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Author(s): Philip Thody
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[An English educator and critic who specializes in twentieth-century French literature, Thody is the author of several books on Camus as well as the translator of Camus's notebooks collected in *Carnets* (1963), *Carnets, 1942-1951* (1966), and *Lyrical and Critical* (1967). In the following excerpt, taken from his *Albert Camus: A Study of His Work* (1957), Thody analyzes Camus's treatment of the absurd in *The Stranger*.]

It was with the publication, in 1942, of *L'Étranger* and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, that Albert Camus changed quite suddenly from a little-known provincial essayist into one of the best-known French literary figures. This success is easily accounted for. His automatic assumption that life had no meaning, his denunciation of hope, his determined refusal of any comforting transcendence exactly fitted the mood of the time. Cataclysmic defeat had drifted into the monotony of occupation, the prospect of liberation seemed almost infinitely distant, and a philosophical view of the universe in which all paths to the future were rigorously closed and all optimism suppressed, corresponded exactly to the historical situation of the French people. *L'Étranger (The Outsider)* conveyed the atmosphere of the time before the philosophical essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe (The Myth of Sisyphus)* offered an analysis of it and suggested a provisional attitude to be adopted. Both novel and essay had their origin in Camus's own personal thoughts and experiences, and the aptness with which they expressed the mood of 1942 was coincidence rather than deliberate intention on his part. *he did not intend to reveal a universal truth

The stranger = description of the situation
the myth of sisyphus = analysis of the situation

philosophy of the abs
→
* his theory reflected the reality of the 20th century

Meursault, the central figure of *The Outsider*, is characterized by his complete indifference to everything except immediate physical sensations. He receives the news of his mother's death merely with faint annoyance at having to ask for two days' leave of absence from the office where he works. At her funeral he has no sadness or regret, and feels only the physical inconveniences of watching over her body and following the hearse to the cemetery under the burning sun. He notes automatically and objectively everything which strikes his eye: the bright new screws in the walnut-stained coffin, the colours of the nurse's clothes, the large stomachs of the old ladies who had been his mother's closest friends, the whiteness of the roots in her grave. The day after the funeral he goes swimming, meets a girl whom he knows vaguely, takes her to see a Fernandel film and goes to bed with her that night. He shows no more affection or feeling for her than he had shown for his mother. When she asks him to marry her, he accepts with the calm remark that it is all the same to him. At his work, he is more interested in a detail like the pleasant dryness of a hand-towel at midday and its clamminess at night, than in a possible promotion and transfer to Paris. He becomes involved in a rather sordid affair with his next-door neighbour, in which he shows himself as indifferent to friendship and to the purely social convention of truthfulness as he was to love, and as a result of a series of accidents finds himself one day with a revolver in his hand, standing on a beach facing an Arab who is threatening him with a knife. Almost unconscious, under the blinding sun, of what he is doing, he shoots the Arab and then fires four more shots into his inert body. 'And it was like four sharp raps which I gave on the door of unhappiness.'

→ lack of empathy
→ dismissal of the subjectivity of human emotions
→ unaffected/uninterested in human interaction

↳ why 4 more?
significance of #? he was already X

In the second part of the book, until the very last page, Meursault remains as detached and indifferent as he was

↳ even after the murder