

Small Literary Studies

A collection for a systemic reading of works

N° 18

**The Stranger by Albert Camus,
"the only christ we deserve."**

or

**A hero guilty of being alive
and therefore alien to be on Earth**

Bernard Spee

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**The Stranger by Albert Camus,
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or
A hero guilty of being alive
and thus
unwelcome, stranger to be on Earth...**

**"There is no true creation without secrets." ¹
A. Camus**

**"Orphans often write mystery literature where the family novel is the equivalent of a mystery novel when
the reader looks for clues that point to the killer." ²
B. Cyrulnik**

**"Where a humiliated childhood opens a wound that cannot heal."³
Grenier J.**

**"But everyone knows life isn't worth living."⁴
Meursault in *The Stranger***

**"I had tried to portray in my character the only Christ we deserved." ⁵
A. Camus**

Several generations have been fed with the reading of *The Outsider*, which in our opinion represents a serious pedagogical error, the error is not so much in having this book read as in not having proposed a systemic analysis of it.

The lack of such an analysis is, in part, what can be read in the words of a knowledgeable connoisseur like Bernard Pingaud: "Despite so many efforts by so many perceptive exegetes to find the "true" meaning of the novel, the enigma remains whole."⁶ This echoes an article in *Le Monde* where Camus says that "The dark side, the blind and instinctive part"⁷ in him has been overlooked.

¹ Camus A., *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, Editions Gallimard, p.155

² Cyrulnik B., *La nuit, j'écrirai des soleils*, Editions Odile Jacob, Paris, avril 2019, p p.256-257 A propos de cette réflexion, nous pourrions dire que nous allons tenter de trouver le nom de "l'assassin".

³ Grenier J., *Cahiers du Sud*, février 1943 in Pingaud B., *L'étranger d'Albert Camus*, Editions Gallimard, coll. Foliothèque, 1992, p.171

⁴ Camus A., *L'étranger*, Gallimard, coll. Folio plus N°10, 1942, 1996, p. 114

⁵ Camus A., *Théâtre-Récits et Nouvelles*, Editions Gallimard, Coll. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, tome I, p.1928. Il s'agit de la préface à l'édition américaine datée du 8 janvier 1955.

⁶ Pingaud B., *L'étranger d'Albert Camus*, Editions Gallimard, coll. Foliothèque, 1992, p.17

⁷ *Le Monde*, *La part obscure de L'Étranger*, article du 17 juillet 1995 consulté le 13 avril 2020 sur le site : https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1992/07/17/la-part-obscur-de-l-etranger_3901511_1819218.html

On the other hand, the deficit of a fair analysis lies in the fact that the nihilistic system of this novel has not been sufficiently dismantled. We allow ourselves all the more this after our reading of Nancy Huston's text entitled *Professors of Despair*. She writes: "It is the beating heart that I read at the age of fifteen, my first nihilist books...*La Nausée*, by identifying myself with Roquentin who vomits up the families, by identifying myself with Meursault that the death of his mother leaves cold. And I told myself that yes, that must have been it, freedom. That must have been it, real human life. Down with the bonds... As soon as it became materially possible (at seventeen), I moved away from my family. Later, love breakups almost always took place on my own initiative: I was the one who left. I was light."⁸ In summary, we could say that *The Stranger* is a nihilistic enigma. This is the problem we propose to solve.

A lack of analysis in the readings of *The Stranger*? Another approach?

We deplore the absence of a systemic⁹ analysis of this emblematic novel. This regret may seem quite pretentious in view of the thousands of pages devoted to it. The absence of a systemic reading could refer to a kind of collective blindness due, on the one hand, to the presence of the monumental work of Jean-Paul Sartre, in whose shadow Camus' work was built, but the blindness is also due, on the other hand, to the progression of a religious acculturation that no longer allows the ordinary reader, for example, to understand the rooting of a post-Nietzschean criticism of the Christian tradition.

Faced with this "acculturation", the most common point of view that prevails over Camus' work is that of Sartre, who "sees it as the fictional implementation of the philosophy of the absurd developed by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*". This point of view is well in line with Camus' initial intention when he proposed to Editions Gallimard the simultaneous publication of his three books *L'Étranger*, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* and *Caligula*. Initially, Gallimard will only publish the novel.

With this in mind, we propose to begin our analysis by showing the absurd as a central concept of *L'Étranger*, even though many commentators warn against the temptation to "reduce this novel to the illustration of a philosophy of any kind." The novel is a work of art that is not only a work of art, but also a work of art that is a reflection of the world.

The rest of our analysis will demonstrate the validity of this warning.

[p.5..... p.24]

⁸ Huston N., *Professeurs de désespoir*, Editions Actes Sud, Coll. Babel n°715, 2004, p.44

⁹Spee B. , (décembre 2008), *L'Idole de Georges Rodenbach ou L'anorexie comme trouble de l'idéal ? Une application « Du « Comment lire ? » de T. Todorov*, Petites Etudes Littéraires N°1, 25 pages. Texte inédit publié sur le site www.onehope.be

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In 1959, Camus declared about his work that it had been neglected: "The dark part, the blind and instinctive part" in him. For most exegetes, this obscure part is hidden in The Stranger, a novel that Camus admits to having written "under dictation".

Camus is the first to be astonished. This book escapes him and it escapes us still today. According to Bernard Pingaud: "Despite the efforts of so many perceptive exegetes to find the "true" meaning of the novel, the enigma remains."

Today, through a systemic approach and in particular through an onomastic study, we have tried after many others to lift another part of the veil from this enigma .

Bernard Spee is a philosopher by training. He taught literature and history in the final classes at the Collège Saint-Hadelin in Visé (Belgium). Concerned with a systemic approach to texts and works, he is the author of numerous analytical articles on Hergé but also on Molière, Simenon, Rodenbach without forgetting René Magritte's painting. He is also the author of several pedagogical articles.