

Correspondence, 1932-1960

Albert Camus, Jean Grenier, Jan F. Rigaud

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As a philosophy teacher, mentor, and friend, Jean Grenier (1898–1971) had an enormous influence on the young Albert Camus (1913–1960), who, in fact, acknowledged that Grenier's Les Iles had touched the very core of his sensibility and provided him with both a "terrain for reflection, and a format" that he would later use for his own essays. Their correspondence, beginning when the seventeen-year-old Camus was Grenier's student at the Grand Lycée of Algiers, documents the younger man's struggle to become a writer and find his own voice, a period in which he turned frequently to his mentor for advice, comfort, and direction. The letters cover a period of almost thirty years, from 1932 to Camus's untimely death in 1960. Because Camus destroyed the earlier correspondence he received, the first twenty-six letters in the volume are his only; the full begins in 1940.

These enlightening letters offer invaluable glimpses into the development of Camus's aesthetic ideas, literary production, and political stance. In contrast to the correspondence of Grenier, who throughout remains somewhat reticent about his life and doubtful about himself and his works, Camus's letters are a window into his most profound thoughts and sensitivities, delving deeply into his psyche and, at times, revealing a side of the writer unfamiliar to us. Undoubtedly they allow us a better understanding of Albert Camus, the man and the artist.



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