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CAMUS' *THE STRANGER*: THE SUN-METAPHOR AND PATRICIDAL CONFLICT

Many critics are convinced that Meursault, the anti-hero of Camus' *The Stranger*, is an affectless figure in a pre-moral policy of beyond good and evil, and a pursuer of the hedonistic moment. Some commentators perceive him as a Christ figure for our schizoid times. Critics such as Thomas Hanna[1] and Philip Thody[2] hold that there is no explanation for the murder, thereby raising Meursault's indifference to a cosmic level. A prevalent response among contemporary students of French literature is that Meursault is a hero and a martyr who died because of his absolute respect for the truth. Some readers disregard the fact that Meursault wrote the letter for the pimp Raymond, designed to deceive the Arab girl and expose her to humiliation; that he lied to the police to get Raymond discharged after he had beaten the girl; and that he murdered the Arab, firing five bullets into his body. In a preface to an English edition of *L'Étranger*, Camus, who wrote this novel in his mid-twenties, describes Meursault in a defensive manner:

> . . . the hero of the book is condemned because he doesn't play the game. In this sense he is a stranger to the society in which he lives; he drifts in the margin, in the suburb of private, solitary, sensual life. This is why some readers are tempted to consider him as a waif. You will have a more precise idea of this character, or one at all events in closer conformity with the intentions of the author, if you ask yourself in what way Meursault doesn't play the game. The answer is simple: He refuses to lie. Lying is not only saying what is not true. It is also and especially saying more than is true, and, as far as the human heart is concerned, saying more than one feels. This is what we all do

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> every day to simplify life. Meursault, despite appearances, does not wish to simplify life. He says what is true. He refuses to disguise his feelings, and immediately society feels threatened. He is asked, for example, to say that he regrets his crime according to the ritual formula. He replies that he feels about it more annoyance than real regret, and this shade of meaning condemns him.
>
> Meursault for me is, then, not a waif, but a man who is poor and naked, in love with the sun which leaves no shadows. Far from its being true that he lacks all sensibility, a deep, tenacious passion animates him, a passion for the absolute and for truth. It is a still negative truth, the truth of being and of feeling, but one without which no victory over oneself and over the world will ever be possible.
>
> You would not be far wrong, then, in reading *The Stranger* as a story of a man who, without any heroics, accepts death for the sake of truth. I have sometimes said, and always paradoxically, that I have tried to portray in this character the only Christ we deserved. You will understand after theses explanations that I said this without any intention of blasphemy and only with the slightly ironic affection which an artist has the right to feel toward the characters whom he has created.[3]

In this excerpt, Camus would rehabilitate his hero. These lines reveal a degree of intimacy, an autobiographical proximity between the novelist and his character.

Let us assume that the silence of Meursault is a camouflage for non-communicated thoughts. Thus, for C. Roland Wagner,[4]

> [T]he "silence" of his (Camus') hero is . . . an unconscious reflection of Camus' need to be silent about the truth within himself. It may imply some dim awareness of his need to repress.

He places the mind of Camus at the center of the controversy, and adds:

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> To preserve his own sense of innocence, Camus had to see Meursault as primarily innocent, as a victim of the hostility of society.

This lucid critic is aware of Camus' guilt which led him to articulate the inner drama and give words an analgesic function. The process of sublimation provided a form of therapeutic relief for the moment. Wagner reminds us:

> As *The Stranger* began to grow visible in his mind, he (Camus) wrote in his *Notebooks* (August, 1937) that he sometimes needed "to write things which I cannot completely control but which therefore prove that what is in me is stranger than I am."

Writing becomes externalization, elucidation. It is an act, a process akin to sympathetic magic. Through writing, Camus experienced the feeling of control and mastery over inner forces and compulsions which threatened his rational French intellect.

In his notebooks, *Carnets,* Camus wrote: "Three characters went into the composition of *The Stranger:* two men (one of them me) and a woman."[5] We should note that when Camus was a student in Algiers, he worked as a clerk, as Meursault does.

Mersault was a pen name which Camus had used in journalism. Mersault could be translated as "sea-salt" or "sea-leap," a pseudonym fitting his passion for swimming and the Mediterranean. "Meursault" can also be read as "die-salt" or "die-leap" (suicide). Salt is an obsessional metaphor in Camus' short story "Le Renegat" and symbolizes the dessicated, moistless and graceless mental state of the protagonist. Significantly, salt from sweat blinds Meursault a few seconds before the homicidal gesture.

Another detail of significance is the name Sintes, given to the rowdy neighbor who makes his living as a procurer. It is perplexing to the biographer and critic that Camus had given this character his mother's name, Sintes. In fact, throughout the novel, women are either neglected (mother), picked up (Marie), or beaten (the Arab prostitute). The hostility toward women is clear. However, in my view, it is not

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the matricidal impulse which is the predominant element in this novel, although Meursault's detachment veils a latent mysogyny and gynocidal wishes which are used against him in court and are instrumental in his punishment.

Women are the secondary target of Camus' repressed aggression. In *The Stranger* a faceless, nameless male with a knife in hand is murdered. In this novel, the major longing is of a patricidal nature, although it is camouflaged. The cover-up of this criminal impulse protects the author against his own conscience. Generally, critics have failed to identify in this novel, and in all Camus' writings, the homicidal insurrection against a patriarchal super-ego, which in my view is the thematic axis of Camus' work. Among the theocides—Kafka[6] and Dostoyevsky,[7]—whom Camus read feverishly, he found elective affinities. His concept of "sainteté laique" ("lay holiness") illustrates his obsessive wish to find innocence and relevance in a world where God has been neutralized.

This theme of inner loneliness and isolation without God found roots in Camus' traumatic infancy: he lost his father in the battle of the Marne when he was just one year old. He shared a two-room apartment with his brother Lucien, his illiterate and mute mother (*deus absconditus*), and his grandmother in the working class district of Belcourt.

A series of men played a major role in his artistic life. Camus attached himself to significant male mentors, professors and colleagues who played a nurturant and maturational role. First, Louis Germain, his teacher in primary school to whom Camus dedicated the "Discours de Suède," his Nobel Prize speeches; Gutave Acault, his uncle who had a passion for books; Jean Grenier, his professor of philosophy, to whom he dedicated *L'Homme révolté;* and other positive tutelary father figures who guided his intellectual development.

In Camus' novels, once God is nullified, great importance is given to the relationships among men: Meursault-Raymond, Tarrou-Rieux (*La Peste*), the renegade-Father Beffort ("Le Renégat"), for example. It is the dialectics of the rapport between two men which give substance and direction to the Camusian will to exist.

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Camus enjoyed the companionship of men bound together by having the same objective, forming a group against the absurd. He perceived this collective undertaking among males gathered for the same objective, joined in feelings and purpose, as a "fraternité virile" ("virile brotherhood"), the united sons acting against the fatality of history. Camus had a great passion for soccer and the theatre. He joined the Resistance and, with other men, experienced that existential "engagement," that commitment in history, which he advocated in his novel *La Peste* (*The Plague*).

Heart of Light

The central theme embodied in the art of Albert Camus is metaphysical revolt; that is, man's mutiny against an unjust deity. This rebellion, activated by the innocent son, is an attempt to challenge an authority clearly patriarchal. In *L'Homme révolté* (*The Rebel*), Camus writes: ". . . the rebel defies more than he negates." The act of aggression establishes a climate, a dialectic between oppressed and oppressor. Thus for Camus, "the metaphysical rebel is not atheistic; on the contrary, he is mostly a blasphemer."[8]

For Camus, the first prototypical metaphysical rebel was Prometheus, the fire thief who challenged the patriarchal Zeus, and was chained on the Caucasus to have his liver devoured by the vulture of conscience. Prometheus refused to repent for his transgression. He is, in the Camusian sense, an existential rebel, heroic in his undertaking, emancipated in the clear awareness of his crime and his punishment.[9]

In the writings of Camus, the sun is the symbol of that authority which reminds the characters of their subjugation. It is the sun which is the metaphor (*meta:* beyond; *phoros:* light) of patriarchal absolutism and consequently the target of Nimrod's arrows.

In the radiant world of Camus, the sun is a malevolent presence. In the hysterical short story "Le Renégat," an oedipal seminarist armed with a rifle is waiting in the desert to kill the missionary Father Beffort. He succeeds in his project. Under an infernal Algerian sun, the patricidal

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priest confesses events of his youth to the dying missionary. He recalls the cosmic catechism of one of his theological teachers who alleged: "Catholicism, it is the sun." He alludes to his literal castration (genital and lingual) at the hands of the primitive tribe which inhabits the heliotropic Taghasa, the city of salt he had hoped to Christianize.[10] In *The Stranger,* the theme of solar castration as retaliation for patricidal wishes against the sun is clearly voiced.

At this point I want to explore in greater detail Meursault's solar patricidal act and to connect it with Camus' patricidal philosophical thought. I will also attempt to trace the roots of this ideology of insurrection in Camus' intrapsychic conflicts as reflected in his literary works.

Let us examine the dialectics of sacrifice as illustrated in Part I, Chapter VI of *The Stranger,* and corroborate Julian Stamm's assertion that "Camus' fatalism is not fatalism but psychic determinism."[11]

On that fated afternoon when the homicidal act takes place, the sun plays a predominant role. Meursault perceives it as aggressively omnipresent. In the beginning of Chapter VI, Meursault, getting ready to visit Masson, is slapped by the sun: ". . . the day, already filled with sun, struck me as if it was a slap." The day is Sunday (sun-day, Christ-day, mass-day). Franz Cumont, in his *Mysteries of Mithra,* traced the origins of our Sunday to the day over which the sun presided in the Mithraic religion. He writes:

> The devotees of Mithra held Sunday sacred, and celebrated the birth of the sun on the 25th day of December, the same day on which Christmas has been celebrated since the IVth century at least.[12]

It is worth noting that Mithra, after his birth, wrestled with the sun and vanquished it, placing on his head the radiant crown. Moreover, Mithra the young male god was born from a rock called in the Mithra cult, "the Regenerative Rock," of which a replica was placed in every temple. It is of interest to us to draw a parallel between Meursault's

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journey to the rock on the beach from which the source springs, and the rock that gave birth to the divine son whose devotional effigies, found throughout the Roman world, represent him as the slayer of the solar bull. Ernest Jones called Freud's attention to Mithra Tauroctonous, the Bull Slayer, a very popular deity among the Roman legions. This god, who competed with the expansion of the worship of Christ, symbolized the son who killed the primeval father and rejoiced in his triumph. We might note that Christianity, the religion of the suicidal son, triumphed over Mithraism, the cult of the patricidal son.

Meursault is afflicted by "Sunday neurosis" (Ferenczi). He does not like Sundays. Sunday is soul day, when the sense of guilt is experienced as "lassitude" or "ennui," a generalized feeling of boredom and fatigue. Meursault seems to be weighed down by a massive depression, manifested in irritability and a somber mood.

Later, while swimming, the sun produces its progressive, relentless dehydration of Meursault, reaching a panic point prior to the homicidal discharge: "The sun removed the last veils of water which were dripping in my mouth." The sun becomes more and more intense. It assaults sand and sea. "The sun was falling straight on the sand and its glow on the sea was unbearable." Numbed by the sun, Meursault is sedated: ". . . I was half asleep by this sun on my naked head."

In the first encounter with the Arab, Raymond is cut; the aggressor escapes. The sun paralyzes them, solidifying space and time in a stupor, "while we remained nailed under the sun with Raymond holding tight his arm dripping with blood." The sun "nails" them as the Arab had just "nailed" Raymond's arm with a knife. "The sun was now crushing. It burst in fragments on the sand and on the sea."

A vocabulary of entrapment marks this whole scene. Later in his prison cell, when Meursault receives the unexpected visit of the chaplain who, as a missionary, tries to bring faith to the condemned, Meursault experiences the same gravity, the same tropism: "His presence weighed on me and annoyed me."[13]

We recall the protagonist of the short story, "Le

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Renégat" ("The Renegade"), who never forgot the association of Christianity and the oppressive sun, and who ended killing the missionary priest, Father Beffort.

Let us pursue our analysis of the solar duel. The sun explodes all around Meursault who feels its savagery. We are witnessing throughout this chapter a study in solar persecution. Meursault's trajectory leads him to the water source which springs from a rock. The sun is perceived by Meursault as an obstacle to this quest. It harasses and torments Meursault on the beach. Molested by the rays, Meursault gradually loses grip over his impulses. Self-control slowly erodes under the solar assault. Suddenly, the sun rushes upward in the sky, blocking any possibility of escape. For Julian Stamm,

> Camus' description of Meursault's subjective state is vividly suggestive of a crescendo of sexual excitement that is felt during and at the peak of ejaculation![14]

The sun has trapped Meursault; the statement, "le soleil a glissé dessus" ("the sun has slid upward"), has sexual overtones in French. The verb to slide, "glisser," implies genital penetration.

On the sand, ignited by the rays, Meursault is ravished by the sun. It appears as a duel:

> It was the same red bursting. . . . I was walking slowly towards the rocks and I felt my forehead swelling under the sun. . . . I tensed up to triumph over the sun and over this opaque rapture that it poured on me. To each sword of light spurted out of the sand, of a whitened shell or a broken glass, my jaws clenched.

We are witnessing what is experienced by Meursault as a case of solar rape. The vocabulary is orgastic: ". . . my forehead swelling under the sun"; ". . . this opaque rapture it poured on me" (semen); ". . . sword of light spurted out of the sand." Meursault has taken the role of the passive-feminine homosexual prey.

Battered and penetrated by the sun, Meursault's vision borders on hallucination: "I saw from afar the small dark mass of the rock surrounded by a blinding halo of light."

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The Arab is perceived as the obstacle in Meursault's going to the rock where fresh water flows. The sun doubles its assaults: "The sunburn overtook my cheeks and I felt drops of sweat gather in my brows."

The sun consumes its victim in a scene remindful of the dessication of the sacrificial goat which the Hebrews of the Old Testament, after having recited over its head the sins of the people, used to lead to the desert to die by exposure to the sun as part of the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16: 10–22).

Meursault is at the end of his tether:

> . . . the Arab pulled out his knife which he exhibited to me in the sun. Light burst on the steel and it was like a long sparkling blade which struck me in the forehead. At the same moment, sweat that had gathered in my brows dripped at once on my eyelids and covered them with a thick and tepid veil. My eyes were blinded behind this curtain of tears and salt. I felt only the cymbals of the sun on my forehead, and the bursting sword which spurted out of the knife in front of me. The burning blade was nibbling at my brows, foraging my painful eyes. Then everything reeled. The sea carried a thick and scorching wind. I felt the sky opening in all its mass and raining fire. My whole being tensed up as I touched the polished belly of the butt and it was then, in the dry and deafening noise that all began.

About his firing, Julian Stamm comments:

> When viewed from the vantage point of tension discharge, the sequence of firing is understandable as a continuing process of discharge of tension, both aggressive and sexual, analogous to the orgastic peak in the male gradual detumescence.[15]

Close analysis of this intense passage provides ample data to substantiate the theme of homosexual rape and castration. The sun and the nameless Arab are presented in close symbolic proximity. The Arab is an allegorical substitute for the sun. The sun and the Arab suggest the homo-

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sexual father. In the 20th century French novel, the Arab is traditionally depicted as the nurturing homosexual who heals the ailing puritanical Frenchman (Pierre Loti, André Gide, Albert Camus, etc.).

We think of the last words of *Totem and Taboo:* "Im Anfang war die Tat." ("In the beginning was the act.") By this firing, Meursault activates his intrapsychic life which leads to his awareness. In the Freudian context, the death of the father was the original "sin" which led to a concatenation of mental events that stimulated the birth and unfolding of consciousness. Camus hoped for that state which preceded the birth of consciousness.

In *Noces,*[16] Camus writes:

> This union wished by Plotinus, what is so strange about finding it on earth? Unity expresses itself in terms of the sun and the sea.

Meursault experiences his most harmonious moments when he is near the sea and the sun. In these instances, cuddled by his cosmic parents, he is in unison and feels guiltless. It is his closest experience to a state of grace.

We recall Benjamin Disraeli's therapeutic relationship to the sun on his journey to Palestine. In his letter to his father from Gibralter (July 1st, 1830), Disraeli described himself as the son of the sun. Disraeli's neurosis, his cardiac tremors and head pains, diminished when the sun shone on him.[17]

The sun is an ambivalent symbol in the works of Camus, who as a Mediterranean wished to merge in the luminosity which permeated his Algerian motherland. Camus' thesis in philosophy, "Métaphysique chrétienne et néo-platonisme," reveals his quest for that union with the One described by Plotinus which Camus illustrated in terms of the sun which can either save or condemn.[18] The sun which glows that brutal afternoon on the beach is a mutilator, the negative imago of the father. When the trial opens, the sun beams at its brightest. It penetrates the courtroom in spite of the window shades, intruding onto

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this stage where a soul is going to be weighed: "In spite of the shades, the sun infiltrated at certain spots and the air was already suffocating."

The sun will also be there waiting for the sentence to be given. When asked about the motivation for the crime, Meursault replied that it was because of the sun (". . . c'était à cause du soleil").

Ecce Homo

There is an irrational sequence of events which can be understood if perceived according to Meursault's wish to be punished. When the judge, in the privacy of his chambers, asks Meursault, deprived of counsel, for an explanation of the delay between the firing of the first and the second bullet—a significant detail in the case— Meursault recalls the red beach and the sunburn on his forehead, and remains silent. Meursault, like Jesus (Matthew 27: 11–14), answers the representative of temporal authority with nihilistic silence.

In the second part of the novel, we discover a different Meursault: an introspective, insightful and inquisitive man wrestling with trying to understand his fate; not a seemingly autistic character, a living identification of his mute mother. Harry Slochower[19] writes:

> It is only in these passages that Camus draws Meursault as coming alive. As an artist, Camus' "No" harbors a "Yes."

In the psycho-social context, Slochower emphasizes the significance of the blinding perpetrated by the sun as well as the burning blade of the Arab. Thus, according to this critic, the enucleation induced by the gun and knife frees Meursault of his inertia, and he shatters the silence of his petrified life by firing the gun. The deed has shattered his depression, awakening thoughts and feelings hitherto repressed and fossilized. It seems that through his homicidal gesture Meursault has cracked Sisyphus' rock, that inner density, the life-calcifying agency that had sclerosed his libidinal impulse. Slochower argues that Meursault's

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> . . . shooting of the Arab and the attack on the chaplain mark the birth of his self, mark the conditions for the possibility that his aggression can be turned towards constructive individual and social pathways.

Meursault recovers his fluidity of thought once the influence of a harsh super-ego has been fragmented. Let us explore the significance of the deed committed by Meursault.

In a dramatic scene, the judge privately tries to mobilize Meursault's repentance. Brandishing a crucifix, the judge sermonizes Meursault, trying to save him from the guillotine. In the context of colonial Algeria, the murder of an Arab by a Frenchman would not have been considered a serious crime, and would have elicited a minimal penalty if the culprit cooperated with the judge. But, Meursault does not collaborate with the judge. In his passive aggressiveness he threatens the judge and thereby assures his self-immolation. Meursault could have survived had he played the rules of the game. Instead, he used his own version of the truth for his suicidal needs, challenging the judge and the jury.

The judge and the prosecutor recognize Meursault's death wish against the father. In his final speech, the prosecutor adds another charge, perhaps the most damaging and consequential:

> . . . you will not find my thoughts too daring if I say that the man who is sitting on this bench is guilty as well of the murder that this court will try tomorrow.

The murder which will be tried by the court the next day, alluded to three times in the previous pages of the novel, is patricide. Meursault's lawyer first assures him that his trial will not exceed two or three days because of the court's impatience to try a case of patricide, a more important case than his. In the courtroom, a journalist alludes to the patricide which will be tried the next day; then he

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points out to Meursault the special envoy from Paris who came to report on it.

When the chaplain in the prisoner's cell tries to confess him in his last hours, Meursault becomes restless and impatient. Meursault replies to the visiting priest who asks him why he calls him "Sir" instead of "Father": "It angered me and I answered him that he was not my father: he was with the others."

Meursault has unwittingly succeeded in justifying to himself that filiarchy is just a camouflage for patriarchy. The sons use the same methods employed by the primitive fathers of pre-history—castration. The society of the sons is a hierarchy of the fathers. They are not truly Christian, because they do not forgive but identify themselves with the vengeful father instead of the penitent son, Jesus.

Through his self-mutilatory project, Meursault has shown the ambivalence on which Christian society is based. He arranges to have himself castrated for his crime against the sun-father. This sentence describes the formalization and institutionalization of castration: ". . . I would have my head severed in a public place in the name of the French people."

Meursault's last words confirm the fulfillment of his secret wish: his identification with the sacrificial offering:

> For all to be consummated, so that I feel less alone, it remained for me to wish that there would be many spectators the day of my execution and that they receive me with shouts of hatred.

The identification with Christ is now complete. "Pour que tout soit consommé," is the "consummatum est" uttered by Christ on the cross (John 19: 30).

Metaphysical Patricide and Psychoanalysis

I want to suggest that on that fateful Sunday, Meursault was under the influence of a particular intrapsychic conflict. Marie notices the pallor of his face, joking that he has "une tête d'enterrement" ("a head for a burial," or "a head to be buried"). Even his cigarette has a bitter taste.

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Progressively, Meursault will project onto the sun unconscious material which will turn the solar orb into a menacing presence. I would surmise that Meursault is under the intrapsychic tyranny of a father introject projected onto the sun. His obsessive wrestling with the sun on the beach is an external drama which reflects an inner collision with an antagonistic father introject. The father introject is awakened in Meursault's unconscious by the recent sexual intercourse with Marie (Marie, mare, mère, mer, sea), an act which is consummated the day after his mother's burial. The repressed oedipal father awakened by this act wreaks vengeance on the oedipal son.

Like Camus, Meursault never knew his father, apart from a story told by his mother. From her account, Meursault's father had witnessed an execution of a criminal; he then returned home and vomited. Meursault, on having heard the story, voices the following about the father he had never known: "My father disgusted me a little then."

This allusion suggests Meursault felt disgust towards his father because he was attracted to the macabre public decapitation of a man, or because his father's weak sensibility revolted him.

The story related by his mother probably had a strong impact on his unconscious; a few years later, Meursault assumes the role of that beheaded criminal watched by a multitude of fathers whom he had offended. Could this be the punishment for his "disgust" for his father?

How can we explain the presence of such a punitive and retaliatory introject of the father in the unconscious of Meursault who, like Camus, did not know his father? His only knowledge of his father was given to him by his mother in an unsettling story of decapitation. Meursault's mother had unknowingly offered a devastating association of the father's fascination with castration, which we assume made an impression on the mind of the future self-mutilator.

Years later, the mother's story inspired an essay entitled "Reflections sur la Guillotine" ("Reflections on the Guillotine"). Speaking about his own father, Camus writes:

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> One of the rare things I know about him, in any case, is that he wanted to witness the execution, for the first time in his life. He woke up in the middle of the night to get to the execution site, at the other end of the city, in the midst of a great throng. What he saw that morning, he did not say anything about to anyone. My mother told that he came home like a gust of wind, his face overwhelmed, refused to talk, stretched a while on the bed and suddenly threw up. He had just discovered the reality which hid under the great formulas which masked it.[20]

In this essay, Camus attributes his father's interest in the execution to his feelings of outrage and vengeance towards the decapitated murderer who, not content with killing a family of farmers, had massacred the innocent children as well. In other words, Camus' father had shown a particular interest for this psychotic infanticidal father to the point of waking up in the middle of the night not to miss his bloody execution.

Freud argued that many childhood fears, especially neurotic phobias, are phylogenetically endowed. Speaking of the Oedipus Complex, Freud wrote:

> Whenever experiences fail to fit in with the hereditary schema, they become remodelled in the imagination. . . . It is precisely such cases that are calculated to convince us of the independent existence of the schema. We are often able to see the schema triumphing over the experience of the individual. . . . [21]

Let me try and apply this to Meursault and to Camus.

Deprived in his infancy and childhood of a natural (ontogenetic) father, Meursault and Camus had recourse to the phylogenetic father of the unconscious. Camus never fully acknowledged his patricidal wishes, but his interpretation of the biblical story of the massacre of the innocents is revealing. Camus could not forgive Jesus for the massacre of the infants, the new-born sons of Judea, slaughtered by the soldiers of a patricidal and psychotic Herod searching for

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Christ. Camus' anger was directed towards Christ (the son) instead of towards Herod, the agent of this infanticide. Camus identified with the innocents slaughtered by order of an infanticidal father: King Herod.

This is what Freud called the schema which is invoked to fulfill deficiencies and lacunae in the ontogenesis of the individual. In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud wrote that the pathological over-reactions of children to their oedipal situations were hardly surprising when properly understood as brief repetitions of the more severe experiences with the terrible father of phylogeny.

The Stranger is an angry book. As a work of art, it barely conceals the patricidal rage of its author. This novel, written in a confessional style, expresses the inner crisis that haunted Camus in his mid-twenties. Making use of a surrogate, Meursault, Camus questions the foundation myth of his culture, exposing the intrinsic spiritual schism which resides at its core. Using a seemingly psychopathic protagonist and persona, Camus reveals his repressed wishes and chronic guilt. For Jean Onimus, "Camus is truly the secularized son of Augustine and Pascal."[22] Following Augustine, another North African, Camus believed in a sense of guilt that pervades us all. This sentiment of inescapable guilt is latent in all his works. In *L'Été* he writes: "At first innocent without knowing it, we become guilty without wanting it."[23] In Camus' theology God is not dead, but simply offended; Meursault is sacriligeous, not theocidal.

We can identify Camus' unsuccessful theocidal project as a quest for his father. Meursault arranges to offer himself as a sacrificial ram to the father surrogates: judge, prosecutor, jury. Deprived of a father in his infancy and childhood, Meursault orchestrates a situation which will provide him with considerable paternal attention.

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6. The chapter entitled "L'Espoir et l'absurde dans l'oeuvre de Kafka," in his *Mythe de Sisyphe,* reveals a great interest in the paranoid world depicted by the Czech writer in his novels and short stories.
7. A close reading of *L'Homme révolté* (*The Rebel*) in *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 407–709, illustrates the significance of Dostoyevsky in the mind and art of Camus. In this essay, the Russian novelist is often quoted and.alluded to.
8. *L'Homme révolté,* 436.
9. See "Prométhée aux enfers," in the essay "L'Été." Albert Camus, *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 806–876.
10. Camus, Albert. "Le Renégat," in *Théâtre récits nouvelles.* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 1578.
11. Stamm, L. Julian. "Camus' *Stranger:* His Act of Violence," in *American Imago,* Vol. 26, No.3, 1969, 287.
12. Cumont, Franz (1956). *The Mysteries of Mithra.* (New York: Dover Publications) 191, 132.
13. Camus, *L'Étranger,* 1160, 1163–4, 1207.
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15. Stamm, L. Julian. *Op. cit.,* 288.
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17. Bronson, Feldman. "Imperial Dreams of Disraeli," in *Psychoanalytic Review,* Vol. 53, No. 14, 1966–67, 108–141.
18. Camus, Albert. "Métaphysique chrétienne et néo-platonisme," in *Essais,* 1224–1310.
19. Slochower, Harry. "Camus' *The Stranger:* The Silent Society and the Ecstasy of Rage," in *American Imago,* Vol. 26, No. 3, 1969. See pp. 291, 294, for this and the following quotation.
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21. Freud, Sigmund. "Introductory Letters on Psychoanalysis III. St. Ed. **16:** 17, 119, 399.
22. Onimus, Jean (1970). *Albert Camus and Christianity.* (University: University of Alabama Press), 105.
23. Camus, Albert. "*L'Été,*" in *Essais,* 871.

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