The Artist at Work broke the pattern of the first four stories in several ways; it used a new narrative perspective, it covered an entire life rather than a single day, it was set in Paris rather than North Africa. The final story also departs from the original pattern in some of the same ways. In its simplest outline, The Growing Stone relates the arrival of an engineer in an isolated town and his acceptance by the townspeople. The engineer, D'Arrast, is French; the town, Iguape, is in Brazil. The story opens with an extended account of the trip to Iguape, in a car driven by a native of the region, named Socrates; the most remarkable incident is crossing a river on a primitive ferry. In the town, D'Arrast meets the notables, the Mayor, the Judge, the Harbor Captain, and the Chief of Police, who makes trouble over D'Arrast's passport. He then visits the poor area near the river, where he is to design a flood control dike. There he meets a Cook, who becomes a key figure. Iguape has a shrine, centered around a miraculous stone that grows; and the church has a statue of Jesus, which arrived by "swimming" upstream. The Cook has made a vow to carry a large stone to the church in a procession, but he succumbs to his love of dancing the night before and is too weak to fulfill his promise. D'Arrast picks up the stone and carries it past the church to the Cook's hut, where he places it in the center of the room. The Cook's family invite him to sit down with them.
This summary, despite its brevity, gives some idea of the comparatively cluttered action. Peripheral characters abound; numerous incidents remain unresolved, although the action is spread over a span of several days. The unifying thread is, of course, D'Arrast; but it is not his desire or will that propels the plot. He has come on a mission, yet the story ends before he has really begun his work. He asserts himself in various ways: he asks to visit the poor section, he insists that the Police Chief not be punished, and he seizes the Cook's stone. Yet in a sense, he is almost pure consciousness, for he seems to have no memories, no feelings, no expectations. In the face of such disturbances as the drunken Police Chief's threats, or the hostility of the old Negro whose hut he is shown, or his exclusion from the dance, D'Arrast's cool tranquillity reminds one of the legendary heroes of the Hollywood Western.

The Brazilian setting, itself an anomaly, puts these events in a context radically different from the North African stories. Where they were arid and lonely, Iguape is humid and teeming with life of all kinds, including people. Even Jonas does not encounter as diverse a group, and the crowds in his apartment remain anonymous ciphers, whereas the Iguapeans assume vivid and individual lives in *The Growing Stone*. In part, this results from D'Arrast's insistence on visiting the humblest part of town and from his ability to talk to people like his chauffeur or a cook. Even before D'Arrast articulates his comprehensive interest in humanity, however, the reader can sense a new kind of fraternal feeling, in the evocation of the ferryboat men or the Japanese living in the jungle. There is an extraordinary babble of voices and languages around D'Arrast, and a mixture of nationalities, races, and classes.

D'Arrast moves into this world with almost perfect freedom. Although he recalls a recent crisis, in terms that link him to other characters, he remains unencumbered by it. Neither guilt nor frustration surfaces in his thoughts. Moreover, he shows as little concern for the future as for the past. He has come to build a dike, but expresses no impatience to get started. He manifests no desire to return home to France, either. This description makes him sound completely passive, but that is inaccurate; he
possesses a great deal of energy and, in certain key situations, takes initiatives. Understanding the story depends largely on identifying the peculiar qualities of those situations. D'Arrast is free, like the heroes of eighteenth-century philosophical tales. Camus has left him undetermined so that he may act freely and, in that freedom, confront the moral issues that the other characters found thrust upon them.

In the foreground of the story are the relations between D'Arrast and the people of Iguape. D'Arrast never suffers the kind of isolation that becomes the lot of the Renegade or Daru, and the end of the story shows him being invited to join a group, as the beginning had shown him on comradely terms with Socrates. This easy sociability does not mean that his contacts with others arise automatically, however, or that they encounter no obstacles. Even the genial Socrates has an annoying, though involuntary, trait: he keeps D'Arrast from sleeping with his "cataclysmic" sneezing (168).

D'Arrast's friendship with the Cook grows under still more trying circumstances. At their first meeting, when the Cook tells about his vow, "D'Arrast felt slightly annoyed" (185), but he agrees to participate in the ceremony anyway. By evening, when they go to the dancing together, they seem to be on close terms, but the Cook jeopardizes that closeness by sending D'Arrast away. He addresses him "coldly, as if speaking to a stranger," and tells him "they don't want you to stay now" (197). Furthermore, the Cook reneges on his resolution not to dance and rebuffs D'Arrast, who had been invited partly to help him keep the promise. D'Arrast sustains and even imposes the fraternal solidarity between them by ignoring these slights and committing his own energies to what he takes to be the most genuine of the Cook's desires.

The Cook serves in part to represent a special community, the Negroes who live in the huts by the river and who are the most impoverished citizens of Iguape. At first, D'Arrast's efforts to make contacts among them are met with hostility. Only because the Harbor Captain speaks to the Negroes "in a tone of command" (175) is D'Arrast able to gratify his desire to visit one of the huts. When no volunteers come forward, the man to
whom the order is delivered obeys it with a hostile look. And it is in the name of the whole community that the Cook requests D'Arrast to leave the dance.

To outward appearances, the Police Chief raises a more daunting challenge. He wears the uniform of authority, and his demand that D'Arrast show his passport would ordinarily presage continual harassment. In fact, he is made to back down almost instantly by the Judge; but for D'Arrast a new problem arises immediately in place of the first: the Judge insists that D'Arrast decide on a punishment for the Police Chief. D'Arrast temporizes, and tries to evade the responsibility; the Judge reminds him several times, however, and requires that he pronounce a sentence. Ultimately, D'Arrast finds the solution in a graceful speech appealing for leniency as a special favor so that his stay in Iguape “could begin in a climate of peace and friendship” (188).

The incident has no further repercussions. Its arbitrary inclusion calls attention to its importance for Camus as a final statement on the theme of justice. We never learn why the policeman behaved so boorishly, except that he was drunk; but if that is the whole explanation, we never learn why the citizens so urgently demand that he be punished. It is a virtually pure exercise in judicial reasoning, thrust upon D'Arrast by the circumstances. D'Arrast, unlike Daru, rises to the occasion. He finds the formula that will both accomplish his wish, that the offender be pardoned, and satisfy the legitimate need of the community to affirm its laws. He finds within the ethical code of the Iguapeans themselves the pretext for the pardon, and at the same time assumes full responsibility for the judgment. It was precisely this gesture that Daru failed to make, either for Balducci or for the Arab.

Once that hurdle has been cleared, however, D'Arrast finds no barriers to communication with the wealthy and powerful citizens. All of them except the Police Chief had welcomed him enthusiastically from the start, and once the Judge has pronounced his verdict acceptable, D'Arrast enjoys the full favor of the community. Instead of settling comfortably into it, D'Arrast moves on to the stern challenge of the poor people in the huts.
When, from his vantage on the balcony, he sees that the Cook has faltered, D'Arrast leaves the company of the notables and rejoins the common people in the crowd. He takes the Cook's burden on his own shoulders, but he does not exactly fulfill the Cook's vow. He passes by the church and instead carries the stone to the Cook's hut. There he awaits the decision of the Cook's family and friends whether his action has earned him acceptance or not. The verdict is again favorable; he is invited to sit down among them. Once more, D'Arrast has succeeded in meeting the standards of the society around him without betraying his own convictions. He has not pretended to have a faith he lacks, and has graphically shown that his own faith is in people. At the same time, he has taken seriously the beliefs of the others, and shared their sense of responsibility if not the faith behind it. Consequently, he achieves the fraternal union that he sought, by reconciling his values and theirs.

The bonds that D'Arrast forms between himself and other individuals represent possibilities of fraternal links across many kinds of social barrier. In virtually every story, the main characters are isolated by the most ordinary differences. They belong to different races or civilizations or economic classes from the people around them. D'Arrast shares all these signs of difference. He comes to Iguape as an exemplar of European civilization, with all that implies of knowledge and power. His sole reason for being there is to put his superior skill as an engineer at the service of a less-advanced society. Of course, both Daru and the Renegade intended to carry out similar missions. The risks of misunderstanding are great, as the industrial nations have learned to their dismay in the real world. The benefits of technology and material gains seem worthless if they must be purchased through self-abasement.

D'Arrast must, then, offer his superior skills without making the beneficiaries feel inferior. Perhaps it is for this reason that Camus so completely neglects the actual construction project for which D'Arrast has come. The engineer begins by trying to learn about, and from, the people of Iguape. The significance of the name Socrates also becomes clear in this context. Despite the initial impression of comic irony, the name should be taken
seriously as designating a wise man. The traditional wisdom of the Greek Socrates was to pretend ignorance and question others. The Brazilian Socrates embodies a genuine wisdom in his relative ignorance, and D'Arrast becomes his disciple, a seeker, not a dispenser, of the truth.\(^8\)

It is in very similar fashion that D'Arrast resolves the judicial problem, as we have just seen. For the European, D'Arrast's leniency expresses the highest ideals of liberal justice, whereas the local citizens' demand for punishment seems vindictive and harsh. So it may be, but we may not assume the moral superiority of "ours" over "theirs," of civilization over primitive society. In the end, they prove to be quite capable of encompassing a pardon within their own code, and this resolution of the question of justice is simultaneously a reconciliation of the two civilizations.

Of all the difficulties that D'Arrast must confront, none poses more profound challenges than religion. Class, language, race, or wealth might seem in the real world to be the chief obstacles to human solidarity. From the perspective of the Camusian hero, however, these problems are illusory; it suffices for the person with the apparent advantage to put aside prejudice, in order for the real equality of all people to become manifest. The European's superior technical knowledge was actually a graver difficulty; the engineering skill of D'Arrast is no illusion. In this case, however, the barrier can still be overcome because the technician and the ordinary people share the same sense of purpose. It seems less plausible that they should find a shared sense of faith. Camus's anxious pursuit of the truth about humanity's place in the universe led to a passionate skepticism that seems incompatible with sophisticated liberal religions, much less with the Cook's superstitious faith.

Yet even here, D'Arrast achieves a reconciliation, in part because he listens respectfully to the Cook's ideas about God, but also because the Cook's faith strangely resembles Camus's skepticism. The Cook's religion provides no dogmatic answers to the questions that haunt Camus. The universe retains all of its capricious indifference to human needs, and the good Jesus answers prayers according to his own inscrutable judgments.
With so honest a recognition of the truth, the Cook's supersti­tions about miracles and vows appear no more than a naïve formulation of the very problems that concern D'Arrast, and Camus—how human beings fit into the world around them, and how they can act responsibly. The local priest is conspicuously absent from the group of dignitaries who welcome D'Arrast, and with whom D'Arrast establishes the first cordial relations. The reconciliation with religion is not achieved with the likes of the Renegade, or Father Paneloux or the prison chaplain from Camus's earlier works. It is only with a simple man, as direct and honest in his faith as D'Arrast in his unbelief, that this last division between people can be closed.

The severest trial occurs at the Negroes' dance, which is actually a religious ritual reminiscent of the Taghāsans' fetish worship. The dancers' hut shelters an altar with "a magnificent colored print in which Saint George, with alluring grace, was getting the better of a bewhiskered dragon" (190). Even in this apparently Christian image, violence predominates. Beneath the altar, however stands a little statue "representing a horned god . . . with a fierce look . . . brandishing an oversized knife made of silver paper" (191). Obviously the faith of the Iguapeans spans the whole range from savage ancient deities to modern Christianity. As the ceremony progresses, these hints of bloodshed are realized when the dark girl appears, as a central figure in the dance, holding "a green-and-yellow bow with an arrow on the tip of which was spitted a multicolored bird" (196).

Many elements of the ceremony resemble scenes from the hut of the fetish in Taghāsa, beginning with the rhythmic dance. In Iguape as in the city of salt, the people are transformed into animals, uttering inarticulate sounds, shrieks, howls, and "a strange bird cry" (196). One woman, "rolling her animal face from side to side, kept barking" (194). The participants enter into a collective frenzy, they are "possessed of the spirit" (193), they fall to the floor in exhaustion. Some are masked, and all, even the Cook, are transfigured into distorted forms. In their own view, they become "the god's field of battle" (193), and the double axhead of the fetish reappears as the short saber wielded by the Negro dancers.
D'Arrast's place in this ceremony is problematic. He is, to be sure, an outsider. Almost as soon as he arrives, he is singled out by the leader as an impediment: "Unfold your arms . . . you are hugging yourself and keeping the saint's spirit from descending," the Cook explains to him (191). D'Arrast complies, and perhaps there is a grain of truth in the implicit criticism of his egotism and withdrawal. Immediately afterward, D'Arrast begins to resemble a "bestial god" himself, albeit a kindly one (192). He remains pressed against the wall, like the Renegade, drawn unconsciously into the communal experience at moments, but excluded from real participation. The heat and smoke nauseate him, as the bitter drink had sickened the Renegade. Finally he is rejected by his guide and ordered to leave.

We must not, of course, push the parallel between D'Arrast and the Renegade too far. D'Arrast is never beaten or mutilated or physically mistreated in any way. The similarities permit us to make some connections, but not to equate the two. D'Arrast is, in fact, a false victim, almost a decoy. He could have made his plight worse by stubborn resistance or by self-pity, but as we have seen, he characteristically accepts rebuffs and frustrations with equanimity. And indeed, the real victim of the ceremony is not D'Arrast but the Cook.

The Cook has already once been designated as the symbolic scapegoat, when he was drowning. He was rescued then, he believes, by the good Jesus, to whom he made a vow. At the dance, he gives in to his love of dancing, to the cigars, to the eroticism; and the next day he cannot fulfill his vow. The ritual has been a trap for him, and in his own mind it has caused him to be cast back into the sea. In the procession, we recognize him as the victim again, for he is dying of the effort to carry the stone, and resembles Christ carrying the cross. This time, only when D'Arrast intervenes is the fatal sacrifice thwarted.

D'Arrast survives the ritual because of his respect for others. Unlike the Renegade, he had not come to convert these people. Whatever he may think of the cult of Saint George or the horned god, he feels no need to impose his beliefs on the celebrants.
When told to unfold his arms, he offers no resistance; when ordered to leave, he goes willingly. He accepts as much participation as the people will allow him and demands no more. The next day, at the procession, however, he seizes a role. By relieving the Cook, he assumes for himself the function of the scapegoat. At the same time, he asserts a new doctrine; for when he bypasses the church, he changes the nature of his gesture. Instead of laying the stone, and his exhausted body, as a sacrifice before the sacred altar, he returns the stone to the midst of the people and actually makes a new altar of it. Symbolically, a new order has been founded, no longer dependent on the violent casting out of evil, but devoted to an affirmation of human wholeness and solidarity.

*The Growing Stone* carries the process to an even greater length, however. The profound solitude of the earlier characters meant not only their sense of separation from each other but also their feeling of alienation from the material world. Their moments of illumination involve an ephemeral intuition of oneness with the desert, with the cracking stones and with the wheeling stars. As we noted before, the setting of this last story is no longer an arid landscape, but rather a teeming jungle. As the title suggests, in this climate the very stones may come alive and start to grow. Suddenly there is a joining of the animate and inanimate. The movement that was imperceptible in the Saharan desert can be seen all around in the Brazilian rain forest.

In several of the other stories, water and the sea have appeared fleetingly as images of harmony between the human and the material universe. In Iguape, the flow is universal. D'Arrast first appears crossing a river, he awakens into a rain, and he has come to control the flow of yet another river. The sea too is close by, and the Cook worked on a ship. The plunge into the water, a motif we have seen in *The Fall* and *The Artist at Work*, is most fully realized in the Cook; but the statue of Jesus too swam in the sea, and D'Arrast plunges into a symbolic sea, the human tide of the procession. In the final moment, the river has become part of D'Arrast; he feels his joy as a flow within him. Thus *The Growing Stone* concludes the collection on a
vision of almost total reconciliation. Not merely all people but all things and all people are somehow joined in a common feeling and a common purpose.

These happy images do not, however, supply answers to the philosophical questions at the base of Camus’s thought. What takes place in Iguape is no permanent solution, even for D’Arrast and for his newfound friends. Eventually, they must part; the Frenchman will have to return to France, and the Iguapeans will go about their lives as before, although presumably without the regular floods. This, as we noted before, is a philosophical tale, which particularizes abstract ideas while it simplifies reality. Iguape is Camus’s El Dorado, the home of an ideal community.

Candide returned from El Dorado of his own free will. The timeless uniformity of Voltaire’s utopia was in fact boring, and Candide came to regret the very evil that had caused his expulsion from the paradise of Thunder-ten-tronckh, the differences of status among people. Candide wanted to go home and be richer than anyone else.

Camus’s utopia has far more plausibility, and its fatal flaw is not in its structure but simply in the nature of things: it cannot last. It is a fortunate combination of circumstances and people ready to appreciate them. Such moments of shared joy are as much miracles as the stone or the statue of Iguape. It is as if they too wash up occasionally from the sea, along with the wreckage, the drownings, the floods. The lesson we should take from the story is to be prepared to seize the moment when it comes. D’Arrast contributes his part in creating the miracle of reconciliation, partly through the very practical actions that we have seen. The central gesture, however, defies rationality. In seizing the Cook’s stone, D’Arrast perfectly illustrates the need to take the burden one finds at hand. Neither the vow he fulfills nor the load he bears is what he might have chosen, but our choices are never entirely free. The hope that Camus offers us is that by making the choices that do come our way, we may indeed overcome that solitude and despair by affirming our human solidarity.

As we remarked in the beginning of the chapter, *The Growing*
Stone seems anomalous in Exile and the Kingdom because of its loose structure, its profusion of characters, and its exotic setting. Furthermore, the ending seems strikingly more hopeful than in any of the first five stories. As the final story, it occupies a position of unusual importance in the collection, for it will largely determine the overall impression. To the degree that readers perceive unity and order, they must depend heavily on The Growing Stone to provide the sense of an ending, to make the diverse characters, events, and themes cohere. On closer examination, we will see that the apparent strangeness of this concluding story conceals many strong links to all the other stories—so many, in fact, that the optimism of the ending may require a retrospective rereading of the whole work.

To a remarkable extent, the main characters of all six stories are alike, and begin in like situations. All are middle-aged and feel themselves at a point of crisis. Their dreams have gone unfulfilled, their energies are waning, their hopes are gone. With Janine and Yvars, the detailed realization of their aging occupies much of the story. Of all the characters, the Renegade has most flatly failed; and he tries to murder his own past when he kills the new missionary, who might have succeeded where he had failed. With these three, recollections of their disappointments obsess them. Even Daru, who had apparently found his place in his little desert schoolhouse, is led by the arrival of the prisoner to recall his first days there and his early frustrations. Daru, however, has come to need the colorlessness, the solitude, the silence, just as Janine needs Marcel, Yvars his trade, and the Renegade his masters.

Since Jonas's whole career is told, he presents a slightly different case; the critical moment does not begin until quite late in the story, when his inspiration deserts him. No incident occurs, but a progressive paralysis of the will and a growing indifference to his work. A few key phrases bring out the analogy to the others, however: "for the first time, he was bothered by the people he kept bumping into everywhere" (146) and "the cold pierced him to the marrow" (147). Jonas's progressive breakdown leads, not to a single dramatic revelation, but to idleness, drink, and womanizing, until his wife's
sorrow leads him to make one last effort; and his final painting is comparable to the visions of the other characters.

D'Arrast thinks less about his past than the others, and we learn relatively little about it. Outwardly, he seems happy and successful, but there are signs that he too has reached a point of crisis. In response to the Cook's questions, he reveals that he once made a promise, "in a shipwreck? —If you wish," and he goes on to say, "Someone was about to die through my fault. It seems to me that I called out.—Did you promise? —No. I should have liked to promise. —Long ago? —Not long before coming here." And finally: "I used to be proud; now I'm alone" (187). Whatever one infers from this discreet confession, which makes D'Arrast sound a little like Jonas, Clamence, or Tarrou, it plainly implies a recent personal failure of some sort. Moreover, like Janine and the others, D'Arrast feels a vague longing, of which he grows most aware after seeing the stone of the title: "He too was waiting in front of the grotto under the same film of water, and he didn't know for what. He had been waiting constantly, to tell the truth, for a month since he had arrived in this country" (180). D'Arrast's prestige and success as an engineer overlay a dissatisfaction comparable to all the others, expressed in terms that are in fact identical to Janine's.

The six central figures, differing widely in profession and class and intellect, nonetheless all share the trait of physical solidity. D'Arrast is called a colossus; Janine suffers from her large body; Jonas is tall and rugged. Yvars has dry, hard muscles like a vinestock, Daru is broad and powerful enough to break the Arab in half, and the Renegade has a hard, mulish head. To all of them, their bodies seem encumbrances. Janine and Yvars especially feel themselves stiffening and weakening. The Renegade has been tortured and mutilated. Jonas collapses from fatigue at the end of the story, after feeling increasingly cramped in his crowded apartment. Even Daru is bothered by the Arab's presence, and feels vulnerable. D'Arrast feels nauseated, suffers from a migraine, and almost collapses, despite his strength. The importance of their solid bodies is emphasized by the regular contrasts to the other characters. D'Arrast dominates everyone else, especially the short, fat Cook and the small, thin Socrates.
Camus shows no concern for a psychological or sociological analysis of these characters. He makes no effort to sentimentalize their plights, and even less to generalize about the social conditions. Daru and D'Arrast have virtually no past. The factors that have affected the other characters' lives—the war that ruined Marcel's business, the Renegade's peasant origins, Jonas's broken home—are not perceived by the characters themselves as determinant. In every case, the central event concerns a person who must confront his or her own limitations, whether personal, physical, or professional. They have slightly different substance in each story, but in each there is a moment of failure and loss, which gains plausibility from the fact that it corresponds to a well-documented moment of crisis in the average person's life; but Camus always stresses the moral and philosophical implications, never the social or historical causes. The limits encountered by all the characters are, in the final analysis, those of human mortality and human existence in the absurd universe. Janine is most explicit about the underlying source of her anxiety: "She too was afraid of death" (29). As the first story of the collection, *The Adulterous Woman* serves as a kind of preface and suggests that the nameless anxiety that comes to all the central figures springs from a similar origin. The bodies, originally strong and healthy, bring the first warnings of the impending crisis. These characters's vigor, at an earlier date, was a delusion of possibilities, an appearance of superiority to the common fate that allowed them to be indifferent to their place. Their European origins, in the context of Algerian and Brazilian settings, reinforce this notion. Although in various ways they all admit to having held this illusion of infinite capacity or eternal youth, Jonas most concretely expresses the idea in his "star," as if the universe were watching over him. Ultimately, though, reality demands the same price from him as from everyone else, whether he recognizes it or not. He too has to agonize; he too has to sacrifice; he too has to drive his body to the limits of endurance, as D'Arrast most dramatically does in the final pages of the book, carrying the stone.

While the body provides one form of warning, the settings of the stories consistently provide another. At the start of each one,
the central character is isolated, spiritually if not physically. For Jonas and d’Arrast, the realization of their solitude comes to them well into the story. But D’Arrast’s triumph over isolation is all the more impressive because he is so strikingly alone and out of place. Along with the sense of loneliness, Camus creates an atmosphere of disorientation. The long introductory section of The Growing Stone, where D’Arrast travels through night and mist, drifting in and out of sleep, waking into dreamlike scenes such as the Japanese settlement, serves in part to recapitulate similar scenes in the other stories—Janine riding through the sandstorm, Yvars and the Renegade in the blinding light, Daru looking at a landscape made featureless by snow, and Jonas sitting long hours in the dark.

Camus constructs his stories so as to emphasize the strangeness of the familiar. As the characters look about them, their habitual settings seem altered and well-known objects unrecognizable. The discomfort they feel in their bodies extends to all the material world. For D’Arrast, as for Janine, a journey into foreign territory provides the initial shock; but with all the characters, the sense of growing separation from the physical world is meant to translate for us the awareness of a radical alienation, the awakening of a rational mind in a meaningless universe of things.

Having set each of the stories in motion with a similar structure, Camus proceeds by means of a number of repeated motifs and themes. By motif, I mean simply a specific object or situation that recurs; by theme, an idea that is explicitly mentioned. Many of these are familiar, not only in these stories, but also in Camus’s other works. Many critics have looked for the works’s coherence in the themes of exile and the kingdom, for example, or of solidarity and fraternity, or the motifs of the natural environment, sun, sea, desert, and so on.

For Camus, stone is the fundamental image of the concrete universe, and appears in many forms. The mystical stones of the final story, The Growing Stone, point to the positive symbolism; the stone is humanity’s burden of responsibility, akin to Sisyphus’s stone. The growing stone of the grotto, consecrated by superstition, nonetheless represents the fruitful cooperation
of people and their environment. D'Arrast, one of those (like Dr. Rieux) who fight against creation as they found it by building roads and dikes, may at the same time learn from the humble acceptance he observes among these poor Brazilians. The struggle to dominate nature can never be won; even the stones may grow again. The other stone, which D'Arrast carries to fulfill the Cook's vow, shows human solidarity at its finest, in the struggle with the world. D'Arrast bears it to the Cook's hut rather than to the church, for his faith is in people, not gods. Inside the hut, it occupies the central place, in the middle of the human circle, like a kind of altar to humanity.

As we have seen, stone was important in all the other stories except The Artist at Work; but once again, it is the first story, The Adulterous Woman, to which the concluding story seems most fitting as a response. For Janine, stone represented not only the harsh real world around her but also something spiritual, linked to the Mosaic law. In her climactic swoon, she discovers a oneness with the universe, stars and stones alike. D'Arrast actually becomes part of this universe. Like the miraculous statue, he "bucks the human tide" (206) to come to the Cook's aid; like the miraculous stone, he grows "taller and more massive each time he came back to life" (161) in the beginning, then "straightening up until he was suddenly enormous" (212) at the end. The waters of the river, whose sound fills him with "a tumultuous happiness," also flow within him as a "surge of obscure and panting joy" (212), just as the water of the night had filled Janine.

Most of the characters have not understood their place in the material universe at the start, if they ever do. They learn from a new experience of pain, but also by reaching a point from which to take a broader view. At the same time, this perspective may suggest a feeling of superiority to the world and to others, which must be overcome or surrendered before peace can be felt. All the characters grow aware of their feelings on elevations—Janine on her parapet, Daru on his hill, Jonas in his loft, and D'Arrast on the balcony.

If revelation occurs on the heights, however, the hero must come back down to profit from the experience. Again, D'Arrast
illustrates the most positive instance of this descent; on the balcony with the town notables, he awaits the procession, but leaves instantly when the Cook does not appear with the others. Down among the people, he first tries to revive the Cook, then takes up the stone himself. The analogies both of action and of language between Janine and D'Arrast are unmistakable; retrospectively, Janine's return to her husband may be regarded as a necessary resumption of her human responsibilities. Daru and Yvars remain on their elevations at the end of their stories, not necessarily punished, but still unable to integrate their own happiness and the conditions of their lives. The Renegade and Jonas are brought down, the one by force, the other by exhaustion, and therefore with quite opposite expectations. Both were wrong, however—the Renegade to suppose that he could serve a god, Jonas to suppose that a god (his star) existed to serve him. The Renegade must learn the truth in the most brutal fashion, getting a mouthful of salt when he was aching with thirst. Jonas, on the other hand, in painting the ambiguous solidary/solitary canvas, seems to be on the road to a productive compromise, especially since he has reaffirmed his love of his family and the beauty of the noises of humanity without abandoning his art. Still, like his Old Testament namesake, he had to learn love as well as courage.

One of the most common episodes in Camus's stories, as we saw in The Silent Men, is a meal or a drink. Part of a long heritage of symbolism, the act of consuming links people with the material world on the one hand, and with the divinity, through Communion, on the other. Shared meals have a complex ritual, itself full of meanings to those who understand it. D'Arrast illustrates the full possibilities of the communal meal. Significantly, his friend among the Brazilians is a ship's cook, whose work is to prepare the nourishment of others. D'Arrast shares several drinks of hospitality, and several official dinners; but the most important is the dinner of black beans the Cook makes specially for D'Arrast. At the end of the story, when D'Arrast has borne the stone to the Cook's hut, the circle re-forms around the hearth, and D'Arrast is welcomed to his
place. The collection thus ends on a note of harmony and brotherhood.

*The Growing Stone* contains a great deal of dialog compared with the earlier stories of the book. In fact, the first three stories treat silence and the inability to communicate as a major theme. In *The Guest*, although Daru can speak Arabic, yet his conversation with his guest goes continually awry. In the end, Daru's refusal to listen may have cost him his kingdom.

Both Jonas and D'Arrast, creative and professional men of the upper class and of Western Europe, escape the kind of muteness that afflicted the earlier characters. Jonas comes to suffer an artist's block, equivalent to a silence; as an artist, though, he takes on the responsibility for breaking through it. D'Arrast never seems troubled by lack of words; he responds forthrightly to the Cook's questions about his own background, about social conditions in France, and about his promise. Several times, Camus notes a hesitation on his part and on the Cook's part; but always the speaker goes ahead. D'Arrast is fortunate that his hosts, although Portuguese is their native language, chatter willingly in bad French or Spanish; but D'Arrast also speaks more than one language. D'Arrast's greatest linguistic accomplishment is to have found the words with which to judge the Police Chief; the rhetoric does no more than make acceptable to the others what D'Arrast had been saying all along. In reality, he avoids judging and punishing the Police Chief. Yet it is precisely the mark of D'Arrast's heroism that he accepts the challenge of communication at all levels. It was not sufficient for him to be morally right; he had to be so within a social context. His flattering speech is the sort of formula that Daru could not find for Balducci.

Language is, then, a key factor in Camus's moral vision. The early stories show that silence is not necessarily a "sin" or even a sign of dullness; many of the characters understand the truth of the human condition without being able to act upon it. The action alone may be a great achievement—the greater if the inarticulate hero goes unsung. Those who would fully realize Camus's ideal must assume a further burden, however, that of
the writer himself, to convey something of that knowledge to others. Only by sharing experiences and the fruits of experience can human beings achieve solidarity among themselves. This is what D'Arrast achieves in many different areas, most of them already familiar to us from the other stories.

The six stories have in common not only themes and motif but also a general plot structure. Near the beginning, a character expresses or remembers hopes and expectations that have been disappointed. Then a change of some sort takes place, so that the disappointed character finds a new perspective on the events. By the end, a subtle reversal has occurred, and the original position is transformed into its opposite. The change may not be for the better, at least at the practical level; Daru rediscovers solitude, and the Renegade dies. Moreover, the change usually has little emotional impact on the reader, and frequently leaves us wondering what has actually happened. There are no melodramatic reunions, no heart-rending separations, no poetic justice, and no tragic mistakes.

With D'Arrast, the change is complex, but it produces hope. D'Arrast comes to Iguape as a prestigious outsider, to whom even the highest local officials defer; yet in the final scene, he waits to be invited to sit among the poorest folk of the town. A religious skeptic, he has fulfilled a pious, even superstitious, vow. He has calmly tolerated abuse from the Chief of Police and exclusion from the Negroes' dancing. But the rewards for these reversals are similar, more positive changes: the foreigner has found a kind of home, the lonely man has found friends, the exile has found a kingdom. When D'Arrast arrived, he brought not only his authority as an engineer and plans for construction but also a nameless longing and a recent personal failure. For once, the revelation comes to a person ready to accept it, the opportunity is seized; and if our final view of D'Arrast is a strange one, it is nonetheless hard to see how it can be anything but hopeful. But what has happened to D'Arrast is enough like what happened to Janine, to Yvars, to Daru, to Jonas, and even to the Renegade, that his small victory must imply theirs, too.

The reason for the lack of high drama in the plots is that the changes happen within. Even where a striking event occurs, such
as the Renegade's murder or Lassalle's daughter's seizure, the external conditions are not altered so much as the central figure's awareness and understanding of them. The stories show people confronting the realization that things are not what they seem. The underlying purpose, of course, is to force the reader into the same situation; and so each story also induces an expectation on the reader's part that proves false. There is a transaction between author and reader that parallels the one described in the text.

In several cases, the very title sets up a false expectation or prepares an ironic misunderstanding. The Adulterous Woman commits no adultery; The Artist at Work ceases to work; the Silent Men include finally the boss as well as the men; The Guest—l'hôte—may be host or guest, Daru or the Arab, either in either role. Often the apparent action turns out to be secondary as well; Janine has no affair with the jackal-soldier; the workmen do not confront the boss; the prisoner never challenges Daru; even the Renegade's murder of the new missionary matters less than his sudden reconversion to a religion of mercy.

_The Growing Stone_ is yet another misleading title, for the miraculous growing stone is not the most important stone, the one carried by the Cook and D'Arrast. In some sense, however, the title informs the whole story; metaphorically, the two stones are the same, and represent the material world successfully invested with human meanings. The stone they carry grows in a metaphorical sense too, as its weight becomes more and more painful and harder to bear. In the context of _Exile and the Kingdom_, the stone D'Arrast seizes and carries is a reply to the stone Daru flings away; the stone that grows is a contrast to the stones Janine hears cracking into dust. Because the story does not fulfill the immediate implications of its title, we must look for broader symbolic meanings.

In the haphazard development of the plot, _The Growing Stone_ resembles some of the other stories as well. The relationship between D'Arrast and Socrates, so important at the beginning, turns out to be incidental, like Janine's with the jackal-soldier. D'Arrast's hostile encounter with the Police Chief
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has no repercussions, like Daru's conflict with Balducci. The construction of the dike raises no dramatic issues, just as the strikers' return to work leads to no confrontation in *The Silent Men*. *The Growing Stone* brings together an exceptionally large number of these false leads, potential actions that never take place; but it is merely echoing a technique Camus uses throughout. It is, in fact, only our readers' awareness of literary conventions that leads us to see possible plots in every detail or incident. Our belief in literary meaning resembles the faith of the Iguapeans in the Growing Stone: phenomena cannot be accidental when they appear so clearly to signify something.

D'Arrast, however, remains uncommitted in his beliefs; Camus gives us only his actions as clues to his mind. It is significant that in his climactic gesture, even D'Arrast is portrayed as unaware of his motives: he leaves the balcony "quick as lightning, without excusing himself" (206), pushes through the crowd in an "impetuous way" (206), finds himself beside the Cook "without knowing how" (207), takes the stone "suddenly" (209), and changes course, bypassing the church and heading for the hut, "without knowing why" (210). D'Arrast possesses from the start a strong sense of brotherhood with people and of unity with the universe, which Janine glimpses momentarily in her dash to the parapet, a gesture very much like D'Arrast's. Even D'Arrast, however, must allow his instinctive fraternal love to direct his actions. His spontaneity, his tolerance, his freedom are partly learned from the people of Iguape, especially the Cook.

The only strong desire D'Arrast expresses during the story is to visit the poor section of the town. The traditional form of plot, where the hero's will encounters obstacles until it imposes itself or is defeated, is present only in this area. D'Arrast seems to want to be accepted among these people. More than he wants to build the dike, more than he wants to conciliate the notables, he wants to know the lives of Socrates, the Cook, the old man, the dark girl, the pilgrims, the faithful. Besides the conventional virtues of the poor—openness, directness, simplicity, and so on—the Cook gives D'Arrast an important insight into his faith and his sense of place within the universe. To D'Arrast's
skeptical question, "Has the good Jesus always answered you?" the Cook replies, "Always. . . no, Captain!" D'Arrast triumphs: "Well, then?" But the Cook only laughs and responds, "Well, he's free, isn't he?" (187).35 The Cook's relationship to reality is a fraternal one, built on an affectionate respect for the Other's freedom—in this case, the freedom of the entire external universe personified as Jesus. It is immediately after this conversation that D'Arrast finds the solution to the problem of the Police Chief, a solution that respects not only D'Arrast's principles and the Chief's freedom, but also the faith of the Judge and other notables in their system of order.

1. P. 1660: "éternuements cataclysmiques."
2. P. 1669: "D'Arrast se sentit vaguement agacé."
3. P. 1675: "Sans bienveillance, comme s'il parlait à un étranger"; "ils ne veulent pas que tu restes maintenant."
4. P. 1664: "sur un ton impératif."
5. P. 1671: "pût commencer dans un climat de concorde et d'amitié."
6. This incident, like many others in this story, is modeled closely on an experience Camus relates in the notebooks he kept during a journey to Brazil in 1949; Quilliot reprints the relevant passages in the notes, pp. 2063–74, the account of the rude policeman being on p. 2072. The true version gives little clue to what significance Camus attached to it at the time; he relates it rather ironically. And, of course, it tells us nothing about his reasons for retaining it later for the story or about the way it functions in the story for the reader.
7. The penitent carrying the stone is also taken from reality, but in this case with a radical change: in the actual event, the man fulfilled his vow unaided (pp. 2073–74).
8. The indirect source of this detail is Camus's observation that his Brazilian driver looked like Auguste Comte (p. 2069).
9. P. 1672: "un superbe chromo où Saint Georges, avec des airs séducteurs, prenait avantage d'un dragon moustachu." The print of Saint George and most of the details of the ceremony are taken from Camus's impressions of a macumba in Brazil (pp. 2063–67).
10. P. 1672: "représentant un dieu cornu. Il brandissait, la mine farouche, un couteau démesuré, en papier d'argent."
11. P. 1675: "un arc vert et jaune, muni de sa flèche, au bout de laquelle était embroché un oiseau multicolore."
12. P. 1675: "un étrange cri d'oiseau."
13. P. 1674: "remuant de droite à gauche sa face animale, aboyait sans arrêt."
15. P. 1673: "le champ de bataille du dieu."

17. P. 1672: “dieu bestial.”

18. Once again this attitude is based on Camus’s own; he had been asked to unfold his arms, and obeyed docilely (p. 2065). His opinion of the ceremony as a whole, at least as the notebooks record it, was succinct and rather contemptuous: “I like the night and the sky, more than the gods of men”—“J’aime la nuit et le ciel, plus que les dieux des hommes” (p. 2067). D’Arrast’s seizing the stone thus exposes a fantasy of intervention and involvement that Camus did not acknowledge at the time.

19. P. 1646: “pour la première fois, il était gêné par les gens qu’il rencontrait partout.”

20. P. 1646: “le froid pénétrait jusqu’à son cœur.”


22. P. 1666: “Lui aussi attendait, devant cette grotte, sous la même brume d’eau, et il ne savait quoi. Il ne cessait d’attendre, en vérité, depuis un mois qu’il était arrivé dans ce pays.”

23. P. 1570: “elle aussi avait peur de mourir.”

24. I am indebted to two excellent articles for some of the ideas in this paragraph, and elsewhere in this chapter: Thomas Claire, “Landscape and Religious Imagery in Camus’s ‘La Pierre qui pousse,’” and Michael Issacharoff, “Une Symbolique de l’espace: Lecture de ‘La Pierre qui pousse’ d’Albert Camus.”

25. P. 1680: “remontant la marée humaine.”

26. P. 1656: “plus grand et plus massif à chaque résurrection.”

27. P. 1683: “redressant toute sa taille, énorme soudain.”


29. It was disappointing to my students of the late 1970s that Camus seemed to assume *maternity* and *solidarity* for women, *fraternity* and *solidarity* for men. The latter has much greater scope and is trammeled by fewer social exigencies. Maternity, as Camus is using it here, is as metaphorical as adultery, and is self-defined. Janine transforms actual motherhood, which she has not experienced, into a generalized sense of responsibility for an Other, and then accepts Marcel as that Other. For all Camus’s heroes, virtually all of them male, that appears to be the right moral choice: one must seize the burden at hand. But for the Renegade, it would have been a humble parish in France; for Yvars, his boss; for Daru, the Arab prisoner; for D’Arrast, the Cook. For Jonas, it would include Louise and his children, but also his painting. For women, somehow the burden at hand always turns out to be a husband or a child. I think Camus anticipated many points of a feminist analysis in his presentation of Janine’s situation, and there is much interest in his exploration—limited though it is—of the implications of his moral thought for women.
Most of the time, however, like his contemporaries Saint-Exupéry and Malraux, he evades the problem by contriving to write about almost all-male societies. You could almost end up believing that women were immune to bubonic plague. For some interesting comments on Camus's misogyny, and his treatment of women in his earlier works, see Anthony Rizzuto, *Camus' Imperial Vision*, especially pp. 78 and 127.

30. P. 1680: “D'un seul mouvement, sans s'excuser.”
31. P. 1680: “d'un mouvement emporté.”
32. P. 1681: “sans qu'il sût comment.”
33. P. 1682: “Soudain.”
34. P. 1682: “sans savoir pourquoi.”
35. P. 1670: “Ton bon Jésus t'a toujours répondu?—Toujours, non, Capitaine! —Alors? —Eh bien, il est libre, non?”