Pour que soit possible une œuvre absurde, il faut que la pensée sous sa forme la plus lucide y soit mêlée. Mais il faut en même temps qu'elle n'y paraisse point sinon comme l'intelligence qui ordonne. Ce paradoxe s'explique selon l'absurde. L'œuvre d'art naît du renoncement de l'intelligence à raisonner le concret. Elle marque le triomphe du charnel. C'est la pensée lucide qui la provoque, mais dans cet acte même elle se renonce. Elle ne cédera pas à la tentation de surajouter au décrit un sens plus profond qu'elle sait illégitime.

(For an absurd work to be possible, the most lucid form of thought must be involved in it. But at the same time it must not be visible in it, except as the organizing intelligence. This paradox is explainable according to the absurd. The work of art is born of the intelligence's refusal to try to reason concrete reality: it marks the triumph of the physical. Lucid thought instigates the work, but precisely in so doing it renounces itself. It will not yield to the temptation to add on to what is described a deeper meaning it knows to be illegitimate.)

— ALBERT CAMUS

Fiction that not only takes absurdity as its subject but also seeks to mirror it in its form must elect to reveal a causally fragmented histoire. The perceived divorce between psyche and exterior reality, between “l'intelligence” and “le concret” in Camus's terms, presupposes that physical causation is problematic; the relationship between cause and effect in the world about us is part of the organizing grid imposed upon perceived reality by the organizing eye. For the contrast between psyche and reality to strike the reader's consciousness with convincing force, the
concrete reflected in the *histoire* must retain its causal disconnectedness before the narrator's eye and in the narrator's prose.

We have encountered fragmentation before, in the traditional fiction of Zola and in the causal blockers of the "track-and-sidetrack" texts. In traditional fiction, breaks in the causal chain of the *histoire* are relatively infrequent, while they are, in absurdist structure, ubiquitous, often more common than linkage. If neither the récit nor common sense nor personal experience helps readers of traditional fiction to fill a given gap between two events in the *histoire*, recourse to the level of narration will suggest what the inferred author is up to in breaking the chain at that point. Fragmented absurdist fiction discourages, in one way or another, any peek behind the scenery to discover an author at work. Indeed, it is on the level of narration that the absurdist paradox is, shamefacedly, hiding out, for despite Camus, "lucid thought" is never quite ready to renounce itself.

It may be useful to reiterate here as well the distinctions drawn in an earlier chapter between "track-and-sidetrack" fiction and "broken-line" texts. Episodic structure provides a break in the causal chain at the end of each episode (at least). Episodes are not causally related to one another; instead, they are usually connected by similarity—structural parallelism, common themes, a single dominant viewpoint. They exist as branches of a basic substructure or "plot," which they dominate by sheer volume. A digression or two does not constitute episodic structure; the sidetracks must take up more room in the text than the main line. Above all, episodes are generally interchangeable; the order in which they occur is not of the essence. Absurdist fragmentation, on the other hand, lacks the substructure of "plot"; the viewpoint of the narrator is not constant, but changes; and the segments of the récit, although not causally interconnected, must appear in the given order. A truly fragmented story is linear despite the extreme frequency of causal gaps; the linearity is determined by factors other than causation existing on the level of the récit or of the histoire.

As a prototype of the fragmented tale, Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938) will serve admirably. And Camus’s partially fragmented *L'Etranger* (1942) can hardly escape analysis here, since, like a latter-day Bête humaine, it takes causality as its subject, and since the fascinating and voluminous scholarship that surrounds it disagrees with respect to the causal function.

While *L'Etranger* has elements of diarylike structure, Sartre's text adopts all the conventions of the fictional journal,¹ including a framing "Avertissement des Editeurs" and dated entries. The diary novel is emi-
nently suited to absurdist fragmentation, most obviously because the fictional "time of composition" is itself fragmented. Written in a series of "present" moments, it reveals a narrator rooted in each one successively, with no knowledge of what the future then holds. The narrator cannot therefore construct a causal chain (an activity that requires reverse logic, reasoning from effect to cause) to connect beginning to end and to explain the dénouement. So fictional journals as a class must be causally disconnected at the level of the récit. It is often possible, however, for readers to infer causation at the level of the histoire just as well as in a Zola novel: one has only to think of Gide's La Symphonie pastorale, Malraux's Les Conquérants, or Mauriac's Le Noeud de vipères; sometimes one can discern even the allegorical paradigms of a "signifié second," as in Bernanos's Journal d'un curé de campagne or in the log entries of Tournier's Vendredi, ou les limbes du Pacifique. But La Nausée carefully segregates events—walks in the park, days in the library, conversations with the Autodidacte, meals in the café, a visit to the municipal museum, a trip to see Anny—grounding each in its own present. None of these can be said to "cause" any of the others, and such causal fragmentation reinforces the insight that the present alone exists: the "past" is present memories, present texts, and the future is at best a present project.

Fictional diaries share with all first-person narratives a limited point of view: we see the fictional world from behind a single pair of eyes. We can enter the psyche of the narrator alone, and all we can know is what is registered there now, with the distortions peculiar to the individual diarist. There is no omniscience and no objective viewpoint: if causation appears to be functioning at all in the world outside the narrator's mind, we can have no objective validation of it. When external causation appears in La Nausée, it often seems to have its origin in the observing psyche's distorted perspective: a pebble causing "a kind of nausea in my hands" (p. 16).

Finally, diarists, both fictional and real, are generally at the same time narrator and narratee in their texts. They write for themselves, often with an eye to greater self-understanding. Roquentin adopts this stance; his diary is not written for public consumption, but for his own edification. He is translating the daily events of his life to words, then reading (presumably) the words in order to comprehend the life. It is in the presumption that reading is enough like living for one to facilitate comprehension of the other that Roquentin's diary (along with the novel itself, in a sense) runs into trouble, as we shall see.
Like the texts of Huysmans and of Proust previously discussed, *La Nausée* traces the progress of a "disease." But the events of the story, apparently separate and random as they are, never function as digressions, never provide escape or even temporary remission from the progress of the symptoms. Events are ordered not by causal relationship to each other but to mirror the gradually increasing severity of Roquentin's suffering; as he becomes ever more lucid about the radical separation between his mind, in which his true self seems to reside, and concrete, exterior reality, horror and creeping psychological revulsion little by little take possession of him. The gradual progression, carefully arranged, of the symptoms, from initial anxiety to raving hallucination, to the deceptive tranquillity of the final pseudocure, defines the rectilinear character of the *récit*. The onset of this metaphysical disease, from which no other character in the text suffers, its relentlessly increasing severity, and the unrealistic "cure" all exist in the text without explanation: no cause is given for the rectilinear evolution of Roquentin's particular problem. We may well infer as readers that he is the victim of his own lucidity, of course, but neither the reason for his special insight nor the cause of his peculiar, carefully graded psychological reaction is inferable. Nothing in the characteristic of lucidity itself determines such an evolution. The text is informed by degree of severity of reaction, and by the fact that disease precedes cure, rather than by cause and effect.

As we are instructed at the outset, in the initial, abortive "feuillet sans date," the purpose of the diary is understanding ("y voir clair," [p. 5]; "to get a clear insight into it") and cure ("Je suis guéri, je renonce à écrire mes impressions," [p. 7]; "I'm cured; I'll quit writing down my impressions"). Thus Roquentin transforms himself, for therapeutic purposes, into a narratee, into a reader: he becomes one of us. From that transformation arises the persistent double meaning of the text, in its relationship to Roquentin for one part, and in its relationship to us (other) readers for the other.

Reading skill, I reiterate, involves ability to draw inferences, and in dynamic systems, such as novels and life, inferences have their basis, on one level or another, in causal assumptions. This is what Roquentin soon begins to discover. He becomes aware (pp. 46–50) that we cannot narrate our own adventures, that the term "true story" is an oxymoron, because of the causal logic inherent in stories. Begin to relate an experience, and the listeners or readers will know that you begin with a particular end in view: "C'est en réalité par la fin," concludes Roquentin, "qu'on a commencé" ("It's really with the end that you began"). What our hero is discovering is the reverse
causal logic that functions on the level of the *narration*: if we are told A, it is in order to prepare for the subsequent occurrence of B, of which the inferred author, if not the narrator as well, is already cognizant. By assuming an author's intentions as prime cause in the narrative, we are associating text with mind, with psyche, as divorced from reality. Indeed, a primary distinction between life and story is that the latter has a "level of narration," while the former does not (unless, unlike Sartre, one envisions an inferred God). This discovery should already give Roquentin pause with respect to the therapeutic usefulness of his diary, but, situated *in media res* and unaware of where his next entry is coming from, he can claim freedom from intentionality. Not so Sartre. Readers are correctly assuming a level of *narration* in *La Nausée* and can only read Roquentin's discovery as a warning that the novel itself, in its supposed referentiality, is a delusion. That Sartre was aware of the delusion is nowhere more apparent than in his *prière d'insérer*, where he notes the narrator's discovery that "there are no adventures," only to add, "Alors commence sa véritable aventure, une métamorphose insinuante et doucement horrible de toutes ses sensations; c'est la Nausée..." (*Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 1695); "Then begins his real adventure, an insidious and sweetly horrible metamorphosis of all his sensations: Nausea..." Finding no cause for the disease and its gradual progression, nor for the "cure" in the *récit*, and unable to infer any in the disjointed *histoire*, readers are impelled to seek them out in the *narration*: to attribute the "véritable aventure" to authorial intent. If Roquentin knows not what his future holds, Sartre does (see, for example, his outline of the projected novel, in *Oeuvres romanesques*, p. 1686).

Roquentin is perfectly aware of the uselessness of causal inference for explaining exterior reality, since it is on that shoal that his biography of the Marquis de Rollebon runs aground. The last sentence of his manuscript, the one upon which our hero gives up his biographic endeavor, is a causal explanation: "M. de Rollebon dut se laisser prendre à cette manoeuvre, puisqu'il écrivit à son neveu en date du 13 septembre, qu'il venait de rédiger son testament" (p. 116); "M. de Rollebon must have fallen for that maneuver, since he wrote his nephew as of September 13 that he had just drawn up his will." The logic of the sentence is precisely that of a reader constructing *histoire* from *récit*. The cause indicated by "puisque" ("since") is not that of an event in Rollebon's life, but the condition for Roquentin's own inference: \( C \Rightarrow R (A \rightarrow B) \). The cause of Rollebon's reaction ("cette manoeuvre") is inferred ("dut"—"must have"), as is the reaction itself ("se
laisser prendre”—“fallen for”): Roquentin creates an histoire on the basis of a récit (the letter to the nephew plus circumstantial knowledge of the “maneuver”), using inference as readers must. His rejection of such reasoning as unrelated to the objective reality of the events under consideration ought to raise questions for him about the value of narrating the events of his life in a diary in order to understand them, for understanding of texts presupposes causal inference. For readers of the novel, this incident points to the unreliability of readerly inference, as if it were warning them away from seeking to infer what is going on at the level of narration, where the paradox lies.

Despite his discovery that “you have to choose: live or narrate” (p. 48; “il faut choisir: vivre ou raconter”) and his injunction to “Beware of literature” (p. 68; “Se méfier de la littérature”), Roquentin unfailingly “reads” his life. One foggy, rainy day, for example, when the proprietor of the café Mably did not come down to work, the idea strikes Roquentin, on a half-joking suggestion of an employee, that M. Fasquelle might be dead in his bedroom upstairs. This terrifying thought haunts him all through the varied events of the day (pp. 85—97). Like a reader, habituated to seeking meaning in the narration, for whom weather is a portent, and who knows that no self-respecting novelist would tell us that a character failed to appear for work unless that fact was the result of an important cause or the cause of a major effect, Roquentin fictionalizes, textualizes his life. It is in the diary’s mixture of “living” and “narrating” that the paradox filters down into the text. It takes the form of a straight but broken line. In the example of the “dead” proprietor, the day is filled with causally unconnected events: breakfast in the café, overheard conversations, walks, morning and afternoon sessions at the library, a discussion with the Autodidacte, an encounter with a “flasher.” But a constant mindset, the haunting thought of M. Fasquelle lying dead and undiscovered in bed, connects it all.

In another segment, preoccupation with his body, as a part of “concrete reality” and therefore distinct from his true inner self, unifies the multiple events in which Roquentin is engaged. First, he is aware of an uncontrolled twitch in his shoulder. Then he becomes conscious of his mouth: “Il y a de l’eau mousseuse dans ma bouche. Je l’avale, elle glisse dans ma gorge, elle me caresse . . . ” (p. 117; “There’s foamy water in my mouth. I swallow it, it slips into my throat, it caresses me . . .”). The quick shift from “Je” (agent) to “me” (patient) reinforces the separation of the observing mind and independent matter. Next, in the famous passage,
his hand takes on a kind of animal life of its own. The notion of “body parts” unites the passage, makes it a “line,” but no causal connective leads from one part to the next. Readers could not foresee the selection of organs nor the order of their presentation. But once the taxonomic principle is determined (independence of the material body from the mind), it is not hard to see where the line is going. It is hardly surprising therefore when, later on, his penis begins to operate autonomously. This leads to the horrifying discovery that he cannot always control his very thoughts, and that he can never stop them: the final line of separation fades. Progression in the passage is not causal but logical; the blockers of fragmentation fall between examples of a principle, not between a potential cause and its possible effect.

Given the continuity of prose and the discontinuity of events, it is hardly surprising that an inveterate “reader” like Roquentin should find a cure for his malady in language. “Le mot d’Absurdité naît à présent sous ma plume” (p. 152; “Now the word Absurdity springs to life beneath my penpoint”): this miraculous birth (there is no definable cause for it except Roquentin’s terrible need for comfort) gives our narrator a linguistic tool, a name for the divorce that separates meaning from life, thought from reality, and narration from récit. But in this word the solipsism that has constituted the malady and the subject of the novel all along resurfaces, for Roquentin endows the word with meaning, with value, with the power to dominate through understanding: “je comprenais la Nausée, je la possédais” (p. 155; “I understood Nausea; I possessed it”). But now we other readers see what our hero does not: that the word “Absurdity” is no more meaningful, no truer in its pseudoconnection of psyche to exterior reality, than any other word. Like the notions of “causality” and “meaning” themselves, it is a mental construct: despite its capacity to name, the psyche never truly possesses anything, including itself. Roquentin will come to glimpse the problem: “Now,” he notes later, “when I say ‘I,’ it sounds hollow to me” (p. 200; “A présent, quand je dis ‘je’, ça me semble creux”).

But if, on the level of the histoire, the birth of the Word, with its magic power, appears miraculous, the event belongs to a clear causal chain on the level of narration. The novel is an “adventure,” and, as Roquentin saw early on, the end causes the beginning. Our hero’s initial anxiety, his lucid insights, and his psychological suffering, all existed in order for this Word, and its concomitant meaning expressed in other words, to come into being.
As I have noted, in his essay entitled “Vraisemblance et motivation,” Gérard Genette evokes the conflict between the chronological causal logic of the récit and the antichronological causality inherent in the intentions of the narration. His use of the term “motivation” applies to all causal concatenations at the récit level:

La motivation est donc l'apparence et l'alibi causalistque que se donne la détermination finaliste qui est la règle de la fiction: le parce que chargé de faire oublier le pour quoi? — et donc de naturaliser, ou de réaliser (au sens de: faire passer pour réelle) la fiction en dissimulant ce qu'elle a de concerté, comme dit Valincour, c'est-à-dire d'artificiel: bref de fictif. (P. 97)

(So motivation is the outward appearance and the causalist alibi that intentionalist determination, which is the rule of fiction, establishes for itself: the because entrusted with driving the what for? from our minds, and thus with naturalizing fiction, or with realizing it [in the sense of “passing it off as real”], by dissimulating what is “concerted” about it, as Valincour says, i.e., what is artificial, in short, what is fictive about it.)

Roquentin's anguish and his resulting need for comfort are, in this sense, a causalist alibi constructed to bring the word “Absurdity” with its full baggage of meaning artificially into the text. But the paucity of causal connections between events in the novel, and Roquentin's position as observer before a succession of causally unconnected exterior happenings, sharply reduce the number of “alibis” in this fiction. We are constantly impelled to infer causation from the narration and to read at that level. But, as we already observed in chapter five, “motivation” in the récit is not a requirement for verisimilitude; La Nausée’s “alibi” resides rather in its verisimilar aspects: people, places, situations.

Genette seems to impugn “motivation,” explicit causation in the récit, as a coverup for the “concerted,” the “artificial,” and the “fictive,” which enter fiction through the narration. But intentionalist determination unconcealed would not be fiction (parables excepted), nor would a narrative without a level of narration to hide. But since the level of narration is simply a product of reader inference, one might suggest that Genette is using his own intentionalist assumptions to subvert what is fictional about fiction. It should be beginning to become apparent that the fictional enterprise requires cooperation of narration with récit, and thus of reader with text.
In *La Nausée*, the narration is concerted, artificial, divorced from reality, like the psyche, so that the tension between récit and narration constitutes a formal example of the paradox that is its subject. To reconcile the irreconcilable, the text decides to incorporate the project of another text: Roquentin decides at last, Proust-like, to write a novel, in the hope that it will reflect a moment of his present being upon the future, like the jazz artists "immortalized" on his favorite record. Like all fictions, it will dissimulate; it will have a narration level (implicit in the "hope" of the previous sentence) inexistent in the reality it pretends to describe. It is therefore a pseudosolution, for the absurd tension will remain between récit and narration, just as in *La Nausée* itself. This tension bears an obvious relation to the interlevel irony we observed in mythic stories (chapter eight), the importance of which I shall discuss in the conclusion.

While Roquentin's malady alerts readers from the start to the intentions of the narration (we may guess that Roquentin is headed for a "cure" or "death," rather than toward a linguistic pseudocure, but we know at least that the reverse logic of the narration warrants a guessing game), the narration is so eclipsed in the first part of *L'Etranger* that we are nearly at the end of it before we realize that there is a game of causal logic afoot. In the histoire, the game is played for higher stakes: whether Meursault killed the Arab "en connaissance de cause" (p. 1196) is the question on which the homodiegetic narrator's life hangs. The reader is in less jeopardy, but the competition between the narration we infer and the récit we read is so subtly waged that we grow aware of it only retrospectively.

Part I of *L'Etranger* is a fragmented, diarylike presentation (although it lacks the diary conventions of dated entries and introspection) of certain events in Meursault's life during the eighteen days, more or less, that end with the murder. Part II is a straightforward narrative account of some of Meursault's experiences during the investigation, the trial, and his subsequent imprisonment while awaiting a pardon, which apparently does not come (the latest moments related in the novel, in the present-of-narration at the beginning of II, 5, suggest that Meursault has been moved to death row, and that execution, and the attendant final interview with the chaplain, appear inevitable to him). Part I thus provides no apparent causal chain leading directly to the murder, while part II, in the case developed by the investigating magistrate and the prosecutor, presents a récit connecting many of these events in a causal strand that attempts to demonstrate premeditation. We may call part I "récit-dominant," because it encourages
readers to read at that level rather than constructing a causally linked histoire; the prosecutor's case is histoire-dominant, since it presents most of the same events in a causal relationship, virtually creating retrospectively the histoire for the reader. The confrontation of these two modes by the narration points to the notion that causation in human conduct is a matter of mental perception, not of pragmatic fact.

Since part I is fragmented, and since fragmentation is supposed to impel readers to seek causal explanations at higher levels of narrative, why do readers tend to accept the causal gaps in Meursault's récit unquestioningly? I propose three answers. First, the fragmentation is successful: the murder remains unpredictable until I, 6; therefore construction of a causal histoire remains impossible, and interrogation of the intent of narration fruitless. Second, the hero appears unthreatened until the end; our need to understand and predict is therefore somewhat diminished. Finally, the frequency of causal vocabulary in part I is extraordinarily high, giving a superficial impression that Meursault is indeed explaining, making the causal connections among the events in his life. The unusual density of obvious, optional causal connectives in part I has left critics at odds.

Sartre claims, in his penetrating "Explication" (1943), that, in a style like that of L'Etranger,

. . . on n'organise pas les phrases entre elles: elles sont purement juxtaposées: en particulier on évite toutes les liaisons causales, qui introduiraient dans le récit comme un embryon d'explication et qui mettraient entre les instants un ordre différent de la succession pure.  

(. . . you do not organize the sentences with respect to each other; they are purely juxtaposed; in particular, you avoid all causal linkings, which would introduce a kind of embryonic explanation into the story and set up between the moments an order which is different from pure succession.)

Subsequent critics—Ullmann, Thody, Fitch, Simon, et al.—have also indicated that the text tends to avoid causal connections. Sartre adds, in a more ambiguous sentence we shall examine later, that the world of this novel is one from which "causality has been carefully eradicated" ("dont on a soigneusement extirpé la causalité"). Yet Ignace Feuerlicht was able to list, in 1963, one hundred nine causal connectives in L'Etranger: parce que (60), causal comme (15), à cause de (13), puisque (7), car (6), c'est pour cela que (2),
causal *ainsi* (3), *donc* (2), *par suite* (1). There are also examples of causal *de*, of *pour* (accomplished intention), and of numerous transitive verbs indicative of causation (not to mention parataxis) not listed by Feuerlicht. A great deal of this vocabulary occurs in the “fragmented” part I: thirty-five of the sixty uses of *parce que* appear in that section. The frequency of the causal connectives cited by Feuerlicht in *L’Etranger* is indeed far higher than that in our Gidean sample (see appendix A)—quite high, I think, in absolute terms. Our first-person narrator seems almost preoccupied with explaining “why,” and yet the notion that he fails to make causal connections persists.

Close analysis of Feuerlicht’s list (after the minor corrections indicated in note 8 above) suggests the reason for the contradiction. About sixty-six percent of the occurrences of causal terms are inconsequential or apparently evasive, or they involve mere inference or speculation on Meursault’s part: such uses of the vocabulary cannot contribute to the generation of causal chains. Another nine percent are not part of Meursault’s *récit* as such, but belong to the *histoire* as judgments of other characters quoted or alluded to by Meursault. The remaining twenty-five percent of occurrences of these “optional” causal terms reflect an awareness on the narrator’s part of working chains of cause and effect, although seven percent of those appear to refer to the *narration*, of which Meursault is, theoretically, unaware. (For a statistical summary of my analysis of Feuerlicht’s data, see appendix C.)

A few examples of this causal vocabulary will show how it often serves to give the impression of explaining without really doing so. Meursault writes, for example, that, during his vigil beside his mother’s coffin, he fell asleep. Then: “Je me suis réveillé parce que j’avais de plus en plus mal aux reins” (p. 1133; “I woke up because my back was hurting worse and worse”). But no long-term consequences arise, either from awakening or from the sore back. No explanation at all is offered for dozing off (if one can ever explain such things), although it is falling asleep, rather than awakening, which will cause repercussions at the trial. The first morning after the return from the funeral, “J’ai eu de la peine à me lever,” writes Meursault, “parce que j’étais fatigué de ma journée d’hier” (p. 1138; “I had a hard time getting up, because I was tired out from yesterday”). The cause-and-effect relationship is highly plausible, but the fatigue left him strong enough to go swimming that morning, to take Marie out that evening, and to prolong the date in his room into the night. Much of the causal vocabulary in this text explains in this way brief and inconsequential circumstances.
Less frequently, Meursault's causal vocabulary apparently evades a central issue, either by his intent or through his failure to grasp it. Two examples occur within three sentences when, after swimming, he and Marie put on their street clothes to leave the beach. She is startled, since he has just made a date with her, to note from his black tie and armband that he is in mourning, and he tells her his mother is dead.

Comme elle voulait savoir depuis quand, j'ai répondu: “Depuis hier.” Elle a eu un petit recul, mais n'a fait aucune remarque. J'ai eu envie de lui dire que ce n'était pas ma faute, mais je me suis arrêté parce que j'ai pensé que je l'avais déjà dit à mon patron. (P. 1139)

(As she wanted to know since when, I answered, “Since yesterday.” She backed off a little, but made no remark. I felt like telling her it wasn’t my fault, but I held off, because it occurred to me I’d already said that to my boss.)

The initial comme introduces the reason for his responding, but not for his response; yet the problem lies there, for his mother had died, at the latest, the day before yesterday. Did he lie or err? As for the parce que, the fact of having said something once is not of itself a valid reason for not repeating it to another interlocutor. The construction of parce que with a mental “action” (parce que j'ai pensé que, trouvé que, senti que, etc.) is not, however, atypical of Meursault; he has no qualms about “explaining” actions on the basis of momentary judgments, illogical or not. He will give, parataxically, better reasons for his silence in the two sentences immediately following: “That didn’t mean anything. Any way you look at it, you're always a little at fault” (“Cela ne voulait rien dire. De toute façon, on est toujours un peu fautif”). But precisely, the parataxis here, after the earlier parce que, leaves open the question of whether these reasons entered his mind while speaking to Marie or whether he thought of them later. Here again, he explains his (absence of) response, but not what he felt like responding. Why did he feel the need to disclaim responsibility for his mother's demise? Does he see her death as out of step with his usual style of life, rather than seeing his lifestyle as out of step with her recent passing? In such instances, Meursault explains the inconsequential—why he spoke (or did not)—while eluding the more crucial question of the cause behind his expressed (or unexpressed) ideas. So used, causal vocabulary creates no “chains of events.”

Now and then Meursault uses the terminology of causation to draw inferences about the reality that surrounds him. While they let us see the
world through his eyes, these inferences never explicitly influence his conduct. As he approaches the Arab he will soon kill on the beach, for example, he notes: “Maybe because of the shadows on his face, he looked like he was laughing” (p. 1165: “Peut-être à cause des ombres sur son visage, il avait l’air de rire”). If he took the inferred amusement on the part of the Arab as an affront, the text gives no indication of it; in the récit, the murder is caused by the sun, not anger. Indeed the causal term in this sentence serves to explain why the inference was of dubious validity. Occasionally too, our narrator chooses causal terms in developing hypotheses about future or other nonexistent “realities.” Such speculations have no bearing on any action, and they occur essentially toward the end of the novel, as Meursault seeks to imagine what it will be like to be guillotined, or whether some other form of execution might be preferable (e.g., p. 1204, Ainsi, Car, Par suite).

But Meursault does make a number of substantial causal connections. The primary example in part I is the relatively clear causal chain, of which Meursault is conscious, leading from the relationship with Raymond Sintès to the initial confrontations at the beach, in Raymond’s company, with the latter’s Arab antagonists. Meursault knows that Raymond enjoys his company, “because I listen to him” (p. 1145; “parce que je l’écoute”). Such willingness to listen entangles the protagonist in Raymond’s plot to brutalize further his former Arab mistress, who has been unfaithful, or, if he is her pimp, “unremitting.” When asked if he will write a letter to draw her into Raymond’s trap, Meursault says nothing; asked if he would mind writing it then and there, he replies, “No.” There is no explicit causal explanation for that decision, but Meursault notes that he wrote the best letter he could, to please Raymond, “parce que je n’avais pas de raison de ne pas le contenter” (p. 1148; “because I had no reason not to please him”). Passivity—listening, not minding, having “no reason” to displease Raymond (although “avoiding violence” might have done in a pinch)—characterizes the explicit explanation at this juncture. From there, the causal chain continues, with others (Raymond, Masson) making the decisions and Meursault electing only to participate, until the first confrontation with the Arabs on the beach (pp. 1164–65). The causal link between that fight and the second encounter is not explicit, but Meursault infers a possible motive on Raymond’s part (p. 1165). At the end of the second confrontation, our narrator takes a more active part, apparently to prevent Raymond from shooting his adversary. Here the causal chain ends. The
third confrontation, in which Meursault returns alone to the beach and kills the Arab, is isolated from the preceding chain of events by the introduction of a new cause: "C'était le même soleil... A cause de cette brûlure..." (p. 1168; "It was the same sun... Because of that searing heat...").

Here the etiological term sets in motion a new causal chain, the most formidable of the novel: hearings, trial, conviction of premeditated murder.

In addition to the substantial causes Meursault sees, a number of causal terms in the text explain his emotional and mental states (e.g., "J'étais un peu étourdi parce qu'il a fallu que je monte chez Emmanuel pour lui emprunter une cravate noire et un brassard," [p. 1127]; "I was a little confused because I had to go up to Emmanuel's to borrow a black tie and armband from him"). But for the most part such states of mind are without consequence. A few may be seen, however, as actual causes of Meursault's final enlightenment. During the trial, our narrator once notes, "I had a crazy desire to cry, because I felt how much I was detested by all those folks" (p. 1189; "j'ai eu une envie stupide de pleurer parce que j'ai senti combien j'étais détesté par tous ces gens-là"). After conviction, he can still imagine himself alive and free. "J'avais tort," he explains, "de me laisser aller à ces suppositions parce que, l'instant d'après, j'avais si affreusement froid que je me recroquevillais sous ma couverture" (p. 1203; "I was wrong to let myself make these suppositions because, the next minute, I was so horribly cold I curled up in a ball under my blanket"). His final decision to cherish that which separates him from those who judge—and thus from life and freedom—appears to be, at least in part, a result of such explicitly caused mental states.

A few causal explanations, inconsequential in the récit, seem in retrospect to refer to the text itself, to what is going on at the level of narration; we will consider these later. The essential point is that, despite a causal vocabulary of exceptionally high density, the critics who see Meursault's account as causally fragmented are quite correct. Most of the obviously causal terms are "wasted" on the inconsequential or on apparently "evasive" explanations, particularly in part I. But the "waste" may have a dual purpose. First, it can give some readers at first reading the impression that Meursault is indeed explaining the events of his life, thus discouraging speculation, at the level of narration, about the indexic author's purposes. Secondly, it suggests a tension between words and reality, raising doubts about the veracity and utility of language, of linguistic "explanations."

Of course, if Meursault were writing, diarylike, the story of his life
day by day as he lived it, it would be quite plausible that he might fail to
note causal relationships that would become apparent only afterward:
hindsight, after all, is the natural direction for causal reasoning. So it is that
the question of when the text was composed by Meursault (present of
narration) becomes central for analysts of causation. With it, the question of
who is writing surfaces: is it the bereaved office clerk who writes I, 1, or the
condemned murderer of II, 5, or both?

As several critics have noted, 10 evidence of proximate narration figures
prominently in part I, suggesting a daily notebook or diary: in the first two
paragraphs of I, 1 ("Aujourd’hui, maman est morte,” [p. 1127]; “Today
mama died”); in the temporal overlap of paragraphs two and three (“Je
prendrai l’autobus . . . . J’ai pris l’autobus,” [p. 1127]; “I’ll take the
bus. . . . I took the bus”); at the beginning of I, 2 (“c’est aujourd’hui
samedi,” [p. 1138]; “today is Saturday”); in I, 3, where the whole chapter
could, without contradiction, be read as if composed at the close of the day
recounted; in I, 4, which purports to have been written on Sunday ("Hier,
c’était samedi,” [p. 1150]; “Yesterday was Saturday”), but which ends with
our narrator already in bed Sunday night (when did he write?). Beginning
with I, 5, there is apparently nothing but postponed narration until the first
sentences of II, 5 (“en ce moment,” [p. 1202]; “right now”). It is easy to
situate the segment of postponed narration as being composed during the
period of incarceration, but the problem posed by the proximate narration
is that Meursault gives such a full account of his activities that it is hard to
imagine when he finds time to write.

Jean-Claude Pariente has proposed an ingenious solution: I, 1 through
I, 4 constitutes a diary without indications of dates and times of entries; it
was divided into parts and chapters by a transformed Meursault near the end
of his life, when he also composed the long narration, I, 5 through II, 5.11
Thanks to this latter-day textual division, breaks between moments of
composition can occur in midchapter. Thus, for example, all of I, 1 after
the first two paragraphs, plus the first two paragraphs of I, 2 (i.e.,
p. 1127–39), was composed on Saturday, after the morning swim and
before the evening date. That would allow perhaps some eight hours (minus
time for meals) for the project: possible for a fast writer, but a grueling
session. Meursault likes to explain his mental states, yet he never mentions
distractions, or writer’s cramp; indeed, he never alludes to work on the diary
at all. If I raise the issue, it is to begin to suggest that no inferred solution,
on the level of the histoire, can be completely satisfying.

Another difficulty with the early-chapters-as-diary theories is perhaps
the ultimate causal question about the *histoire*: why, or for whom, was the "diary" written? Fictional diaries traditionally exist for cause, explicit or implicit;\(^{12}\) Roquentin, one will recall, explains at the outset what impels him to write. *L’Étranger* provides no such indication. Fictional diarists almost always write for themselves alone, and the union of narrator and narratee furnishes for readers a guarantee of the narrator’s sincerity.\(^{13}\) Now, if Meursault begins a diary for himself, he need not explain those things he knows full well, such as the fact that the nursing home is in Marengo, eighty kilometers from Algiers (p. 1127), or that his bedroom overlooks the main street of the *faubourg* (p. 1140), or even that old Salamano occupies the other lodging in his floor (p. 1144). Such details imply another reader, one who needs orientation in an unfamiliar environment.

And, if diary there is, why does it begin precisely with the death of "maman"? Is it just an odd coincidence that the first event of the diarylike text is also the earliest element of the prosecutor’s case? One critic, noting the problem, suggests that the text pretends to be retranscribed and edited after Meursault’s decapitation, going so far as to imagine a possible editorial frame, which would indicate that entries prior to Mme Meursault’s demise, being unimportant to the case, were deleted.\(^{14}\) Of course, the notion of importance or relevancy is one of consequentiality, a causal notion whose adoption would presuppose an editor favorable to the prosecutor’s case. And, if there were a *post mortem* "transcriber," could we attribute to her or him the insertion of the orienting details Meursault would not have written for himself? If so, what else did the *transcripteur* add or delete, given a bias for "relevancy" and public clarity? And if, as J.-C. Pariente has proposed, it is Meursault, at last capable of seeing his story objectively, as a "stranger" to himself, who performed the editing (division into chapters), did he delete entries prior to his mother’s death and add the orienting explanations at that time, perhaps in view of presenting "his side of the story" to a wider audience? In that case, might he not have deleted a crucial causal term here or there, or inserted one of his "je ne sais pas pourquoi" ("I-don’t-know-why" assertions) on occasion? A diary modified *ex post facto* by anyone is suspect, and one that takes account of external readers’ ignorance is doubly so.\(^{15}\)

On the other hand, if Meursault composed the whole tale in prison, when he presumably had ample time to write, the diarylike character of part I, with its indices of proximate narration, is a pure fabrication. With such hindsight, the absence of crucial causal connections and the mislead-
ing abundance of causal vocabulary could well be self-serving. In full knowledge of the prosecutor's reading of events, and aware that he was writing for others, he could propose another version of events, whether he believed it to have been "true" or not, as a condemnation of the judicial system and as his vindication before posterity.

So neither of these histoire-level readings is fully satisfactory; both leave doubts about the narrator and a suspect text. But it is precisely the impossibility of constructing a credible histoire that impels us to turn to the narration in search of an explanation. Novels that are complete and quite internally consistent in their histoire (like La Bête humaine, where Denizet's explanation fills the structural role occupied by the prosecutor's analysis of events here), while they may hint at their level of narration, do not oblige us to consult it. Inconsistencies in the histoire open a novel "at the top," raising our consciousness of the indexic author's intentions as we infer them, and increasing the importance of the narration. It is time to turn, therefore, to the metacausality in the narration of L'Etranger.

Meursault attends his mother's funeral, takes a mistress (in the parlance of the period), writes a letter for a friend, and kills an Arab. These four events occur in the fragmented part I, and again in the same order in the prosecutor's demonstration of premeditation. The difference lies in words: the absence of crucial causal connectives in part I and their presence in the prosecutor's reading of events. The narration presents first a récit with causal gaps, followed by an histoire of that récit, reconstituted by inference with the gaps neatly filled. The States Attorney is merely reading part I as we have read Zola, making all the possible connections.

The metacausal function of part I is to make possible the prosecutor's histoire, while putting its validity in doubt. The first-person narration throughout tends to keep readers' sympathy with Meursault. (The four final shots, for example, are not bullets penetrating a dying man's hide, but knocks on the gates of "malheur" for Meursault; the unfortunate victim remains nameless throughout: he is just "the Arab.") We read Meursault's version first, so that the subsequent, competing version must not only be plausible in itself (which is all we required of the first version), but must also overcome the established credibility of the prior account. And Meursault will narrate the trial too, telling us he is disoriented, hurt, and astonished to see his actions debated as if without his participation. The narration appears thus to be seeking to ensure that we will see in the prosecutor's histoire a fabrication. For the point of the narration is that all
causal explanations, coming, as they must, after the fact, are artificial constructs. Whether Meursault begins with a diary or not, whether he edited it or not, whether he used causal connectives innocently or to mislead, whether he wrote for posterity or for himself, the *narration* shows that two plausible versions can exist for the same events, that events can “exist” with or without crucial causal interconnections, and thus that causation is not inherent in them at all, but an exterior interpretation placed upon them by a human mind.

In addition to the causal terms treated earlier, there are eight examples of causal vocabulary in text-referential sentences. I hope to show that these examples, while inconsequential in the *récit*, point to the operation of the *narration* and thereby to the problematics of literary causation.

The three examples at the beginning of I, 6 (p. 1160) provide a significant lexical and thematic link between the mother’s funeral and the murder, in the ironic company of “useless” causal vocabulary. The first example looks backward toward the funeral and contains a somewhat characteristic ambiguity: “Marie s’est moquée de moi parce qu’elle disait que j’avais ‘une tête d’enterrement’” (“Marie made fun of me because she said I ‘looked like I’d come from a funeral’”). The sentence can, of course, be understood in at least two ways: “Marie seemed to be making fun of me because she said ...” (affirmation as cause of inference), or “Marie made fun of me because (as she said) I ‘looked like I’d come from a funeral’” (facial expression as cause of teasing). Thus, while we may be at something of a loss about causation in the *récit*, the funereal mien that Meursault did not have when he first flirted with Marie the day after the funeral now appears, some two weeks later, sending symbol seekers to the *narration*. In the next paragraph, only five short sentences farther on, Meursault gives two reasons, with causal terms, for the sun’s powerful effect on him as he left his building for the beach. There are no consequences, and he is soon enjoying the sun; but several hours later it will, he says, provoke his murderous act. Thus the text will organize a significant conjunction here between the funeral and the effects of the sun (a conjunction echoed just before the murder, “le même soleil”—the same sun as the day of the funeral, p. 1168). It will do so in the presence of three obvious causal terms; but the conjunction is by juxtaposition of naming words (“enterrement,” “soleil”), while the words of causation (“parce que” twice, and “à cause de”) are at best of superficial utility. Juxtaposition of events and causal interconnection of events are the two grids for observation of reality that the text provides. If
this passage contains anything of significance, it lies in the juxtaposition: the \textit{narration} appears to privilege that mode.

Words of causation are not, of course, the only "useless" vocabulary in circulation. Meursault notes that Masson's sentences are interlarded with "et je dirai plus" ("and I'll even go so far as to say"), although what follows usually adds nothing to what went before. He comments on it at the beach the day of the murder, adding, "je n'ai plus fait attention à ce tic parce que j'étais occupé à éprouver que le soleil me faisait du bien" (p. 1162; "I quit paying attention to this habit because I was busy feeling how much good the sun was doing me"). The earlier painful effects of the sun are now completely gone and their alleged causes of no effect. The meaningfulness of that causal vocabulary, through inconsequentiality, is annulled, as is the sense of Masson's habitual phrase, and for the same reason. Yet this sentence itself contains a "because": the indexic author appears to be pointing to causal vocabulary as a mere "tic" of our narrator's style.

Meursault's conception of his own identity is linked to four causal terms in the text, as his discovery of his separateness, his \textit{étrangeté}, is brought to light, and as the meaning of "je" in the text is called into question. Early in the trial, Meursault describes a young reporter, with an asymmetric face expressing nothing in particular, who was observing him intently. He adds:

\begin{quote}
Et j'ai eu l'impression bizarre d'être regardé par moi-même. C'est peut-être pour cela, et aussi parce que je ne connaissais pas les usages du lieu, que je n'ai pas très bien compris tout ce qui s'est passé ensuite. . . . (P. 1186)
\end{quote}

(And I had the strange impression of being looked at by myself. Maybe it was on account of that—and also because I was unfamiliar with the customs of the place—that I didn't understand too well everything that happened afterward. . . .)

What Meursault fails to understand specifically is the process of jury selection and the attorneys' opening statements, but he is here beginning to define his own separateness from judicial procedure in general. The "customs of the place," from which he distinguishes himself, include of course the causal linking of events; the fact that he gives his unfamiliarity with such things as a cause makes this choice of words ironic, when viewed from the level of the \textit{narration}.

The presence of the journalist\textsuperscript{18}—the other cause of the distraction—
evokes the startling prospect of becoming the subject ("he") of someone else's story; that the journalist should resemble Meursault calls up the notion of being the subject ("he") of one's own story ("I"). "Maybe it was on account of that" that Meursault feels estranged. If diary there is at this point, he has been (unknowingly?) dividing into a writing "I" and a written about "I-he" for some time. Whether he only now realizes the danger of this previous division, or whether he will realize it now and later assume the peril by writing, the estrangement from himself it implies produces here a failure to comprehend. "Being looked at by myself" implies distinctions between present self (observing) and present self (observed), between present self (observing) and past self (observed) and between present self (observed) and others (observing). Others, as strangers, cannot observe Meursault's past self, but only reconstruct it through inference. Yet inference about past events is inaccurate, because, when the events occurred, they were not past (and therefore subject to causal logic), but present. The diarylike text of part I reproduces in proximate narration, not a past self, but a series of present selves, none of which is inferable from any of the others since in the present there are no causal connectives. Meursault, for whom each of his selves was always already present, fails to comprehend the applicability of causal inferences to himself; the function in the narration of the juxtaposition of parts I and II is to bring readers to deconstruct the process of causal inference.

As Meursault takes the stand,

On m'a encore fait décliner mon identité, et malgré mon agacement, j'ai pensé qu'au fond c'était assez naturel, parce qu'il serait trop grave de juger un homme pour un autre. (P. 1187)

(They made me state my full name and occupation again, and, in spite of my irritation, I figured basically it made sense, because it would be just too serious to judge one man for another.)

But the naïve faith in a permanent identité, which causes our hero to overcome his "irritation," is precisely at the root of the problem. The injustice is indeed "just too serious," for the court is about to judge a Meursault-past, subject to causal reasoning, for a crime committed by a Meursault who was, at the time, quite present. Only if he returned to the beach with the gun, "looked at by himself" as a future self, inferring a potential killer-self, can premeditation be adjudged. The text cannot provide objective data on that matter, leaving readers with no tool
but inference, and with nothing to discover but the inapplicability of the tool.

During the summation of the lawyer for the defense, Meursault is inattentive. "At one point, however, I listened, because he was saying, 'I have killed, it's true'" (p. 1198; "A un moment donné, cependant, j'ai écouté, parce qu'il disait: 'Il est vrai que j'ai tué'"). The substitution of "I" for "he" is the cause of Meursault's attention: he is discovering that the notion of consistent identity is a matter not of reality but of language ("Meursault," "je"). If an attorney can be said to have assumed temporarily the role of his client on the courtroom stage by a choice of pronoun, then Meursault (present in court) can see himself as having assumed there the role of Meursault (present on the beach). Only a naïve faith in the consistent truth value of language can cause these identities, so different in reality, to be perceived as one by the jury.

Causation, so readily expressible in language, is a means of giving persistent continuity to events; when it disappears, all the related assumptions—including the notion that "I" am consistently the "same person"—vanish with it. Causality returns for Meursault in prison, however, where the condemned man is forced to share his cell with a future self, ruled by a causality more inexorable than that of the prosecutor's argument: he is constrained to plan for his own dying. From that vantage point, he writes or completes his text. In his remarkable narratological analysis of L'Etranger, Nils Soelberg points out that what becomes of vital importance for Meursault at the end is precisely the unimportance of his life. In a story, it is the inconsequential that is unimportant: causality defines importance. The episode of Salamano and his dog, while perhaps specularly revealing (and it involves a closed system of reciprocating causation, reminiscent of Phasie and Misard in La Bête humaine), is unimportant to his tale, and therefore highly important to its narrator. And a high density of causal vocabulary, used ineffectually, must be important to him too, for it demonstrates that causation is merely linguistic, and not inherent in his life.

Despite similarities, L'Etranger differs radically from La Bête humaine in that the modern work contains little true causation prior to the magistrate's reconstruction. Denizet gets the causes wrong; Meursault's prosecutor inserts causality where there (apparently) was none. At the level of the histoire, then, L'Etranger has the causal structure proposed at the outset, fragmented in part I and rectilinear in part II (see diagram 9.1). Part I is truly fragmented and not episodic, since the starting point and the order of
events are essentially predetermined by the need to allow the prosecutor to present a plausible causal explanation. But looking at the story retrospectively and from the level of narration, where the juxtaposition of the two versions of events sends us, the text seems to form a linear continuity: if Meursault did not premeditate the murder, the indexic author most surely did! On the other hand, the narration privileges the absence of causal chains, since it places the "causeless" version first. So it is that Meursault's récit undermines the prosecutor's histoire, making it a fraudulent imposition. Thus the apparent causal line we perceive from murder to guillotine seems fraudulent as well: at first reading, conviction is not a certainty, for if the jury learns what we know, if the diarylike account is inserted in the trial, premeditation may not be convincingly proven. If we accept the notion of a series of disconnected presents, everything that follows the murder is disconnected too, and our causal chain from murder to execution is a false retrospective imposition. Thus in hindsight, the linear and fragmentary tendencies have been continuously in conflict, the narration engaging them in chiasmic mutual destruction.20

Diagram 9.1 compares the causal structure of L'Etranger perceived as histoire and as narration. The upper half of the narration schema repeats, grosso modo, the causal diagram of the histoire; the lower half reflects the undermining forces present only in the narration: connective structure before the murder, and fragmentation thereafter.

The histoire pits two conflicting versions of events against each other. Criticism working on this level has sought to determine which version is
privileged in the text by striving to unravel the enigmas of the récit: when Meursault wrote part I (question of sincerity), and how conscious the narrator was of causality (presence or absence of causal connectives). But the text can yield no conclusive reading of the histoire, for it is constructed to open upward upon the organizing intelligence of the narration. On that level, it sets in opposition “events” and the very idea of “versions” thereof. The coexistence of Meursault’s diarylike récit and the prosecutor's histoire puts the value of both in doubt, along with the ability of language to recount events objectively.

This brings us back to the quotation from Sartre cited earlier; it should no longer seem ambiguous, for it will now be apparent that Sartre is analyzing neither the récit nor the histoire, but the narration:

Mais peu à peu l’ouvrage s’organise de lui-même sous les yeux du lecteur, il révèle la solide substructure qui le soutient. Il n’est pas un détail inutile, pas un qui ne soit repris par la suite et versé au débat; et, le livre fermé, nous comprenons qu’il ne pouvait pas commencer autrement, qu’il ne pouvait pas avoir une autre fin: dans ce monde qu’on veut nous donner comme absurde et dont on a soigneusement extirpé la causalité, le plus petit incident a du poids; il n’en est pas un qui ne contribue à conduire le héros vers le crime et vers l’exécution capitale. L’Etranger est une oeuvre classique, une oeuvre d’ordre, composé à propos de l’absurde et contre l’absurde.  

(But little by little the work organizes itself before the reader’s eyes; it reveals the solid substructure which sustains it. There is not a single useless detail, not one which is not taken up again later on and added to the debate; and, when at last we close the book, we understand that it could not have begun otherwise, that it could have no other ending: in this world that is intended to appear absurd and from which causality has been carefully eradicated, the slightest incident has weight; there is not one which does not contribute to leading the hero toward the crime and toward the death penalty. L’Etranger is a classical work, a work of order, composed about the absurd, against the absurd.)

If the relationship between words and exterior reality is put in doubt, one might suppose that the literary enterprise that novels in general—and especially “classical” ones—represent is in jeopardy. Not so. Novels, with
the artificiality apparent in their "level of narration," are admirably suited to speak to the human, subjective perception of reality, to our mental representations of the world about us, which are all we have. *La Nausée* and *L'Etranger* represent fragmented reality in paradoxically solid mental structures: the line is broken, but remains a line.

**Notes**


5. The length of time elapsed between the last event of I, 4 and the first event of I, 5 is not determinable with objective certainty; a week or two could conceivably have passed.


8. Ignace Feuerlicht, "Camus's *L'Etranger* Revisited," *PMLA*, 78, 3 (December 1963), 606–21. Working from the Brée and Lynes edition of *L'Etranger* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955), Feuerlicht lists one example of comme which is not causal (p. 117, l. 8) and one of ainsi which is not causal (p. 99, l. 23). Of his two occurrences of
done, one merely repeats the other for clarity and should not count as a separate occurrence. He fails to note parce que (p. 110, l. 16) and c'est pour cela que (p. 105, l. 2). He calls Camus's c'est pour cela que construction "c'est pourquoi." There are two errors in his line references: under parce que, "41/15" for 41/5; and under c'est pour quoi, "23/30" for 23/20. The analytical table in appendix C takes into account these minor corrections, but the accuracy of the Feuerlicht list remains impressive.

9. Feuerlicht, p. 612, note 3, agrees, on the basis of rapid comparison with Stendhal, Gide, Proust, Duhamel, Mauriac, Colette, Giono, Robbe-Grillet, and Sartre, among whom Proust alone showed a higher density of straightforward causal terms.


12. Raoul, pp. 29–30, 32.


15. La Nausée, for example, seeks to elude this problem by presenting the diary intact, with an "editorial" note or two early on to supply orienting details for external readers.

16. Alfred Noyer-Weidner, "Structure et sens de L'Etranger," in Albert Camus 1980, pp. 79–80, notes that the events in part I are consciously ordered to permit creation of the pseudoexplanation in part II.


18. The Brée and Lynes edition of L'Etranger affirms, p. 104, that Camus considered the reporter to be an image of himself. If he did, it suggests that the author was indeed conscious of conjoining, at this point, récit and narration.


20. Camus must have liked the structure, for a nearly identical chiasm occurs in La Chute (1956), with the "suicide" at its center point; there, however, it is not causal linking that is undermined, but the supposed coherence of the Western value system.