ing from "the dustbin of history"? Let us not rush to answer this question. Let us only say—and not worry about being called "Red baiters" when we say it—that it is a legitimate question. Strange and self-annihilating could again be Edward J. Howe comes very close to asking it in ment to Leon Trotsky.ing called "Red baiters" when we say narrative foundation" than this rather strange and self-annihilating monument to Leon Trotsky. \*

**Albert Camus**

by **Herbert R. Lottman**

(Doubleday; xii + 753 pp.; $16.95)

Edward J. Curtin, Jr.

Only the great can move us as much by their failures as by their successes. Albert Camus was such a man. A true artist of his times, he tried to serve both beauty and suffering, to give "voice to the sorrows and joys of all." If one speaks of his "failure," it is only because what he understood by glory —"the right to love without limits"—the great goal he sought, was an end most of us cannot even imagine.

Albert Camus died at the age of forty-seven in a car crash at a point when he thought his true work had not even begun, when he still doubted his capacity to accomplish it. He felt that in his writing he had to hide behind a mask that stifled him. After his first few successes he was frequently moved "to think ahead to a time when there could again be création en liberté," when he would be able to speak his own truth without the mask of personalization. With the exception of *The Fall*, which was written in a sudden explosion, he always suffered from an inability to write freely and truthfully in his own name, regularly experiencing painful writer's block. "I'm increasingly a prisoner of my form," he had said, yet just before he died he achieved a breakthrough of sorts by making a good start on an autobiographical novel, *Le Premier Homme* ("thus I imagine a first man who starts at zero"), written in a new "Faulknerian lyricism, with repetition of words." He was finding a new voice when he died with much left unsaid.

Nineteen years later we can see his life and works of art as a whole. In the end the living process becomes for others a finished product, a life to be mapped, a biography to be written. Herbert Lottman's *Camus* is a heart-breaking story, in that sense fulfilling Camus's definition of art as "a heartbreak perpetually renewed."

Lottman is an American who has lived for more than twenty years in Paris. *Camus* is obviously the result of many years of loving care and diligence. He has exhaustively researched his subject, talking to Camus's friends and foes alike, leaving no stone, as they say, unturned. Many previously published erroneous details are corrected. It is a fair and compelling portrait of a man he clearly holds in high esteem, yet drawn in such a way that Lottman remains invisible throughout. In his lucid and comprehensive way he has chosen to concentrate on Camus's life, not his works. It was a good decision for a number of reasons, including the light it sheds on the relationship between Camus's life and work, especially the work he was struggling to accomplish but never did. This is not spelled out in wearying detail, but enough hints are dropped that the reader is challenged to put the pieces together on his own.

Camus thought of himself as "un voluptueux puritan." In a notebook of 1949 he wrote: "My chief occupation despite appearances has always been love (its pleasures for a long time and, finally, its painful transports). I have a romantic soul and have always had trouble interesting it in something else." But he did precisely that, writing many fine books that touched but never fully explored the subject of love, his true obsession. For this austere and moral Don Juan (a character that always intrigued him; "Why should it be essential to love rarely in order to love much?" he asked in *The Myth of Sisyphus*), this sensual man of conscience and honor, earned his reputation by a life-long literary meditation on death in all its guises: disease (he was constantly threatened by tuberculosis), murder, suicide, capital punishment (his thoughts here never more pertinent than today), war; deaths both "happy" and meaningless, sudden and slow. Yet it was love he was struggling to express, in life and art, but his internal contradictions foiled him to the very end. He wanted to change his life, "to go beyond the concepts of limite, mesure," to overcome the claustrophobia that was choking his life and his writing (he couldn't ride the subway, began to suffocate on the street), to write a book about love. But what he would term *une mort imbecile* prevented that.

Lottman tells the story of this Hamlet (a role Camus prepared for as an actor) in painstaking detail. From his early days growing up in the ethnically mixed working-class neighborhood of Belcourt, Algiers, the pattern of an outwardly confident and proud man of charm and reserve is counterbalanced by the inwardly lonely and troubled soul who, according to a close woman friend, seemed most un-Mediterranean, and "avoided speaking of what really troubled him." He appeared from the first as a man of honor, yet something of a dandy and an actor; a romantic who was always trying to control himself; an honest man who hated lies yet wore a mask to protect himself; a sensual ascetic who loved women; a morose Merrymaker; an atheist with a sense of the sacred who didn't believe in a future life; a brave liberation fighter who couldn't liberate himself; an aloof solitary who "needed constant companionship"; an athlete in a sick man's body; a humanist who "didn't wish to fight
either capitalism or socialism, but liberalism imprimatiste and marxisme," and who was attacked from both the left and the right; a Frenchman and an Algerian who "approved nothing of what was being said on the right or the left" in the Algerian crisis and who was torn apart by it; a moralist and philosopher with an anarchist's and poet's heart; an insightful man who could write in his notebook strangely contradictory words "To set-