Outside The Stranger?
English Retranslations of Camus' L'Étranger

Extrait A


Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can’t be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday.

Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don’t know. I had a telegram from the home: ‘Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely.’ That doesn’t mean anything. It may have been yesterday.

Mother died today. Or maybe it was yesterday, I don’t know. I received a telegram from the rest home: MOTHER DECEASED. BURIAL TOMORROW. VERY TRULY YOURS. It doesn’t say anything. Maybe it was yesterday.

Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don’t know. I got a telegram from the home: “Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours.” That doesn’t mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday.

a. The Home for Aged Persons is at Marengo, some fifty miles from Algiers. With the two-o’clock bus I should get there well before nightfall. Then I can spend the night there, keeping the usual vigil beside the body, and be back here by tomorrow evening. I have fixed up with my employer for two days’ leave; obviously, under the circumstances, he couldn’t refuse. Still, I had an idea he looked annoyed, and I said, without thinking: “Sorry, sir, but it’s not my fault, you know.” Still, I had an idea he looked annoyed, and I said, without thinking: “Sorry, sir, but it’s not my fault, you know.”

b. The old people’s home is at Marengo, fifty miles from Algiers. I’ll catch the two o’clock bus and get there in the afternoon. Then I can keep the vigil and I’ll come back tomorrow night. I asked my boss for two days off and he couldn’t refuse under the circumstances. But he didn’t seem pleased. I even said, ‘It’s not my fault.’ He didn’t answer.

c. The old folk’s home is in Marengo, eighty kilometers from Algiers. I will take the two o’clock bus and I’ll be there in the afternoon. That way, I will be able to stay with the body through the night and I’ll be back tomorrow night. I asked my boss for two days off and, with such an excuse, he was not able to refuse me. But he didn’t seem pleased about it. I even said to him: “It’s not my fault.” He didn’t answer.

d. The old people’s home is at Marengo, about eighty kilometers from Algiers, I’ll take the two o’clock bus and get there in the afternoon. That way I can be there for the vigil and come back tomorrow night. I asked my boss for two days off and there was no way he was going to refuse me with an excuse like that. But he wasn’t too happy about it. I even said, “It’s not my fault.” He didn’t say anything.
(suite)

3/ J'ai pensé alors que je n'aurais pas dû lui dire cela. En somme, je n'avais pas à m'excuser. C'était plutôt à lui de me présenter ses condoléances. Mais il le fera sans doute après-demain, quand il me verra en deuil. Pour le moment, c'est un peu comme si maman n'était pas morte. Après l'enterrement, au contraire, ce sera une affaire classée et tout aura revêtu une allure plus officielle.

a. Afterwards it struck me I needn't have said that. I had no reason to excuse myself; it was up to him to express his sympathy and so forth. Probably he will do so the day after tomorrow, when he sees me in black. For the present, it's almost as if Mother weren't really dead. The funeral will bring it home to me, put an official seal on it, so to speak...

b. Then I thought maybe I shouldn't have said that. After all, it wasn't for me to apologize. It was more up to him to offer me his condolences. But he probably will do the day after tomorrow, when he sees me in mourning. For the moment it's almost as if mother were still alive. After the funeral though, the death will be a classified fact and the whole thing will have assumed a more official aura.

c. After that I thought I ought not to have said that to him. After all, I had no reason to make excuses, rather it was he who ought to have offered me his condolences. But he will probably do that tomorrow when he sees me in mourning. Right now, it's as if Mother were not dead. After the burial it will be settled and the whole matter will take on a more official status.

d. Then I thought I shouldn't have said that. After all, I didn't have anything to apologize for. He's the one who should have offered his condolences. But he probably will the day after tomorrow, when he sees I'm in mourning. For now, it's almost as if Maman weren't dead. After the funeral, though, the case will be closed, and everything will have a more official feel to it.
(suite)

4/ J'ai pris l'autobus à deux heures. Il faisait très chaud. J'ai mangé au restaurant, chez Céleste, comme d'habitude. Ils avaient tous beaucoup de peine pour moi et Céleste m'a dit : "On n'a qu'une mère." Quand je suis parti, ils m'ont accompagné à la porte. J'étais un peu étourdi parce qu'il a fallu que je monte chez Emmanuel pour lui emprunter une cravate noire et un brassard. Il a perdu son oncle, il y a quelques mois.

a. I took the two-o’clock bus. It was a blazing hot afternoon. I’d lunched, as usual, at Céleste’s restaurant. Everyone was most kind, and Céleste said to me, “There’s no one like a mother.” When I left they came with me to the door. It was something of a rush, getting away, as at the last moment I had to call in at Emmanuel’s place to borrow his black tie and mourning band. He lost his uncle a few months ago.

b. I caught the two o’clock bus. It was very hot. I ate at Céleste’s restaurant, as usual. They all felt very sorry for me and Céleste told me, ‘There’s no one like a mother.’ When I left, they came to the door with me. I was in a bit of a daze because I had to go up to Emmanuel’s place to borrow a black tie and armband. He lost his uncle a few months ago.

c. I took the two o’clock bus. The weather was very hot. As usual, I had lunch at the restaurant “Chez Celeste”. Everyone felt very sorry for me and Celeste said: “You only have one mother, you know.” When I left, they walked me to the door. I felt pretty giddy because I had to run up to Emmanuel’s place to borrow a black tie and armband. He lost his uncle a few months ago.

d. I caught the two o’clock bus. It was very hot. I ate at the restaurant, at Céleste’s, as usual. Everybody felt sorry for me, and Céleste said, “You only have one mother.” When I left, they walked me to the door. I was a little distracted because I still had to go up to Emmanuel’s place to borrow a black tie and an arm band. He lost his uncle a few months back.
Extrait B


L'audience a été levée. En sortant du palais de justice pour monter dans la voiture, j'ai reconnu un court instant l'odeur et la couleur du soir d'été. Dans l'obscurité de ma prison roulante, j'ai retrouvé un à un, comme du fond de ma fatigue, tous les bruits familiers d'un village que j'aimais et d'une certaine heure où il m'arrivait de me sentir content.


Soon after this incident the court rose. As I was being taken from the courthouse to the prison van, I was conscious for a few brief moments of the once familiar feel of a summer evening out-of-doors. And, sitting in the darkness of my moving cell, I recognized, echoing in my tired brain, all the characteristic sounds of a town I'd loved, and of a certain hour of the day which I had always particularly enjoyed.


The hearing was adjourned. For a few brief moments, as I left the Law Courts on my way to the van, I recognized the familiar smells and colours of a summer evening. In the darkness of my mobile prison I rediscovered one by one, as if rising from the depths of my fatigue, all the familiar sounds of a town that I loved and of a certain time of day when I sometimes used to feel happy.


The audience had stood up. While leaving the courthouse to go back to the van, I sensed for an instant the odor and color of the summer evening. In the obscurity of my moving prison, I rediscovered, one by one, as if coming up from my fatigue, all the familiar sounds of a city I loved and of a certain time of the day when I had always felt at ease.


The trial was adjourned. As I was leaving the courthouse on my way back to the van, I recognized for a brief moment the smell and color of the summer evening. In the darkness of my mobile prison I could make out one by one, as if from the depths of my exhaustion, all the familiar sounds of a town I loved and of a certain time of day when I used to feel happy.
2/ Le cri des vendeurs de journaux dans l’air déjà détendu, les derniers oiseaux dans le square, l’appel des marchands de sandwiches, la plainte des tramways dans les hauts tournants de la ville et cette rumeur du ciel avant que la nuit bascule sur le port, tout cela recomposait pour moi un itinéraire d’aveugle, que je connaissais bien avant d’entrer en prison.

a. The shouts of newspaper boys in the already languid air, the last calls of birds in the public garden, the cries of sandwich vendors, the screech of streetcars at the steep corners of the upper town, and that faint rustling overhead as darkness sifted down upon the harbor – all these sounds made my return to prison like a blind man’s journey along a route whose every inch he knows by heart.

b. The cries of the newspaper sellers in the languid evening air, the last few birds in the square, the shouts of the sandwich sellers, the moaning of the trams high in the winding streets of the town and the murmuring of the sky before darkness spills over onto the port, all these sounds marked out an invisible route which I knew so well before going into prison.

c. The cry of the newspaper hawkers in the already relaxed atmosphere of evening, the final call of birds in the square, the voices of sandwich vendors, the mournful grinding of tramways winding through the streets in the city’s suburbs, and the sudden surge of nightfall as it spills over the port, all of this reconstructed for me an itinerary that I groped through blindly, reacquainting myself with every object before entering the prison.

d. The cries of the newspaper vendors in the already languid air, the last few birds in the square, the shouts of the sandwich sellers, the screech of the streetcars turning sharply through the upper town, and that hum in the sky before night engulfs the port: all this mapped out for me a route I knew so well before going to prison and which I traveled blind.
Oui, c'était l'heure où, il y avait bien longtemps, je me sentais content. Ce qui m'attendait alors, c'était toujours un sommeil léger et sans rêves. Et pourtant quelque chose était changé puisque, avec l'attente du lendemain, c'est ma cellule que j'ai retrouvée. Comme si les chemins familiers tracés dans les ciels d'été pouvaient mener aussi bien aux prisons qu'aux sommeils innocents.

a. Yes, this was the evening hour when – how long ago it seemed! – I always felt so well content with life. Then, what awaited me was a night of easy, dreamless sleep. This was the same hour, but with a difference; I was returning to a cell, and what awaited me was a night haunted by forebodings of the coming day. And so I learned that familiar paths traced in the dusk of summer evenings may lead as well to prisons as to innocent, untroubled sleep.

b. Yes, this was the time of day when, long ago, I used to feel happy. What always awaited me then was a night of easy, dreamless sleep. And yet, something had changed, for with the prospect of the coming day, it was to my cell that I returned. As if a familiar journey under a summer sky could as easily end in prison as in innocent sleep.

c. Yes, it was that time of day when, a long time ago now, I had been happy. What was in store for me then was always a refreshing sleep without dreams. Nevertheless, something had changed, now it was my cell that came to me with my tomorrows. As if the familiar paths traced in the summer skies could lead to prisons as well as to innocent sleep.

d. Yes, it was the hour when, a long time ago, I was perfectly content. What awaited me back then was always a night of easy, dreamless sleep. And yet something had changed, since it was back to my cell that I went to wait for the next day... as if familiar paths traced in summer skies could lead as easily to prison as to the sleep of the innocent.