Once dry they can be stored inside on a wooden platform in the vaulted space overhead. There is in this pair of structures much evidence of living. Yet, of course, in this agricultural setting more time is spent out of doors than inside. Lacking were the creature comforts which in our culture we have come to expect, although in Alberobello television antennae sprout from the roofs.

What these various dwellings in Apulia do reveal is an integrity which the rapidly growing suburban communities in the United States lack. We have few limitations in terms of materials available and we use materials indiscriminately. In Apulia the lack of wood and the abundance of stone has limited choice and

fostered conditions in which design traditions could grow. What evolved made the kind of sense which strengthens the lives of the individuals involved.

Suburban developments in Ohio reveal a combination of impressive materials on the facade. Stone or brick on the first floor level with vertical wood panelling on the second is common. The sides and back are then variously stucco or horizontal wood siding (honest materials with a low prestige value). It is not an integrated structure but the symbol of a home that seems important. Realtors offer to sell "homes," not houses. But we buy only the facade; and although it is a "substantial investment," it takes an investment of quite another kind to convert a house into a home.

FOOTNOTES

¹Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 7.

²Edward Allen *Stone Shelters* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1969).

³*Ibid.*, p. 5).

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects* (Garden City, Doubleday, 1964).

⁶Edward Allen, *Stone Shelters*, pp. 135-136.

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A CITY BASEMENT – WITH FOOTNOTES
(with apologies to Thomas Gray and W. Shakespeare)

Alas, poor Richard.¹ I knew him, Spiro.²
Like you, he was considered by some a hero;
But his trusted advisers, both Bob³ and John,⁴
Who should have been fired but lingered on,⁵
Led him astray⁶ in a felonious way
That did credit to no one.
Then there was John, surnamed Dean,⁷
Who blew off the lid with considerable steam;
And John the judge,⁸ who kept everything clean.
Another John⁹ – Martha's,¹⁰ that is –
Paid little attention to official biz¹¹
Until he became the chairman of CREEP,¹²
Which made a lot of Nixonites weep.
While we're speaking of Johns and their ilk,
There's the John¹³ who befouled himself with milk.
Now let's take a look at dumb Ronnie,¹⁴
A lad whom you'd hardly call Bonnie.
He was pushed and shoved by President Dick,¹⁵
But what he deserved was a good swift kick.¹⁶
With the press he was most unco-operative;
Now, to use his own term, he's inoperative.¹⁷
And then there was Pat,¹⁸ the dour and fat,
Who always knew where the corpse was at;¹⁹
But he concealed and distorted the facts
Until Dick was about to get the ax.
Like Ron, he stuck it out to the bitter end
And departed the scene with scarcely one friend.
Had Dick paid attention to *Newsweek* and *Time*,²⁰
He still might be in's political prime;
But he chose to listen to Ronnie and Pat;²¹
Consider now, if you will, where he is at.²²
Like you, dear Spiro,²³ President Dick
Resigned, as we've seen, just in the nick,
And thus accomplished his last political trick.²⁴

James K. Ray

FOOTNOTES

¹Richard M. Nixon, thirty-seventh President of the United States, 1969-1974. Variously known as the greatest American President since Abraham Lincoln, King Richard, and tricky Dicky.

²For readers with short memories, Spiro T. Agnew, Vice President of the United States, 1969-1973. Until his resignation in 1973 because of federal income tax fraud, Agnew was the chief tub-thumper (with apologies to Henry L. Mencken) for Nixon's law and order program.

³H. R. Haldeman, White House chief of staff, 1969-1973.

⁴John D. Ehrlichman, Nixon's chief domestic adviser, 1969-1973.

⁵Until 1973, when Nixon finally requested their resignations. By that time, however, the fat was in the fire.

⁶As a result of the Watergate trial, who misled whom is somewhat moot.

⁷John W. Dean III, personal counsel to President Nixon, 1969-1973.

⁸Judge John J. Sirica, *Time's* Man of the Year for 1973.

⁹John N. Mitchell, Attorney General of the United States, 1969-1972.

¹⁰Martha Mitchell, quondam wife of John. In view of subsequent events, *was* would be more accurate than *is*; but a rime is a rime is a rime (with apologies to Gertrude Stein).

¹¹Such as the prosecution of the I. T. and T.

¹²Committee to Re-elect the President

¹³John B. Connally, one of Nixon's several Secretaries of the Treasury, 1973, and heir apparent to the Presidency until the Watergate roof caved in. In happier times (before he became a Republican), Governor of Texas.

¹⁴Ronald Ziegler, Nixon's press secretary, 1969-1974. The word *dumb* is used both literally and figuratively.

¹⁵See *Time*, CII,x (3 September 1973), 8.

¹⁶You know where.

¹⁷Politically, that is. As Nixon's chief aide after the downfall in August, 1974, he did all right financially.

¹⁸Patrick Buchanan, one of the several speech writers for Nixon and Agnew. A humorless fellow with a Messianic complex; a firm believer in the divine right of kings.

¹⁹Poetic license.

²⁰Also the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

²¹See footnotes 14 and 18.

²²See footnote 19.

²³See footnote 2.

²⁴In view of President Ford's subsequent pardon of Nixon, the latter's resignation was perhaps his penultimate trick.

HISTORY AS DRAMATIC REINFORCEMENT: VOLTAIRE'S USE OF HISTORY IN FOUR TRAGEDIES SET IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Voltaire expressed on more than one occasion his basic approach to history in the tragedy: while it need not appear there as absolutely factual, it would be found in his plays as a true depicting of the customs and mores ("peinture vraie des moeurs") of the times in which they were set.¹ When critics² judge that Voltaire has been faithful to this aim, I think we can agree only if we confine our criteria strictly to Voltaire's ideas of history and the historian's task, and even then we must insist on some qualifications. As a *philosophe* and historian his views on history were utilitarian. As a playwright, his use of historical material in his tragedies was usually subordinated to his dramatic aims. We do not find history playing the role that it would later play for such a writer as Tolstoy.³ For Voltaire, such a concept as an abstract historical "flow" (considered impersonally) did not exist and hence could not figure as a determinant of human destinies or human institutions. The sense of history which the two writers held is very different, just as both in turn differ from the idealist views of many modern philosophers and historians, such as R. G. Collingwood. (The doctrine of the latter was that the historian has the obligation to attempt to reconstruct the mentality of another age in his own mind, to penetrate behind the historical phenomena he studies.) Before we approach here the central question of how Voltaire used history in certain of his tragedies, it will be fruitful to look at what his ideas about history were, for his concepts of the historian's task inevitably affected his use of historical material for dramatic purposes.

Voltaire thought that history summed up the slow, painful, but relatively steady march of human progress, and that it contained moral lessons which could increase such progress. To this extent, history was useful to the educational purposes of the *philosophes*. There was no need for a historian to be overly didactic about such values; the lessons would be clear if history were appropriately written. Voltaire's Pyrrhonism in regard to historical "fact," and his increasing concern for accuracy of citation of sources, never eliminated from his work the positive thrust of the propagandist interested in changing society.⁴ His attempt to understand the past was to evaluate it in the light of

the present. There was nothing historically invalid in this for him, for he saw human nature as never changing, even though governments, religions, and the influence of climate and geography caused differences in men. In this rationale for understanding the past Voltaire resembled the other *philosophes* whose views of the utility of knowledge were socially oriented, aimed at the betterment of life here and now.⁵ This point of view is in contrast, however, to that of the more modern idealist theory of history which holds that the task of the historian is the recreating of the past in his own mind for the purpose of understanding and expressing the particular rationale of any given period in its own peculiar integrity. From this *optique* Collingwood calls Enlightenment history "anti-historical."⁶ But in an eighteenth-century perspective, the use of history for their own enlightening purposes appeared legitimate to the *philosophes*. In Voltaire's case, J. H. Brumfitt suggests that one might say it is used as a warning.⁷

This use of history was not as a rule blatantly propagandistic, however, for in common with other rationalist historians, Voltaire appealed to the mind of his reader, and not so much to his imagination or emotions. Voltaire is still considered by many to be one of the greatest of Enlightenment historians, and Georges Lefebvre calls him the founder of truly modern history.⁸ With this judgment in mind, we can sum up from our present point of view his strengths and his limitations. As Brumfitt points out, his originality lay in his selection of content rather than in original research, and he was far superior to his predecessors in evaluating the role of the arts and sciences, of economic and constitutional changes, of customs and inventions, of the lives of ordinary men.⁹ For Voltaire (as he put it in his article "Histoire" in the *Encyclopédie*), history was "le récit des faits donnés pour vrais" ("the recounting of facts presented as true"), but however skeptical he might have been of what was reported, he was unwilling to speculate long on any internal motivation present in historic figures beyond a quick judgment, often witty or ironic. The kind of reconstruction of unknown material in which historical novelists often indulged infuriated him. In fact, he carried his own refusal to examine inner motives to the point where it is a weakness in his writing.¹⁰ His reasons for this restraint were partly prudence (as in the case of Peter the Great) and partly a sense of the limitations of historical method: "...qui sait les secrets ressorts des fautes et des injustices des hommes?"¹¹ ("Who knows the secret motives of men's errors and injustices?"). They also stem from a general lack of psychological insight,

which Brumfitt calls a serious lack in a historian. Can it be any less serious in a writer of tragedies?

When we now look at Voltaire as a dramatist (a role which to him was a major one), we find that he saw in the theatre both a ready path to literary fame and influence and an important means of communication in an almost journalistic sense.¹² He felt that his particular challenge was that of renewing the genre of tragedy — of “putting a new world outlook into an old literary form.”¹³ Something in the air of the early eighteenth century — a growing optimism, a belief in the possibility of improving the quality of human life through science and education, a feeling (culminating in Rousseau) that evil could not be native to the human soul — all this was calling into question the fundamentals of classic tragedy.¹⁴ In a word, the “climate” was non-tragic, and the challenge to Voltaire was no small one. His dramatic career can be described as a constant search for means of renewing this literary form which he valued highly as a treasure of civilization. The use of history (innovatively, of French history) was one such means. We can see, however, viewing from our present perspective, that incorporating history into the tragedy posed for Voltaire a double problem. The vision of history that he possessed is part of the difficulty; the rest is what art and the genre he was using do to the substance of history itself.

Certain critics, notably Henri Lion, have suggested that Voltaire could not sustain the classic psychological tension for five acts in a tragedy, and hence perverted the genre when he resorted to the exterior physical action of historical events to help him out. Voltaire himself (and his defenders later) saw as entirely valid in tragedy the use of history to trace the effects of men's passions.¹⁵ Whatever resiliency a definition of tragedy may have, a major difficulty in Voltaire's case is that in wishing to keep its formal elements intact while reinvigorating it, he ruled out the possibility of utilizing in the theatre his own greatest strengths as a historian.

Classical tragedy by its very definition and nature limited what history could do. Voltaire excelled in his portrayal of the activities of artisans and merchants; these were the people who, in Voltaire's own words, were “fourmis qui se creusent des habitations en silence, tandis que les aigles et les vautours se

déchirent.”¹⁶ (“ants who dig out dwellings in silence while the eagles and the vultures are tearing each other apart.”) Tragedy was by its nature concerned with these “aigles” and “vautours.” The play of economic factors in history, the role of the merchants — these were seen as inappropriate subject matter in tragedy, and Voltaire avoided them in his plays, as they would not be avoided by other playwrights in the evolving *drame bourgeois*.

We should note here that certain things tend to happen to history in tragedies — certain obvious things. Primarily because of the limited time span and dramatic condensation, the nuances of circumstances or historical motivation tend to disappear. (We might call this the “spotlight effect,” to parallel Erich Auerbach’s “searchlight effect” in polemical writing.¹⁷) Because of the time limit, events may have to be focused more closely together than was actually the case. For example, Voltaire moved back a few years the death of the Black Prince in order to have it in the background of the circumstances leading to the slaying of Don Pèdre by his half-brother Henri. Another hazard to history in tragedy is that love (or some other compelling dramatic necessity) may take over, as it certainly does in *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, while the historical motivation for Vendôme’s siding with the English remains very unclear.

The other aspect of Voltaire’s double problem is that his views of history limit him as a tragedian. His unwillingness (or inability) to examine the inner motivation of character is a serious flaw. And when it comes to plays set in the Middle Ages Voltaire was again disadvantaged, for he did not fully understand the basis for its coherence as a period in history — even though, as Georges Lefebvre says, the *Essai sur les moeurs* is the first true synthetic résumé of the feudal period.¹⁸ To Voltaire the Middle Ages appeared as a source of bad examples of the effect of barbarous passions. He could admire great figures in it, even Jeanne d’Arc. But notice how he did it: “...cette héroïne, digne du miracle qu’elle avait feint...”¹⁹ (“...that heroine, worthy of the miracle she had feigned...”) Skepticism can go too far: Voltaire did not seem to realize that people could hold opinions or be motivated by forces totally different from his own.

These limitations we note from our present perspective. But if we try to shift to Voltaire’s point of view, I think we can see that there are more possibilities than problems in the utilization of

history in the tragedy. Perhaps the more legitimate questions to ask here are from Voltaire's perspective: What does he want to do as a dramatist? How will he ask history to help him do it? For we must, I think, seriously suggest (with Jack R. Vrooman) that, with very few exceptions, when Voltaire wrote tragedies he subordinated all other categories of thought to his dramatic aims.²⁰ He could – and did – risk a tirade by *Zaïre* (in *Zaïre*, I, i) which added nothing to the dramatic effect but which did aid the dramatist's own views, as Ronald Ridgway notes. But we agree with Ridgway, too, as he continues, "Mais dans l'ensemble il a raison de dire qu'il a 'prétendu faire une tragédie et non pas un sermon' (Best. 533); son premier souci est de captiver les spectateurs et de s'assurer une réussite éclatante en suivant la direction de ses propres talents et des tendances de l'époque."²¹ ("But overall he is right to say that he 'intended to create a moving and interesting tragedy, and not a sermon;' his primary concern is to assure himself a resounding success by following the direction of his own talents and of the tendencies of the times.") After all, any propagandist purposes he had could not succeed if the play did not.

If we may assume here as a point of departure that Voltaire in writing tragedies wanted most of all to make people feel an emotional reaction, feel the pathos of the situation, then we next ask with him, what can history do for tragedy? In answering this question it seems to make sense to talk first about general or external factors, and then to talk about internal ones of dramatic mechanism, though there is some overlapping of the two categories.

First of all, history (in a more specific way than myth or legend) could contribute to the elevation of tone appropriate to tragedy. The sonorous list of great names of French history was the novel variant of this general effect that Voltaire found very successful in *Zaïre*. Lusignan, for example, says in scene three of the second act, "Quand Philippe à Bovine enchainait la victoire,/Je combattais, seigneur, avec Montmorency,/Melun, d'Estaing, de Nesle, et ce fameux Couci." ("When Philip at Bovine was binding up the victory,/I was fighting, sir, with Montmorency,/Melun, d'Estaing, de Nesle and that famous Couci.") There was a reverberation here that was helpful in establishing a high tone characteristic of great men and great events, honoring them in being part of the greatest of genres and honoring tragedy in turn with their presence.

Another advantage in using history, from Voltaire's point of view, was that it could be the handmaiden of the notion of the relativity of truth as opposed to a universal or an authoritarian notion. The fact that Voltaire's propaganda was often open to more than one interpretation — being more implicit than explicit — served him well.²² It has been a durable commodity, anchored in the relativity of truth itself rather than to any one of its incarnations. What better vehicle than a historical *peinture des mœurs* for making this point of relativity, with contrasting cultures incorporated into the dramatic conflict of the play? This element is especially strong in *Zaïre*, though as Vrooman points out, there is nothing inherently Turkish about Orosmane or Zaïre, and there is a certain ironic discrepancy between Orosmane's saying (in true Turkish fashion), "Mais il est trop honteux de craindre une maîtress." ("But it is too shameful to fear a mistress.") and his subsequent (non-Turkish) actions.²³ But however imperfect, this juxtaposition of varying cultures opened the door on occasion to the contrast of "then" and "now" or of "we" and "they."

History can also contribute its truth to help make the plot seem plausible. Without elaborating here, though, on the long seventeenth-century debate of the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable*, we do need to note that this aspect of the use of history can be a double-edged tool which may cut in the wrong direction — as witness the major factual *peripeteia* in *Adélaïde du Guesclin*. Voltaire's use of an incident he found reported in the *Annales de Bretagne* stretched thin the credibility of his plot. Coucy's disobedience of Vendôme's orders to slay Nemours (based on the Breton episode) contrived a happy ending to a tragic situation.

History can be a source of action, of spectacle, of *tableaux*, and to Voltaire this aspect was very important. Through his early interest in Shakespeare he saw the need for more action on the French stage, and though his admiration for the Englishman would diminish, his search for devices to enliven tragedy would not turn far from this type of remedy. Particularly when the Comédie Française stage was cleared of spectators (1759) his taste for spectacle could be indulged (in *Tancredède*) to include a warriors' march and the panoply of the feudal *jugement de Dieu*. Voltaire saw the feudal period as especially rich for this purpose of spectacle. It was a source, in general, of a certain excessive heroism²⁴ and a certain grandeur of soul which could be useful to the atmosphere of tragedy. In fact, Voltaire appears more sympathetic to the feudal period in his tragedies than in the

Essai, probably for the reason that on stage he wanted to appeal to the emotions of his audience. Ridgway even suggests that the spirit that animates *Tancredè* is so far from the mind-set of Voltaire as historian that perhaps he was simply thinking in terms of exploiting the taste for the Middle Ages which was beginning to spread following the publication in 1753 of the *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie* of La Curne.²⁵ It was a taste which had been planted much earlier than that; between 1715 and 1748 twenty-seven works had appeared in France on the Merovingian period alone.²⁶ Voltaire, too, had helped create this predilection with *Zaïre* and *Adélaïde du Guesclin*. But even more notable than a possible appeal on his part to a certain growing taste is the overall idealism of Voltaire's plays of the feudal period as contrasted to his history of these times, "Il laisse généralement à l'historien le soin de montrer le revers de la médaille et de faire les distinctions nécessaires. Ainsi les nobles chevaliers de *Tancredè* et les vertueux croisés de *Zaïre* deviennent ailleurs des enragés qui s'abandonnèrent à tous les excès de la fureur et de l'avarice," et des 'monstres ornés de croix blanches encore toutes dégouttantes de sang des femmes qu'ils venaient de massacrer après les avoir violées.'"²⁷ ("He usually leaves to the historian the task of showing the other side of the coin and making the necessary distinctions. Thus the noble knights and the virtuous crusaders of *Zaïre* become elsewhere madmen who 'abandoned themselves to all the excesses of fury and greed' and 'monsters decorated with white crosses still dripping with the blood of the women they had just killed after raping them.'")

Doubtless Voltaire the dramatist was giving the audience the picture of chivalry they expected, finding in its ideals a fertile field for the tragedy. When we contrast this attitude of the dramatist with that of Voltaire the historian, we realize that in the plays Voltaire was not using history as a warning at all, as he tended to do in his historical writing, but was using it instead as a means of reinforcing one highly desirable quality of tragedy in his attempt to reinvigorate the genre. For, most importantly of all, history in his plays contributes to an accentuation of the element of the *pathétique*.

In line with Voltaire's concept of what history was, he saw events in historical settings — as opposed to those of legends or myths — as being not so inevitable, not the result of the gods or fate, but the result of human error or chance.²⁸ Hence the victims are, in a sense, even more to be pitied than if they were the

victims of the inevitable. To Voltaire, the element of the *pathétique* was very important, and worth enhancing in this historical way. This last external characteristic of history as used in Voltaire's tragedies leads us directly into the internal, structural elements, for the accentuation of the *pathétique* has a more specific application than the general principle which Vrooman points out. In fact, it has a series of applications which we might see as a kind of reinforcing of various aspects of dramatic motivation or emotional effect. To see just how this operates, we need to look at individual plays — in this case, the four tragedies set in the Middle Ages — *Zaïre*, *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, *Tancredi*, and *Don Pèdre*.

The earliest is *Zaïre* (1732), the first of Voltaire's plays to incorporate the history of his own countrymen. *Zaïre*, a slave of the Saracens, is loved by her master Orosmane, sultan of Jerusalem. *Zaïre* welcomes his love, even though life with him means a denial of her Christian heritage. She does not know who her parents were, but a small cross she wore as a child when taken into the custody of the Moslems testifies to her early life among the crusader Christians of Jerusalem. The retaking of this city by the Moslems under Saladin (1187) in the historical event underlying the action of the play, which takes place in Jerusalem some twenty years later.

Nérestan, a Christian prisoner, had left Jerusalem (pledging on honor to come back) in order to seek ransom money at the French court. The first act of *Zaïre* sees his return; Orosmane rewards his courage with the freedom of many more Christian knights than he was able to bring money to ransom. Orosmane refuses, however, at first to free old Lusignan, descendant of the kings of Jerusalem. *Zaïre* is not to be freed, either — to Nérestan's evident dismay. Orosmane, observing this, is conscious of a twinge of jealousy. *Zaïre* then succeeds in obtaining the freedom of Lusignan, contrary to Orosmane's earlier decision. As the old man comes into the presence of *Zaïre* and Nérestan, the cross worn by *Zaïre* and a certain scar of Nérestan's reveal to Lusignan that his children (whom he had long thought dead) are these two people. They find out the identity of their father, and realize, of course, that they are brother and sister. Lusignan persuades *Zaïre* to declare herself Christian, just as an order comes from Orosmane for the arrest of all the French soldiers. Lusignan makes *Zaïre* swear to keep secret their relationship.

It was the rumor that the French fleet was heading for his coasts that had brought about the order from the sultan to arrest the French. Once that rumor proves false, Orosmane's order is revoked, and he permits Nérestan to see Zaïre. Informed that their father is dying, she agrees to be baptized, and not to marry Orosmane. Zaïre is torn and despairing as Orosmane seeks her out for the wedding, and she flees. She feels that she cannot reveal her becoming Christian. Orosmane, distressed and perplexed, becomes jealous again when Nérestan's note to Zaïre (arranging a meeting) falls into his hands. The meeting is for her baptism, but Orosmane does not know this, and lets the note be delivered to test her. When Zaïre keeps the rendezvous, Orosmane kills her in a jealous rage. Nérestan is brought in, in chains, and then the truth of his relationship to Zaïre is revealed. Orosmane, regaining an apparent calm, frees Nérestan and gives him Zaïre's body to return to France. He then kills himself.

In this play, the most striking example of the use of history for reinforcing the *pathétique* occurs in the first scene of the second act. One of the French soldiers, Châtillon, is here recalling the time when Saladin retook Jerusalem (1187), and his long description of the actual shattering event in terms of "nos pères, nos enfants, nos filles, et nos femmes" ("Our fathers, our sons, our daughters, and our wives") takes on a weight that is doubled. It underscores the motivation that will cause Lusignan to say of Zaïre, "Mon Dieu qui me la rends, me la rends-tu chrétienne?" ("My God who returns her to me, are you giving her back as a Christian?") Not only does it reveal what Lusignan and the others can never personally forget but it also ties the fortunes of the characters in the play to a real event which the audience knew something about from their own history as a nation. It is through this sense of a pre-existing audience concept that the force of the speech is enhanced, emphasizing in the process the aspect of the *pathétique*. This speech by Châtillon is also using history as a time and space stretcher in the play (as memory serves in the exposition of *Phèdre*). *Zaïre* takes place in the required time and space limitations of tragedy, but here a recollection of historical fact extends these confines to recreate for a moment the atmosphere of twenty years earlier.

This is the most striking example of such usage of history in the play, but there are others. In a shorter passage (II, iii) a less specific reference recalls (in a sort of appeal to the *cri du sang*, the ties of blood kinship) the blood of twenty kings, of heroes, of

martyrs that flows in Zaïre's veins. Once again, the historical reference stretches time for the audience. Another example: Nérestan's recounting of his parole to Paris brings briefly into the play the court of Saint Louis (II, i), expanding the space of the action and bringing it home to the audience.

We perhaps should return here for a moment to the general point (noted above) on the *pathétique* in a historical play, where the denouement hinges on human error or chance rather than on fate. This can indeed emphasize the element of the *pathétique*, but Voltaire does not let himself be served by this aspect of history as well as he might, for the chance that operates is often so fortuitous as to invite doubt. More than one critic has noted that the simple word "brother" or "sister," spoken in the dialogue or appearing in Zaïre's letter (as could easily have happened) would have avoided completely the tragic ending. We can see similar weaknesses of plot in other of these plays set in the Middle Ages. In fact, H. C. Lancaster suggests that in *Tancrède* the use of unlikely situations to build plot is so extreme that "...he [Voltaire] gives us no feeling that what happens is inevitable."²⁹ Luckily, his audiences did not seem to object to these structural weaknesses, and this play, like Zaïre, was enormously successful. We are, however, left with the impression when reading the plays that perhaps Voltaire's plots do not extract the full weight of the historical *pathétique*, even though he used French history in an original way to reinforce this value.

The effective device of using history for enhancing motivation and for time and space stretching, as we noted it in *Zaïre*, was not so much utilized in *Adélaïde du Guesclin* (1734), a tragedy set in the period of the Hundred Years War after the death of Charles VI. In a sense, love simply takes over in the play; instead of the wealth of themes present in *Zaïre* and the ingenious use of history in its structure, we find a singleness of theme (love) to which everything else is subordinated, including history. To be sure, certain external advantages of using history are as much present here as in *Zaïre*; the audience heard the notable names of the French Middle Ages and saw evoked the colorful but tragic period of Charles VII, but there is no attempt to portray a conflict of cultures or values. What could have been presented as a very real conflict — the motivations of the nobles (like Nemours) who supported Charles VII's claim to the throne as against the motivations of those (like Vendôme) who fought on the side of the English — is treated so superficially that it loses

almost all dramatic value. As Vendôme says when the brothers meet (II,ii), "Oublions ces sujets de discorde et de haine." ("Let's forget these subjects of discord and hatred.") The only conflict that really moves the play is that of two brothers who love the same girl. Perhaps Voltaire felt that this was good history, too; in the *Essai* he says, "...car l'amour influe presque toujours sur les affaires d'état chez les princes chrétiens, ce qui n'arrive point dans le reste du monde."³⁰ ("...for love almost always influences affairs of state with Christian princes, which does not happen in the rest of the world.")

Bearer of an illustrious French name, Adélaïde du Guesclin is loved by two titled brothers, Vendôme and Nemours. Vendôme, a supporter of the English, had imprisoned Adélaïde in order to get her out of English hands, and thus had saved her life. He wants her to marry him, and his friend and supporter, Coucy, points out to her that she is probably the only one who can bring Vendôme back to an allegiance to Charles VII, whom she and the French faction (including Nemours) support. In the course of the war, Nemours has besieged Lille, where Adélaïde is held prisoner by his brother, but he does not realize that Vendôme loves her also until he is taken prisoner and they meet as enemy kin. Nemours does not reveal to Vendôme that he loves Adélaïde, but the audience by this time knows that she loves Nemours and has rejected Vendôme. In an attempt to win her, Vendôme promises to leave the English side, but she still refuses him, saying that she loves another. The jealous Vendôme eventually discovers who the someone is, and when Adélaïde still refuses to marry him Vendôme orders, in a rage, the death of his brother. He tells Coucy to fire a cannon as a signal when the deed is done. Adélaïde then offers to marry Vendôme to save Nemours, but too late; the cannon is heard from off stage. Then, remorseful, Vendôme urges Adélaïde to take revenge for the death, but Coucy comes back to explain that the cannon shot was a false message, and that he felt he best served Vendôme by disobeying his order. The lovers are reunited, with the blessing of Vendôme, who is not only reconciled with his brother, but supports Charles VII as his rightful sovereign.

The original 1734 version of this play was not successful. The appearance of Nemours on stage when bloody, and with his arm in a sling, his fainting, the cannon shot off stage — all this was a bit too much realism for the audiences, to whose interest in love Voltaire was trying to cater. It did not really matter to

Voltaire in which historical setting this play of the two brothers who loved the same girl took place. A 1752 version (*Amélie ou Le Duc de Foix*) takes place in the eighth century; the enemy are the Moors. The original version was rewritten and performed in 1765; this time — with some strengthening of the love motivation in Vendôme's character — the play was a success. Voltaire did not, however, do much for the historical motivation. As Lancaster points out, there are only a few lines to explain why Vendôme is collaborating with the English: "Le malheur de nos temps, nos discordes sinistres,/ Charles qui s'abandonne à d'indignes ministres/ Dans ce cruel parti tout l'a précipité." ("The misfortune of our times, our ominous dissensions,/ Charles who is abandoning himself to unworthy ministers/ Into this cruel decision all these have precipitated him.") Vendôme himself does not set much store by his reasons; he is ready to change sides simply for Adélaïde's love. (One might think oneself in the latter part of the twelfth century with its knight and lady literature instead of the early fifteenth.) As for Nemours, no subtlety here, in any historical sense. "Le roi le veut" ("The king wills it") explains or justifies his actions whenever love does not. And in Adélaïde's case, when she cites serving her king as the reason she refuses to marry Vendôme, it is actually only an excuse because she loves Nemours instead.

One looks almost in vain for the kind of time-stretching evocation of the past or the historical "memory" of motivating events. There are a few passages of this nature, but they are all brief. Adélaïde's speech setting the scene of the action at the beginning of the play is very unspecific, "J'entends de tous côtés les clamours des soldats,/ Et les sons de la guerre, et les cris du trépas./ La terreur me consume;" ("I hear on all sides the noise of soldiers/ and the sounds of war, and the cries of death./ Terror is wearing me away"). In scene two of the same act she is very specific, though, in wording her feeling about the weight of history that she bears: "Ici du haut des cieux, du Guesclin me contemple:/ De le fidélité ce héros fut l'exemple:/ Je trahirais le sang qu'il versa pour nos lois/ Si j'acceptais la main du vainqueur de nos rois." ("Here, from high in the heavens, Du Guesclin regards me:/ This hero was the very example of faithfulness:/ I would betray the blood which he shed for our laws/ If I accepted the hand of the conqueror of our kings.") In scene one of the second act the playwright's tactful gesture to the Bourbon family appears; Coucy proclaims, "Et suivre les Bourbons, c'est voler à la gloire." ("And to follow the Bourbons

is to fly to glory.”) It is Coucy also who evokes an episode in French history, briefly but dramatically, in attempting to recall Vendôme from his preoccupation with Adélaïde (Act II, scene vii):

Lorsque Philippe-Auguste, aux plaines de Bovines,
De l'Etat déchiré répara les ruines,
Quand seul il arrêta, dans nos champs inondés,
De l'empire germain les torrents débordés:
Tant d'honneurs étaient-ils l'effet de sa tendresse?
Sauva-t-il son pays pour plaire à sa maîtresse?

(When Philip-Augustus, on the Bovine plains,
Restored the ruins of the torn state,
When alone he arrested, on our flooded fields,
The overflowing torrents of the German empire:
Were so many honors the result of his love?
Did he save his country to please his mistress?)

Later, Nemours recalls the constable Du Guesclin (III, i) in explaining to Dangeste that it is not defeat that has disheartened him — for did not the great constable himself suffer reverses? Rather, it is Du Guesclin's niece whom Nemours at this point believes guilty of loving that supporter of the English, Vendôme. The most interesting use of memory in the plot of the play has nothing to do with history at all; it is the personal recollection by Vendôme (V, ii) of his childhood with his brother Nemours, which tender recall moves him to countermand (a bit late) his order to Coucy to slay this very brother. It also leads ultimately to his conversion to king and *vertu*, for this play does not have a tragic ending.

Coucy's disobedience of Vendôme's order to slay Nemours is based on an incident which Voltaire had found in the *Annales de Bretagne*. In 1387 a duke of Brittany had ordered the *seigneur* de Bavalan to assassinate the constable de Clisson. Bavalan told the duke he had carried out his orders, but after the duke had fully realized the horror of his act, Bavalan revealed that he had disobeyed the duke, for he loved him too much to let him be guilty of such a crime. True tale or not, one wonders if the version involving the brothers in the play must not have appeared too contrived to the audience, and have contributed to the "gayety of the parterre" which signaled the failure of the original version. The tension of the true and the plausible, the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable*, has often been an intriguing imponderable of aesthetics.

Tancredè (1760), first played while France was at war, once more used a setting from the Middle Ages (1005, Sicily) and much spectacle for background. At the time he wrote it, the sixty-six-year-old Voltaire was, as usual, engaged in a multitude of other projects and in his normal heavy correspondence resulting from his situation in exile. The suppression of Helvétius' *De l'esprit* and the suspension of publication of the *Encyclopédie* were on his mind. Of all the things that might be said about this fascinating play (it has its moving moments even when read), we need to focus here on a different utilization of history which, instead of reinforcing motivation or stretching time by reaching back into the past, increases its effectiveness by reaching forward into the present. In this play, the forward reach is aimed at arousing the sympathies of the audience for the characters and the author; its use must have been specifically premeditated (rather than implied in a general way as in *Zaïre*), but it is not blatantly propagandistic.

At the beginning of the play, Tancredè (who is French and a descendant of the Norman adventurers who had helped the city of Syracuse throw off Moslem rule) has been away from Syracuse for some time. As rival factions there consolidate to meet the danger from combined Greek and Moslem forces, the French, especially Tancredè, are accused of aiding their enemies. Tancredè is singled out to be banished forever from the city and his property is to become state property. Aménaïde, the daughter of the aging ruler, had been raised at the Byzantine court where she had met and fallen in love with Tancredè. She is sure that he is still loved by the people in the city, and she anticipates that on his return there he could be the kind of oppressed hero who would win support. Aménaïde's true love is Tancredè, but it is also revealed that Solamir, the Moslem leader, had loved her when she was at the Byzantine court. Through the dramatic device of an ambiguously worded letter (sent by Aménaïde to Tancredè but intercepted by soldiers of Syracuse and believed to have been addressed to Solamir) Voltaire put his heroine in peril of her life. Her death for treason is called for, but the feudal *jugement de Dieu* is to settle her guilt or innocence. Tancredè, though he believes on the basis of the letter that she now loves Solamir, offers to be her champion, and he defeats Orbassan who is fighting on behalf of the State. Then, still unrecognized by all but Aménaïde, Tancredè becomes a leader of the forces of Syracuse as they face a decisive battle with the Moslems and Greeks. A heroic victory leaves Tancredè gravely wounded, but before dying

he learns that Aménaïde loves him after all. Before she joins him in death she reveals who he is, and then furiously consigns to hell "...et vous tyrans et my patrie;/ Et ce sénat barbare, et ces horribles droits/ D'égorger l'innocence avec le fer des lois!" ("...both you, tyrants, and my fatherland;/ And this barbarous senate, and these horrible rights/ Of slaughtering innocence with the sword of the laws!")

Throughout the play there are various references to the unjust letter of the law, and it was the dramatic force of these historical passages, easily oriented to the contemporary situation, that gave *Tancredè* much of its power. On top of this, the fact that the plight of the lovers in the play was indeed pathetic gave a poignancy to the contemporary parallels that increased their effectiveness. The successful "reach into the present" of Voltaire's use of history in *Tancredè* was thus a double movement of aroused sympathies that made it work so well for the playwright. Sympathies stemming from contemporary events were directed to the characters of the play and were reinforced in turn by the truly pathetic situations seen on stage. And not only were the lovers sympathetic characters in this sense; all the characters shared or came to share this quality. It is illuminating to go through the play and note those passages which in a general way orient the dramatic situation to contemporary French society, for the author's concerns were recognized and shared by at least a portion of his audience.

The most dramatic evidence of this fact is that in 1762 the play was closed down for a time, after applause and shouts of "Broglie, Broglie" greeted the line (I, vi) "C'est le sort d'un héros d'être persécuté." (The marshal de Broglie had recently been exiled to his estates.) In other lines, Voltaire's own situation in exile could easily be imagined. Such, for example, are Aménaïde's words in regard to Tancredè (II, i), "Un héros qu'on opprime attendrit tous les coeurs;/ Il les anime tous quand il vient à paraître." ("A hero who is oppressed softens all hearts;/ He quickens them all when he appears.") These lines exactly predict the reception which Voltaire himself would receive when he finally did come to Paris in 1778. Voltaire, who as historian was shocked by the primitive forms of justice in the Middle Ages, utilized as playwright their dramatic qualities — but he also appears to have been honing some fine-edged comparisons to his own day.

The final accusation by Aménaïde (quoted above), that the law itself had been unjust and had punished innocence, had been preceded by several passages suggesting that unjust laws produce independence of thought and action. For example, the sixth scene of the fourth act finds Aménaïde saying, "L'injustice à la fin produit l'indépendance." ("Injustice, in the end, produces independence.") She is setting other values above the laws of her country. This is in marked contrast to the attitude of her father, Argire, who has stated (I, iv), "J'ai pendant soixante ans combattu pour l'Etat;/ Je le servis injuste, et le chéris ingrat." ("For sixty years I have fought on behalf of the State;/ I served it [when it was] unjust, and I cherished it [when it was] ungrateful.") So it is of no little interest that those who had condemned Tancredi to exile come to recognize their error in the most interesting recognition scene in the play (IV, xi). Argire says of himself and the other nobles of the council, "O juges malheureux, qui dans nos faibles mains/ Tenons aveuglément le glaive et la balance/ Combien nos jugements sont injustes et vains/ Et combien nous égare une fausse prudence!/ Que nous étions ingrats! que nous étions tyrans!" (O unfortunate judges, who in our faltering hands/ Hold blindly the sword and the scales/ How much are our judgments unjust and vain/ And how greatly a false prudence leads us astray!/ How ungrateful we were! How much were we tyrants!")

The first scene of the second act is especially of interest as regards the use of history; Aménaïde contrasts the present harsh law of Syracuse operating against some of its own people (notably Tancredi) with the attitude of heroic French ancestors who took alarm at an enemy:

Que cette loi jalouse est digne de nos maîtres!
 Ce n'était point ainsi que ses braves ancêtres
 Ces généreux Français, ces illustres vainqueurs,
 Subjuguèrent l'Italie, et conquéraient des cœurs.
 On aimait leur franchise, on redoutait leurs armes;
 Les soupçons n'entraient point dans leurs esprits altiers,
 L'honneur avait uni tous ces grands chevaliers:
 Chez les seuls ennemis ils portaient les alarmes;"

(How fitting is this jealous law to those who govern!
 It was not thus that his brave ancestors,
 Those generous French, those illustrious conquerors
 Subjugated Italy, and won over hearts.
 People liked their sincerity, and respected their arms;
 Suspicions never entered their lofty minds,
 Honor had united those great knights:
 They sounded the alarm only against enemies.)

Could one miss the implied "reach into the present" here?

Tancredè, before fighting Orbassan in the *jugement de Dieu* (III, v), tells him that he (Tancredè) may be as necessary to the state as Orbassan himself is. These are strong words, for Orbassan represents a staunchly patriotic point of view, in which service to the state is the highest of honors. It is this patriot that Tancredè then opposes, though he will in turn be of great service to his own state in scenes that expand and redefine the narrow patriotism which had exiled him. Loredan's judgment in scene one of the fifth act restores and elevates the position of Tancredè; Voltaire could well have intended that the audience recall another great man, writing in exile.

Don Pèdre (1774), which was never performed and which Voltaire said was not meant to be, is notable for our purposes here both as another (though less effective) example of the appeal from the past to the present, and as a case where historiographical concepts and dramatic motivation were in conflict. The kingdom of Don Pèdre, legitimate son of Alphonso XI of Castile, is being threatened by Henri Transtamare, his bastard brother. To this illegitimate son the father on his death-bed had promised Léonore. He had also invoked for Henri the aid of Charles V of France to win control of Castile, and the arrival of Du Guesclin with a French army is imminent as the play begins. An aggressive *sénat* (the Spanish *cortes*, with whom Henri is allied) is challenging the power of Don Pèdre.

Léonore is at court, having been brought there by Don Pèdre. She has become sympathetic to the king, and — in fact — loves him, though she finds court intrigue most distasteful. She hopes to reawaken him to virtue, in spite of his unsavory reputation; Léonore finds his corruption superficial and blames it on the series of mistresses he has had. She even tries to get him to pardon Transtamare who, she points out, is after all his brother. Transtamare has come to claim Léonore as his rightful bride, and cannot understand her support of Don Pèdre. Don Pèdre at first feels that, in urging reconciliation with his brother, Léonore is betraying his best interests, but then he realizes that he has wrongly questioned her motives. He is not so flexible in regard to the *sénat*, but refuses to bow to its claims to power in the kingdom. He calls "gothiques ramas" ("disorderly Gothic remains") what they dare to claim as fundamental laws. Influenced by Léonore, he condemns Transtamare to exile rather than to death.

Transtamare dares Don Pèdre to strike him down while he yet can, as the news comes that Du Guesclin and a French army have arrived.

Don Pèdre prefers, as the legitimate ruler of Castile, to deal with Transtamare through the law. Du Guesclin, once on the scene, extricates Transtamare from the exile about to be enforced, acting in good faith on the death-bed request of Don Pèdre's father to support Henri. Don Pèdre elects to give battle rather than give in to Transtamare and Du Guesclin. The French constable is the victor, overcoming a valiant Don Pèdre, who is taken prisoner and treated honorably by Du Guesclin, only to be slain by Transtamare as soon as he is taken to him. In his relationship to Léonore, Transtamare remains callous to the end. We heard him early in the play evaluating her as a piece of property of which he was being deprived. Just after Don Pèdre's death he tries to claim her (V, iii), saying that as full as the day had been of changes, she could not be blamed for one more — and she should change her loyalty to him. But Léonore, despairing, kills herself, and Du Guesclin strips Transtamare of his knightly rank, calling him unworthy of it. There the play ends, leaving Transtamare to go on to rule Castile, and leaving history to attach to Don Pèdre the title of "cruel" which Voltaire questioned.

It is the judgment of Paul Ilie in his study of this play that "the Castilian experience was captured perfectly" and that the achievement of the play consists in its historiographical image of Spain.³¹ He further points out that dramatic necessity, exemplified in the role of Léonore, had to strike a compromise with historical reality; the judgment of history concerning the character of Don Pèdre is not that of Léonore. Lion's earlier study of the same play emphasized its nature as a *pièce de combat* in Voltaire's hostility to Parlement, drawing a parallel between the Castilian *sénat* (Voltaire's word) and the Parlement of Paris. That the *sénat* is the calculated villain of the play, says Lion, made contemporary political propaganda.³² We can acknowledge, perhaps, a certain validity here, though as Ilie points out, the parallel between *sénat* and Parlement is ambiguous (as is their villainy) and the Spanish *cortes* more justly correspond to the Estates. But be that as it may, in dramatic terms the device of a historical reference projecting into the present failed Voltaire the playwright in *Don Pèdre*. It did not set in motion the double pull of sympathies which made it successful in *Tancredè*. There

is too much ambiguity in the later play.

The question has been raised, for example, whether Transtamare is a sympathetic character, up to that point in the play where he slays Don Pèdre. To this reader Transtamare is not sympathetic in view of his callous attitude from the beginning that Léonore is "un bien qu'un tyran me dispute" ("a piece of property that a tyrant disputes with me"). But the fact that the question can legitimately be raised is one of the ambiguities. A more serious one involves the character of Don Pèdre — the very question which Voltaire wanted to examine anew. Leaving aside what others say of him (which in the plot is certain to be colored by political loyalties), leaving aside what Léonore (who loves him) thinks, we find that Don Pèdre's own view of himself is ambiguous, confusing his role as king and his human personality. "Un roi qui fait le bien ne fait que des ingrats" ("A king who does good creates only ingratitude,"), says the ruler in response to Léonore's pleas for peace. Yet he realizes that he has been wrong to question her motives, and he evaluates his own fate as that "...d'éloigner tous les coeurs" ("alienating all hearts") (II, v). He sees himself as a man unable to accept love when it is offered. For this major reason, a reinforcing of audience sympathy toward this historical personage could not have operated as it did so successfully in *Tancrède*, even though Don Pèdre accepts Léonore's influence later in the play.

When we remember, however, that Voltaire said that *Don Pèdre* was not meant to be performed, we are entitled to wonder, I think, if he was not here writing more consciously as a historian than a playwright — a historian interested in a reinterpretation of the character of Pedro the Cruel. Given this motivation, which his own *Discours préliminaire* to the play would seem to emphasize (however much Lion wished to discount it), Voltaire wrote the history he wanted to write, doing some violence in the process to the clarity of the play he used as vehicle. If, as Ilie proposes, the chief achievement of the play is its historiographical image of Spain, what then can we say about Voltaire's view of the character of the late Middle Ages which it reveals? Is he closer here than in the other plays to his studied condemnations of the Middle Ages in the *Essai sur les moeurs*? It would seem so. Don Pedre, who elected to deal with challenger Transtamare under the law in strong kingly authority, was slain after defeat by the brutal power of a victorious rebel — a rebel who had thereafter been found legitimate by the cynical historical process Voltaire wished to expose as, in fact, anti-historical.

Disregarding the code of chivalry, supported by an opportunistic Pope and an aggressive *sénat*, Transtamare was of his time, of the brutal, irrational side that Voltaire condemned. Don Pèdre, ahead of his day (as we see him in the play), sought a firmly centralized authority dependent on law. He refused, however, to include the claims made by the *sénat* for the so-called fundamental laws which would limit a king's authority. Voltaire made Don Pèdre's law more equivalent to enlightened reason, for the influence of Léonore, who loved Don Pèdre as a person and not as the king, would have succeeded (he suggested) in creating in Don Pèdre that strong, reason-governed monarch so desirable to the State. Instead, the brutal act of Transtamare set the stage for the creating of the historical image of a cruel Don Pèdre. In this play Voltaire the historian attempted to reform the cynical judgment that history loves a winner, and show us another Don Pèdre, who is more than a loser who deserved to lose. The ensuing ambiguities of character are perhaps more true to history than helpful to drama. The double pull of dramatic reinforcement cannot operate here. The ambiguities that Voltaire wrote into the play might perhaps also make us less quick to condemn *Don Pèdre* as a propaganda vehicle than such critics as Lion have been. Voltaire was, after all, writing a love story for the theatre. It was the potential and actual force of Léonore's love which was the justification in the play for a change in and reinterpretation of Don Pèdre's character. The dramatist wished to use his art to convince of the possibility of a different historical judgment of Pedro of Castile.

In these four plays, all set in the Middle Ages, I think we can see four differing aspects of the use of history in tragedy, with certain common elements relating both to their common setting and to Voltaire's concept of history. As effective as the historical reinforcement was for him in *Zaïre* and *Tancredè*, I wonder if we do not have to question, finally, if — in theory at least — history is as effective in this dramatic role as myth or legend. Perhaps the very real effectiveness of history is purchased at a high price, when we look at the total esthetics of tragedy and not just at Voltaire's plays. For in its very specificity of time and place and person (however relative that may be and however many different historical interpretations of the event may be possible) there is perhaps something in history itself that interferes with the most effective recognition scene of all, that shock

of identification by the audience when, in viewing the fate of the tragic hero, they say to themselves, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." At least, the question deserves to be raised, for there is another aspect in the relationship of historical portrayal to dramatic effectiveness that we could not examine with Voltaire. He used history (in his sense of it) often effectively for his purposes, but his very conception of history eliminated the brooding sense of an imponderable movement beyond individual human control which — almost as a kind of fate — Tolstoy, in another age and another culture, used so effectively in the novel. One cannot help but feel that this different conception of history is more at home in tragedy than was Voltaire's eighteenth-century variety.

NOTES

¹The quotation from Voltaire, appearing in the author's preface to *Rome Sauvée ou Catilina*, is taken from the Moland edition of his works (V 210), the edition from which passages from the plays have been cited in this essay. Translations into English throughout this paper are by the present author.

²One such judgment is that of Jack R. Vrooman, *Voltaire's Theatre: The Cycle from "Oedipe" to "Mérope," Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 75 (1970), 189.

³Isaiah Berlin, in *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970) treats the question of Tolstoy's philosophy of history.

⁴W. H. Walsh in his *Philosophy of History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960) defines propaganda as the use of the past for the aims of the present (p. 112).

⁵Where Voltaire differs from most of the rest of the French Enlightenment historians is in his refusal to use medieval history to support some particular theory of the origins of political institutions. He thought that we simply could not know enough about it to make such an interpretation.

⁶R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 77. Not all philosophers who accept the idealist view accept also Collingwood's position that this process is an intuitive act. Compare, for example, W. H. Walsh, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 56 ff.

⁷J. H. Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 168. As an example of Voltaire's views on the uses of history, we note in the article "Historiographe" of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, "Heureusement même un peuple entier trouve toujours bon qu'on lui remette devant les yeux les crimes de ses pères; on aime à les condamner, on croit valoir mieux qu'eux. L'historiographe ou l'historien les encourage dans ces sentiments; et en retraçant les guerres de la Fronde et celles de la religion ils empêchent qu'il n'y en ait encore." ("Fortunately an entire people always finds it good to have put before their eyes the crimes of their fathers; they like to condemn them; they

believe themselves better. The historiographer or the historian encourages them in these feelings; and by retracing the wars of the Fronde and those of religion they prevent there being any more of them.")

⁸Georges Lefebvre, *La Naissance de l'historiographie moderne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), p. 124.

⁹*Voltaire Historian*, p. 47; p. 75.

¹⁰*Ibid.* pp. 162-163.

¹¹Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs*, ed., René Pomeau, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1963), I, 756. The original date of publication of the *Essai sur les moeurs* is 1756.

¹²Robert Nicklaus, "La Propagande philosophique au théâtre au siècle des lumières," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 26 (1963), 1236.

¹³Vrooman, *Voltaire's Theatre*, p. 189.

¹⁴George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), pp. 114 ff.

¹⁵Vrooman, *Voltaire's Theatre*, p. 39.

¹⁶Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs*, I, 757.

¹⁷Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 404.

¹⁸Lefebvre, *La Naissance...*, p. 128. Voltaire as historian worked mainly from printed sources (as opposed to manuscript materials) and eye-witness accounts; there were none of the former and few of the latter for this period.

¹⁹Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs*, I, 752.

²⁰Vrooman, *Voltaire's Theatre*, p. 190.

²¹Ronald S. Ridgway, *La Propagande philosophique dans les tragédies de Voltaire*, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 15 (1961), 96.

²²Nicklaus, "La Propagande philosophique au théâtre...", p. 1236.

²³Vrooman, *Voltaire's Theatre*, pp. 95-96.

²⁴Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs*, I, 454.

²⁵Ridgway, *La Propagande...*, p. 190.

²⁶Franklin L. Ford, *Robe and Sword* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 233.

²⁷Ridgway, *La Propagande...*, pp. 191-192 (interior quotations from *Essai sur les moeurs*).

²⁸Vrooman, *Voltaire's Theatre*, p. 185.

²⁹H. C. Lancaster, *French Tragedy in the Time of Louis XV and Voltaire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1950), II, 417.

³⁰Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs*, I, 754.

³¹Paul Ilie, "Voltaire and Spain: The Meaning of *Don Pèdre*," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 117 (1974), 171.

³²Henri Lion, *Les Tragédies et les théories dramatiques de Voltaire* (Paris: Hachette, 1895), p. 362. Voltaire made no mention of this element in *Don Pèdre*'s situation when he wrote of him in the *Essai sur les moeurs*; by 1774, he did add in the play a rebellious body of nobles. In the years between the two treatments of *Don Pèdre*, Voltaire had written the *Histoire du Parlement de Paris*, in which, Brumfitt says, he was perfectly fair to Parlement. This document was related to the ministerial campaign against Parlement in the late 1760's and "may have been written at government request." (Brumfitt, *Voltaire Historian*, p. 70).

Harold B. Hancock

THE HISTORY OF TOWERS HALL

For more than one hundred years Towers Hall has served the needs of students, faculty and administrators of Otterbein College. Probably every student who has enrolled since 1871 has attended classes in it. At first the structure, then known simply as the main building or the Administration Building – for short the “Ad” Building – served almost every campus need – as administrative offices, classrooms, library, conservatory, art studio, and laboratory. Music left in the 1880’s to occupy the home of former President Davis (site of Carnegie Library) across the way, science moved to Saum Hall in 1898, and art occupied new quarters in Lambert Hall in 1909. But Towers Hall has continued to be used as the main classroom building down to the present time. After World War II the basement was finished off to be used for a business office and storage space, and in the 1950’s the interior was remodeled to provide for library stacks, new offices, and classrooms.

Originally Towers Hall was built to replace the main building which was destroyed by fire during the night of January 26, 1870. President Lewis Davis believed that the fire was set by an arsonist. Only a small amount of laboratory equipment and furniture was saved from the building. Practically all the classroom furniture, the college library of 3,000 volumes, and the libraries and furniture of the three literary societies (expanded to four later in the century), were destroyed.

Undaunted, President Davis called a faculty meeting in his living room across from the smoking ruins at four o’clock in the morning and made plans for the continuation of classes in the three remaining structures on campus and in the homes of professors. With the help of trustees, village residents, faculty, alumni, students and friends, money was raised to construct a new main building. (His act of courage at a time of adversity inspired a student pastor who was an alumnus to undertake the rebuilding of a church seventy-five years later. The edifice was destroyed by fire in the 1940’s in New York state, and the young student pastor, then in seminary, thought of the courage of President Davis at a time when the principal college building was destroyed. Within a year the church was rebuilt.)

The building of Towers Hall began late in the summer of 1870, and some of the materials from the ruins were used in the new structure. Until recently, when the walls were painted in the basement, charred bricks could be seen. The architect was R. T. Brookes of Columbus, and the contractor was A. W. Cornell of Newark. The cost was \$29, 335. All building materials came by railroad via Otterbein Station (Flint) because a railroad had not yet been built to Westerville.

The date of completion was fixed as August 1, 1871, but the contractor went bankrupt, and the structure was still far from complete when the trustees met in October. They threatened to bring suit against the securities of Mr. Cornell, and the building was completed for classroom use by the end of the year. A visitor in December found much to praise about the well-ventilated classrooms, administrative offices on the first floor, library facilities, and well-arranged chapel, seating 800.

Towers Hall is a handsome Victorian Gothic structure with its pointed windows and doorways and towers. Small wonder that a student of college architecture (Johannesen) found much to praise about the building:

The Victorian style is no longer merely a pictorial veneer wrapped around a classical body. It is highly sculptural. Cube, octagon, pyramid, and the truncated pyramidal form of the mansard are played against one another, sometimes harshly, but always dramatically. The windows look as if they had been cut into building blocks. And though the materials are the same as those in earlier buildings, one has the impression of more color — and the roofs are striped. The Otterbein Towers are a fitting symbol of a new era — the era of post-war national and industrial expansion, the end of the predominantly agrarian age in America, and symbolical of a new era in higher education.

In 1972 the building had its face lifted with the repointing of bricks, the erection of a new roof, and the waterproofing of the basement. The next summer two of the towers were dismantled, for they were in bad condition, and replaced.

For many years the administrative offices of the college were on the first floor of Towers Hall. The President occupied the two small rooms left of the south doorway, while the Treasurer and Registrar used the front rooms to the right of the south entrance. Traditionally the room in the southwest corner was the religion classroom, and those in the northeast corner were used by the

English department. At the beginning faculty members did not have separate offices. Each one was assigned a classroom, which he also used as an office. His chair and desk were on a raised platform. Each room had its own stove from which pipes led to a flue in the wall. Smoke escaped through one of the numerous chimneys on the roof.

The classrooms in Towers Hall could tell a thousand stories — of friendships made, of romances, of class anecdotes, of admired teachers, and pranks. Until recently a cow, a horse, or chickens were the occupants of some classrooms once or twice a year. Chairs were frequently stacked in the form of a pyramid. After a senior night out one professor came to class one morning to find his desk and classroom chairs carefully arranged in neat rows under a tree on the front lawn.

Soon after Mr. Sanders Frye came to the Otterbein campus as business manager in 1947, an employee in the boiler room, which was then located on Maple Street, saw several students running out of Towers Hall at four o'clock in the morning. He investigated and found a cow in a classroom on the second floor. When two janitors arrived at six o'clock, they laboriously backed the cow down the steps, took it to a farm across the creek and cleaned up the classroom. The business manager, boiler operator, and janitors agreed not to mention the incident to anyone. Certainly the perpetrators of the trick were surprised next day when they arrived in Towers and found no trace of the cow! To this day the names of alumni who participated are not known.

Today students sometimes ask why there is a large rounding wall on the west side of the hallway on the first floor. Old-timers know that this was because of the adjacent chapel. Here for seventy-five years were held compulsory daily chapel, lectures, and college gatherings, including athletic pep rallies. In this auditorium in April, 1917, a public meeting of citizens promised support for President Wilson in World War I. For almost fifty years the congregation of the United Brethren Church (Church of the Master, United Methodist) met in these quarters, an edifice not being built across the street until 1916. Since it was the only auditorium of any size on campus for many years, plays, variety shows, and the college lecture series were held here. A balcony above, approached from off the second floor hallway, seated two hundred students.

The college chapel was often the scene of pranks. Sometimes when the audience rose to leave, they found that the doors were barred, necessitating that someone climb out a window to remove the barriers. On one occasion in the 1890's some ambitious students carefully dismantled a farm wagon and reerected it within the chapel loaded with sand. How mystified some of the students were next morning when they attended chapel. How could such a large vehicle have been moved in there? The rostrum had a habit of disappearing and reappearing. On one occasion a note to the President indicated that it was in a cornfield adjacent to the campus. The owner would not permit his corn shocks to be disturbed unless they were carted to the barn. After students were hired to do this work, the rostrum was still not located! (One reader of the above incident was reminded of an escapade involving placing the automobile of a student in the hallway of Towers in the 1950's.)

One morning in 1948 several professors unlocked the doors to their classrooms and discovered not a single classroom chair in sight! Where could they have vanished? At chapel time they were discovered carefully piled up in the locked balcony. Later the culprit was discovered to be the student night watchman!

In 1951 Cowan Hall was erected, leaving vacant the old chapel. One of the purposes of the Centennial Campaign of 1947 had been to raise funds for a library. The decision was made to convert the chapel into a three-floor stack and to add a reading room on the west side of Towers Hall. For twenty years the Memorial Library served students and faculty until a separate building was erected.

To guard the library from possible invasion by seniors on their night out, the librarian in 1957 remained in his office, writing his annual report and watching for any disturbances. Early next morning the seniors appeared and graciously offered to drive the wearied guard home. Upon his return he found that all the library tables had been set with place mats, knives, forks, spoons, glasses, and plates, as if for breakfast.

Originally the college library was on the second floor in Room 25. At a later time it also included Room 24. In the 1880's the library was open once a week for one hour with a professor in charge. After the Carnegie Library was erected in 1908, blackboards were placed on all sides of Room 25 for the use of

the classes of such distinguished professors in mathematics as Professors Frank E. Miller, Benjamin Glover, and Fred Bamforth, and in foreign language of Professors A. P. Rosselot and Gilbert Mills.

About the time that Sandy Frye became business manager on January 1, 1947, the state of Ohio informed the college that the worn wooden stairways leading from the basement to the third floor must be replaced because they were a fire hazard. Benham, Richards and Armstrong drew the architectural plans. Since the two stairways were identical, only one set of plans was drawn up. Several contractors bid on the project, but one was \$16,000 lower than any other bidder. Later it was discovered that the contractor had made an error and figured only the cost of one stairway, not two. The college received two stairways for the price of one!

On the third floor are the literary society rooms. At the time of expansion in enrollment after World War II, commonly referred to as the "GI bulge," three of them were converted into classrooms, but the fourth was left untouched with its well constructed chairs, stained glass windows and doors, glass chandeliers, beautiful rostrum with special desks for the President, secretary and critic, busts, pictures, worn wall to wall carpeting, wall decorations and motto, "Quaerere Nostrum Studium Est." Some of the items from the other society rooms were also moved into these quarters. Student members of the societies had always been responsible for selecting and paying for the furnishings. The men's literary societies - Philomatheia and Philophronea - disappeared during the twenties and the ladies - Philalethea and Cleiorhetea - during the thirties.

Soon after Mr. Frye became business manager in 1947, he was asked to check the safety of Philomatheia and Philophronea, since they would be used for meetings during the Centennial celebration. The floors seemed shaky. Mr. Frye and "Tink" Sanders crawled under the floors and found that they were supported by two wooden trusses running north and south. They were about four feet high and showed no sign of undue strain or over loading. One end of each truss was supported by the brick walls of the chapel below. The other end of each truss was supported by a fourteen inch high truss concealed by the common walls of the literary society rooms, but it was supported by a steel column in the exact center of the chapel. The two men felt that the two rooms were perfectly safe, but they had only a few chairs placed in

each room, in order that people would stand in the back near the brick walls. Fortunately nothing happened during the Centennial celebration, but several years later when the old Chapel was being remodeled into book stacks it was discovered that the steel column lacked some four inches of touching the bottom chord of the truss in the literary society walls, which accounted for the slight shake in the floors.

What memories these literary society rooms bring back to alumni: memories of debates, lectures, musical programs, and training in parliamentary procedure. Through the 1950's it was said that evidence of parliamentary training received in those meetings was evident in the deliberations of the Otterbein faculty as well as in other meetings outside of Westerville. The records of the literary societies, now in the Otterbein Room in the library, are the best continuous source for the social history of the college before 1920.

Elsewhere on the third floor, after remodeling the south end of of the building, was the headquarters of the psychology department. In a small room nearby were once kept rats for experimental purposes. In the extreme southeast corner was located Otterbein's first radio station, WOBC, founded by Professor Lee Shackson of the Music Department in 1948. The north end of the third floor was once a storage area, but the need for classroom space led to the construction of three classrooms. Today they are faculty offices.

Few Otterbein students have visited the attic. A narrow steep stairway leads to a large open space in which are stored a few pieces of furniture, a stained glass window on the floor, and a few pipes. From these quarters one enjoys a wonderful view of the campus and hears the booming of the college bell.

The college bell, weighing over one thousand pounds, was purchased in 1872 from Vanduzen and Tift of Cincinnati. A favorite prank was to steal the bell clapper. In the 1940's some students ran a rope from the bell clapper to the Science Building and rang the bell intermittently after 2:00 p.m., until they were discovered. Inspired by this prank, others became more inventive. Taking fine fishing line, they fastened the bell clapper to the limb of a tree. When the wind moved the branch, the bell rang. The line was so fine that college authorities were some time in locating the source of the annoyance.

As late as World War II the basement was unfinished, except for a portion of the southwest end which housed a janitor and his family until after 1920. When Dr. A. P. Rosselot arrived at Otterbein as a student in 1901, he spent the night in these quarters since no one else was around. When Mr. Frye became the business manager after World War II, he used the south end as an office and asked Forest "Red" Moreland, who had just arrived to work for the college, to finish off the rest of the basement. Half of each day he devoted to smoothing the dirt floors. By the use of an eight-foot stick he determined when everything was level, and then an order was placed for a shipment of concrete. Almost a year passed before all the floors were finished. Today the basement is used for printing and storage.

Most of the graduates of the college do not know that Towers once contained two hand operated elevators used for hoisting coal to the upper floors for the coal stoves and for bringing down ashes. At the present time the openings to the elevators in the basement are blocked up. A member of the class of 1943 recalls a prank in which some students, for no particular reason, filled the shafts with classroom chairs. According to him, splinters from the chairs thrown down were still visible many years later.

Near the print shop on the west side of the basement in the corner is the mail room. Formerly it was occupied by the telephone exchange.

Going outside the building and entering the west door of the basement, the visitor enters a hallway which leads to the Reading Development Center. At one time these quarters were occupied by the Otterbein Room. Adjacent is a vault used by the treasurer and registrar of the college. In the northwest corner of the basement is the public relations office. Formerly it was occupied by the Learning Resource Center. Around the corner to the extreme north is a pleasant classroom, Towers 1, an area developed into a classroom at the time of the GI bulge.

In retrospect, Towers Hall has had a distinguished career, serving a great variety of purposes. Only in recent years has it borne the name of Towers. When administrative offices were moved into the Carnegie Library and that structure was renamed the Administrative Building, President J. Gordon Howard decided that the old main building, formerly known as the Administration Building, needed a new name. The first choice was "Old Main,"

but it was soon replaced by the more appropriate name of Towers Hall. The towers of the building adorn college stationery, and the alumni magazine bears the name *Towers*. Alumni always have fond memories of the oldest building on campus.

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