



## Albert Camus: A Life

*By Olivier Todd*

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In this enormously engaging, vibrant, and richly researched biography of Albert Camus, the French writer and journalist Olivier Todd has drawn on personal correspondence, notebooks, and public records never before tapped, as well as interviews with Camus's family, friends, fellow workers, writers, mentors, and lovers.

Todd shows us a Camus who struggled all his life with irreconcilable conflicts--between his loyalty to family and his passionate nature, between the call to political action and the integrity to his art, between his support of the native Algerians and his identification with the forgotten people, the poor whites. A very private man, Camus could be charming and prickly, sincere and theatrical, genuinely humble, yet full of great ambition.

Todd paints a vivid picture of the time and place that shaped Camus--his impoverished childhood in the Algerian city of Belcourt, the sea and the sun and the hot sands that he so loved (he would always feel an exile elsewhere), and the educational system that nurtured him. We see the forces that lured him into communism, and his attraction to the theater and to journalism as outlets for his creativity.

The Paris that Camus was inevitably drawn to is one that Todd knows intimately, and he brings alive the war years, the underground activities that Camus was caught up in during the Occupation and the bitter postwar period, as well as the intrigues of the French literati who embraced Camus after his first novel, **L'Étranger**, was published. Todd is also keenly attuned to the French intellectual climate, and as he takes Camus's measure as a successful novelist, journalist, playwright and director, literary editor, philosopher, he also reveals the temperament in the writer that increasingly isolated him and crippled his reputation in the years before his death and for a long time after. He shows us the solitary man behind the mask--debilitated by continuing bouts of tuberculosis, constantly drawn to irresistible women, and deeply troubled by his political conflicts with the reigning French intellectuals, particularly by the vitriol of his former friend Sartre over the Algerian conflict.

Filled with sharp observations and sparkling with telling details, here is a wonderfully human portrait of the Nobel Prize-winning writer, who died at the

age of forty-six and who remains one of the most influential literary figures of our time.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Olivier Todd's biography of Albert Camus matches its subject's depth by portraying the man as well as the moralist. Born in Algeria and raised in poverty by an illiterate mother, Camus never forgot where he came from. He made his name in Nazi-occupied Paris--publicly as the author of *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus*, covertly as a member of the Resistance and editor of its newspaper, *Combat*--but he longed for the North African sun of his youth. During the years of crisis when Algeria struggled to break free from France, Camus alienated both colonialists and revolutionaries by supporting full equality for Arabs but denouncing terrorism. "I believe in justice," he told an Algerian heckler at a 1957 meeting he addressed in Stockholm after winning the Nobel Prize. "But I will defend my mother before justice." It is this preference for the concrete over the abstract that makes Camus such an appealing thinker. Todd's biography, which offers the most fully human depiction yet, is equally engaging.

### From Library Journal

There are very few biographies as meticulously researched as this one by journalist and author Todd (Cruel April, LJ 8/90). In some cases, the research leads to stretches of very tedious reading, but the book's smooth narrative flow mostly prevents that and makes for a rich description of Camus's life in colonial Algiers, wartime Paris, and his relationship with his immediate family, wives, and lovers. Todd's use of personal correspondence, interviews with family members, and previously unused public records reveals a complex man who was a philosopher, novelist, literary editor, and journalist slowly dying of tuberculosis and at odds with fellow French intellectuals over his political beliefs. Set against the historical background of French North Africa, Occupied France, and the postwar Paris literary scene, Camus vividly comes to life almost 40 years after his tragic death in an automobile accident. Recommended for specific collections.

-?David Lee Poremba, *Detroit P.L.*

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### From Kirkus Reviews

In this penetrating biography, Todd, a French journalist and author, clarifies the greatness of the Nobel Prizewinning author while also pointing out toes of clay. Born into poverty in Algeria, Camus managed, under the tutelage of two dedicated teachers, to educate himself and become one of the leading moral voices of this century. Todd's account traces the development of Camus's mature thought during his editorship of the Resistance paper *Combat* during WW II and after, in the battles over "purifying" the country of Nazi collaborators ("We will maintain freedom, even if it profits those who fought against it," he said, opposing summary justice). Todd conveys both Camus's intense appetite for life, his sensuality and vitality--for playing soccer, for the air and sea of his beloved Algeria--his confidence and also his self-doubt, his feeling of entrapment in his marriage and the consequent inability to remain faithful to his devoted but needy wife, Francine. Todd sagely attributes this to the need "to fight a certain vertigo made up of fear and illness and death"--he suffered from serious, recurrent bouts of tuberculosis. The genesis of his great works, from *The Stranger* to the unfinished novel, *The First Man*, the evolution of his ideas on absurdity, revolt, and freedom, are ably explored, as are Camus's often lonely positions among the French intelligentsia--never an ideologue, he was against Stalinist totalitarianism, against Arab terrorism in the struggle for Algerian independence. Todd's writing (or perhaps just its translation) is not notably graceful, and he can be evenhanded almost to a fault in his portrait of Camus; one wishes for a little less dispassion in his concluding remarks on the writer's lasting significance. (Knopf, however, has set a very bad precedent for serious nonfiction by omitting the end notes, which appeared in the French version, from this edition.) Still, this is a satisfying portrait of a man whose ideas on freedom, nationalism, and violence are as necessary today as they

were half a century ago. -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. Associate programs you got of course the knowledge your information inside the book that improve your knowledge and information. The info you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want attract knowledge just go with training books but if you want sense happy read one having theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The particular Albert Camus: A Life is kind of book which is giving the reader capricious experience.

#### **Sheila Dickerson:**

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or maybe go to the outside with them family or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity that is look different you can read the book. It is really fun for you. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent the whole day to reading a reserve. The book Albert Camus: A Life it is rather good to read. There are a lot of people that recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to deliver this book you can buy typically the e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book out of your smart phone. The price is not to cover but this book has high quality.

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