

ERRATA

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HAS ALBERT CAMUS GOT THE RIGHT TO SMILE?¹

The black color on the covers of books by Albert Camus raises associations with mourning, death, and the dark side of reality. Is that why we are glad seeing this writer on the beach, half-naked and laughing? The same man, but in an elegant black suit is not surprising to such an extent. Does it mean that the image of Camus does not agree with the image of his books? Why **does the** reader viewing the album *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)*² **which** was prepared by writer's daughter find it hard to believe that the same man created such a pessimistic vision of the world in *The Plague* or *The Stranger*? Camus reveals his unknown face – **the** writer who was considered as one of the greatest artists of **the** era of pessimists, is waving his arms and legs and doing

¹ Artykuł nierecenzowany (the article is not reviewed).

² *Albert Camus. Samotny i solidarny*, red. C. Camus, tłum. A. Bilik, Warszawa 2010.

silly faces! – some reviewers open their eyes wide with surprise, watching the photographs included in the book. The prominent French writer – a pessimist was presented in the album as a man **pleased with life**, “who, at first glance, has little to do with despair” – editors of “Książki.onet.pl” **write**³. Has Camus no right to smile? This question interests me more than the others: can we **describe someone’s life through photography?**

Probably visual experiences **play the most important role at the reception of *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)***. The **colors of photographs** included in the album possess extraordinary power of expression, they radically break the ideas of recipients who **treat** existentialism in terms of black and white images. The whole semantic potential of these images lies in the fact that they are already colored or blended into the color, because the black-and-white world seems so distant and unknown. While the black-and-white portraits of Albert Camus, **known for his book covers**, fade away **in a past, rather creating** rather effect of unreality and historicity, the same photos in the colorful album have the effect of reality and shortened distance of time⁴. The big and black-and-white book with photographs of existentialists would resemble philosophical cemeteries, and although we lost something very important with this change of the black and white world of the past for the sake of this colorful, **one** it

³ »*Albert Camus – samotny i solidarny*« – recenzja, <http://ksiazki.onet.pl/recenzje/albert-camus-samotny-i-solidarny-recenzja/bc35f>,

⁴ Inspiring for those comments was the book by M. Rychlewski, *Zapiski semiotyczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, Gdańsk 2014, s. 79-80.

seems that the reception of the writings of Camus may come alive under the influence of this change. The album *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)* may be watched as a movie. The eye must perceive at the same time the photographs and quotes from the author's works, which are like subtitles **in a movie**. Every book is the subject appealing to the senses of sight and touch, but the novelty is that this album forces the synchronous mode of reading and thus opens a new stage in reception of Camus's works.

Polish supporters of **“Camus, the Mediterranean man”** carry in their hands a heavy trophy for the defense of his thoughts before **critics who do not allow words other than absurdity and nihilism in the essays about Camus**. However, this does not mean that *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)* is like the album with photos of **a beautiful, full of dignity woman on the cover wearing a string of pearls around her neck, in the middle of which we find only broken twigs of wormwood**. Of course, here is the mood of Mediterranean, but it all floats in the atmosphere of nobility and austerity. We will not take this album on a trip to Algeria – it would take a whole suitcase. Big, (28 cm x 33 cm) multi-page, hardcover book suggests that we are dealing with a valuable piece. The black color refers to the sphere of evil and death. On the other hand, it connotes not only – generally speaking – the dark side of reality, but also **elegance, physical and mental distance**⁵. The image of Camus on the book cover in some sense was pulled out of popular consciousness. Yet, the grim nature of the **book cover** contrasts with its contents,

⁵ More on this subject: M. Rychlewski, *Zapiski semiotyczne...*, s. 24

with the space full of *cafes, the sea, the sun*, that makes an impression as if to be drowning out the end of existence.

The uniqueness of childhood *makes that* we want to find in this period of our life the answers to questions that plague us *in adult life* – we assume that something, *that* is simple, can be the answer to something *that* is complicated. Camus shares this opinion, what we can learn by reading *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)*. But it is not true that this album is the only chance to discover the direction and evolution of the concept of writer's thoughts or that reading his lyrical essays about Mediterranean soul and culture may successfully be replaced by the contemplation of the photographs of Camus from Algeria or Greece! Something *that* is simple, *can not always be* the answer to something *that* is complicated! The postcards from Algeria can not replace reading *Algerian chronicles* and photographs of “the certificates of morality” will not affect our own opinion about the importance of Camus for culture of the twentieth century. The daughter of the writer correctly points out – no one owns the truth about Camus⁶, but after all, I am worried by the joy of reviewers coming from the fact that looking through *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)* we get a sense of proximity, which *was not given to us at all* by any novel by the author of *The Myth of Sisyphus*⁷. The interest sparked by Camus not is purely intellectual, it stems from what we might call *trust and friendship. Do we really live* in a world where friendship with Camus may be possible only

⁶ *Albert Camus. Samotny i solidarny...*, s. 6.

⁷ »*Albert Camus – samotny i solidarny*« – recenzja, <http://ksiazki.onet.pl/recenzje/albert-camus-samotny-i-solidarny-recenzja/bc35f>,

when we can pry the author both in formal situations, as well as in completely private ones, whether the photo of Camus who is shaving has a greater impact on readers than the *Myth of Sisyphus* now? *Albert Camus – Samotny i solidarny (Solitude and Solidarity)* can bring many emotions, however **the reception** of this album **on** internet proves that the whole closeness of photos of the writer and quotes from his books do not patch holes in the memory about his literary output.