

## L'été

*A. Camus*

July 22–28, 2020

This is a selection of various essays written between 1939 and 1952 concluded by excerpts from a journal kept on a sailing boat apparently going around. The essays are touristic, in the sense of trying to capture the essence of a place, or philosophical. In the first essay we meet Oran, later to be compared with Alger, with a brief mentioning of Constantine, which I have never heard about before. The cities of Algeria are Mediterranean, but lack the history of the European counterparts and thus are lacking in spirit. They are like deserts, meaning pure locations with no vegetation of human memories going back over generations. Thus they are as cities without charm. You can describe their buildings and their natural settings. In the case of Oran it is the man-made harbor which is the most impressive, by far the largest and most imposing human construction blending with the surrounding landscape. The Oranians have a complex *vis a vis* their bigger brothers, those living in Angers. The author takes us to a boxing event, where such local patriotic sentiments are given free reins.

What to do in Alger would you be a European tourist? Camus points at no buildings and monuments, only to cafes and restaurants, starting early in the morning by the sea. This is the way of savoring the special charm of the city. The young women are very beautiful, he comments. The big cities have European and Arab inhabitants. The Europeans are of a mixture of various people, but would be not out of place in Paris. One gets the impression that parts of the city would appear more or less French. About the Arabs not much is said. He speaks about cities displaying sadness and boredom devoid of melancholy.

The relentless sun beating down on the beaches filled with sunbathing youth is a recurring theme. Nature is relentless in its cruelty, but the desert, I believe does not edge all the way to the sea, but in between there are mountains. The large empty deserts are to be found south of them, and play little if any, rôle, in the minds and consciousness of Algerians, at least not the urban.

Camus has a predilection for philosophical inquiry. He mentions Descartes and notes that total skepticism is not possible, and whenever something is dismissed as nonsense, automatically something else must be claimed as sense serving as a touchstone. Total skepticism is impossible, likewise any account is based on certain indisputable values.

We may not like the epoch in which we live, but we have no choice but to embrace it, none else will be available to us.

July 28, 2020 **Ulf Persson:** *Prof.em, Chalmers U.of Tech., Göteborg Sweden* ulfp@chalmers.se