Camusian Existentialism in
Arthur Miller’s *After the Fall*

DEREK PARKER ROYAL

An existentialist ethic permeates the fabric of Arthur Miller’s drama. Perhaps more than any other American playwright of his time, he constructs situations that not only highlight a particular historical circumstance but also translate themselves into the larger ontological conundrums facing individuals in the last half of the twentieth century. His protagonists are faced with the inescapable project of defining themselves through a series of Promethean choices. Biff, in *Death of a Salesman*, realizes that Willy “never knew who he was” and refuses to follow him into a similar life of bad faith.¹ In *The Crucible*, a more direct expression of dramatic existentialism, John Proctor denies the right of the church and the state to define his actions by choosing death over a false confession, asking the profound question, “How may I live without my name?”² *Incident at Vichy*, a play coming on the heels of *After the Fall* and continuing the latter’s themes, broaches the subject of individual complicity and culpability in the light of an abstract condemnation, especially in the figure of LeDuc, who has to wrestle with his own guilt in accepting his freedom while those around him are doomed. He asserts that “there is nothing and will be nothing – until you face your own complicity with this ... your own humanity.”³ In all cases, the individuals assert themselves by creating the terms under which they are to live, heroically or otherwise, thereby assuring themselves an accurate inscription of their names on the tablet of history.

Those critics who have read Miller as an existentialist writer have usually done so in terms of Sartrean philosophy, perhaps the single most representative expression of existentialism.⁴ The protagonists in Miller’s dramas, according to these critics, are often working against a sense of mauvaise foi, or bad faith, an investment in a predetermined notion of being that precludes any possibility for a true subjective assertion of identity. They see a moral obligation to take responsibility for their own existence and make it completely their own, which means that they must progress from an ontological state of being-

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for-others – feeling alienation, guilt, or shame because the individual is perceived as an object or a category – to one of being-for-itself – the subject knowing what he is by knowing what he is not, as well as defining himself through his actions. While this can be a useful way of reading Miller’s plays, it nonetheless has its limitations. Sartrean existentialism, for all its humanistic potential, ultimately allows for little in the way of true intersubjectivity, the interpenetration of consciousnesses loosely defined as love, friendship, or empathy. In the fight to assert themselves, individual subjects always end up objectifying others, making of human relations a constant “tug of war” between consciousnesses. Similarly, Sartre’s focus on subjective possibility, especially if taken to its extremes, tends to lead to a rampant individualism that privileges the subject over everything else. There is little room for mediation between personal and collective values. (Later in his career Sartre would espouse a more Marxist approach to allow for a more collective focus, but he would do so at the expense of his earlier philosophy as developed in Being and Nothingness.) The heroes in Sartre’s fiction and drama tend to be lone individuals working against foreign or hostile surroundings that demonstrate no possibility for any form of interconnectedness.⁵

Perhaps a more appropriate way to read Miller’s drama existentially is through the works of Albert Camus. Most of the French writer’s works are concerned with the possibility of tempering individual action with an overarching sense of solidarity. This he calls a “philosophy of limits,” an understanding of the individual that takes into account not only the necessity for self-definition, but also an awareness of the dangerous potential of that expression in its extreme – an abstracted justice usually exemplified, for him, in the concentration camp and the gulag.⁶ As Camus states in his postwar manifesto The Rebel,

Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is. The problem is to know whether this refusal can only lead to the destruction of himself and of others, whether all rebellion must end in the justification of universal murder, or whether, on the contrary, without laying claim to an innocence that is impossible, it can discover the principle of reasonable culpability.⁷

In other words, the problem is a question of moderation, or a balance between an absolute freedom and an absolute justice. From the moment the existential man – or the rebel, to use Camus’s term – finds his own voice, he must constantly safeguard against the overwhelming desire to judge, and do so with a full awareness of his position between these two poles.

Miller’s plays speak for the possibility, if not the absolute necessity, of such an awareness. After the Fall, one of his most notable examples of Camusian existentialist drama, explores a man’s discovery of what Camus calls “the principle of reasonable culpability” and how that discovery allows him once
again to commit to meaningful relationships. Miller himself states that he used Camus’s *The Fall* as a point of departure for his play. In his comments on Camus’s “beautifully carved story,” Miller notes in his autobiography, *Time-bends*, that the conclusion raises a series of disturbing questions:

What if the [narrator], at risk to himself, had attempted [the drowning woman’s] rescue and then discovered that the key to her salvation lay not in him, whatever his caring, but in her? And perhaps even worse, that strands of his own vanity as well as his love were entwined in the act of trying to save her? Did disguised self-love nullify the ethical act? Could anyone, in all truth, really save another unless the other wished to be saved? Was not the real question how to evoke that wish? And if it refused evocation, when did one confess failure? And how was failure justified or could it be? *The Fall*, I thought, ended too soon, before the worst of the pain began.

These questions that Miller poses all foreground the complex dilemma of interpersonal responsibility, the ways and the extent to which one person’s actions are responsible for the fate of another. Camus’s works are filled with individuals who negotiate the conundrums of this responsibility – Tarrou in *The Plague* and Kaliyev in *The Just Assassins* are just two vivid examples – and who do so against the strictures of ideology or of self-definition taken to extremes. Miller, in asking these questions, is an astute reader of Camus who recognizes the necessity for the type of moderation espoused in *The Rebel* and, in less direct ways, in *The Fall*.

Indeed, several critics have rightly noted the similarities between *The Fall* and Miller’s play, citing, in particular, the common thematic grounds that both protagonists share. Yet all of these studies, although focusing on the French writer, nonetheless fail to point out the *existentialist* nature of Miller’s affinity with Camus. When Miller has been read as an existentialist dramatist – as in the case of Steven R. Centola – it is in light of Sartre, and when he has been read as a Camusian dramatist, it is at the expense of any underlying existential ethic. Despite Camus’s reservations over being labeled an existentialist, his philosophy nonetheless incorporates many of its basic tenets. Most of his characters, in both his fiction and his drama, attempt to define themselves by the choices they make. What is more, they do so against a blank metaphysical and political backdrop where God, or any other essentializing ethos or ideology, is either absent or problematic. But what distinguishes Camus’s brand of existentialism is its emphasis on moderation, the recognition and subsequent negotiation of the will to freedom and the will to tyranny. This he posits in the prototype of the rebel, the politically tangible individual who must act as a bulwark against injustice and dehumanization. As he states in *The Rebel*:

The logic of the rebel is to want to serve justice so as not to add to the injustice of the human condition, to insist on plain language so as not to increase the universal false-
hood, and to wager, in spite of human misery, for happiness.... The consequence of rebellion ... is to refuse to legitimize murder because rebellion, in principle, is a protest against death.¹²

Here, Camus brings home the political necessity of the existential rebel. The desire for self-definition and idealization is vital, but not at the expense of an awareness of other consciousnesses. When you enact your own visions of justice, what are the consequences on the others surrounding you? Are their lives and desires merely clumped under your categorization of "the right thing to do"? If so, how does the "right thing" manifest itself? These are the questions that Camus asks time and time again, and, as demonstrated in Miller's *After the Fall*, they are questions that deserve the utmost attention, yet at the same time promise no ultimate answers. But, it is important to note, it is the asking of the questions, the awareness of the dilemmas, that, for Miller, connects humans one to another.

The structural premises of *The Fall* and *After the Fall* are strikingly similar. Both are confessional monologues delivered to an absent audience; for Miller it is "the Listener"¹³ and for Camus, an unnamed drinking companion. (The dialogue in Miller's play takes place inside Quentin's head, the dramatic equivalent of novelistic stream-of-consciousness or narrative flashbacks, and is therefore bracketed within the confessional address.) What is more, the fictional audiences are situated within the texts in ways that directly engage the actual audience, so that by the end of the novel or play – if not before – the reader or viewer becomes something of an accomplice to the action. Miller does this by placing the Listener, a surrogate for the audience, "just beyond the edge of the stage itself" (*After 2*), and Camus through his frequent addresses to "mon cher compatriote."¹⁴

Like his Camusian counterpart, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, Quentin is a lawyer who has become obsessed with his fall from innocence. He laments the passing of the time when he felt that there was a clear sense of right and wrong, a "world so wonderfully threatened by injustices" that his sense of duty was unquestionable: "Remember – when there were good people and bad people? And how easy it was to tell! The worst son of a bitch, if he loved Jews and hated Hitler, he was a buddy. Like some kind of paradise compared to this" (*After 22*). This was the time of a childhood morality, an ethical Garden of Eden where the self was denied complicity with evil. But, while Quentin has grown used to the affirmation of his goodness from others – both Felice and his mother are constantly blessing him – he nonetheless tells the Listener, "It sounds foolish, but I feel ... unblessed" (22). This profound sense of moral discomfiture, which Miller likens to the Biblical fall of Adam and Eve, is akin to Camus's notion of the absurd.¹⁵ The feeling of oneness with the world is lost the moment an individual becomes aware of his or her moral position in that world and, as a result, experiences at first a sense of existential despair.
“When you’ve finally become a separate person,” Quentin asks his wife, Louise, in a moment of exasperation, “what the hell is there?” (42).

The cause of Quentin’s loss of innocence is an increased awareness of the selfishness and hostility within his world. As he progresses in his confession to the Listener, he re-enacts the poignant scenes of betrayal throughout his life: his mother condemning his father when he loses the family fortune, Elsie ridiculing Lou when he decides to publish his book, and Mickey deciding to name names to the House Un-American Activities Committee. Even Quentin himself—especially Quentin himself—is not beyond the taint of personal disloyalty. When he discovers that Lou has thrown himself in front of a train, he experiences an overpowering sense of relief at not having to defend his friend in front of Congress and thereby endanger his career: “I wanted out, to be a good American again, kosher again—and proved it in the joy ... the joy ... the joy I felt now that my danger had spilled out on the subway track!” (59).

When Louise confronts him with his inability to sustain their marriage in any sincere manner, he accuses her of being the one who sows the seeds of discontent (30). And when Maggie attempts to commit suicide for the last time, Quentin relates how he stands aside and passively listens to her die (112). Almost every time Quentin recalls a scene of betrayal, perpetrated by either himself or a loved one, the stone tower of the German concentration camp, “[r]ising above” the entire setting “and dominating the stage” (1), lights up and draws his attention like a bitter memory that refuses to die. This becomes for him a point of anguish, for he finds it difficult to believe that men just like him, men whose hands are free of Holocaust blood, helped to erect it: “Even this slaughterhouse! Why does something in me bow its head like an accomplice in this place!” (30). The tower is an awakening to the dangerous possibilities that lie hidden just beneath the rational and humane surface of existence, something that anyone is capable of committing. After learning of the suicide of Lou, Quentin realizes of the tower that

[t]his is not some crazy aberration of human nature to me. I can easily see the perfectly normal contractors and their cigars; the carpenters, plumbers, sitting at their ease over lunch pails; I can see them laying the pipes to run the blood out of this mansion; good fathers, devoted sons, grateful that someone else will die, not they, and how can one understand that, if one is innocent? If somewhere in one’s soul there is no accomplice—of that joy, that joy, that joy when a burden dies ... and leaves you safe? (59)

In this way, Quentin comes to associate his transgressions against friends with the larger Nazi crimes against humanity, thereby recognizing the personal evil within that metaphorically makes him an “accomplice” to this crime. As Holga tells him more than once in the play, “no one they didn’t kill can be innocent again” (21). Quentin, then, is torn between two diametrically
opposed images: the grace of the outstretched hands of Felice and his mother, and the dark condemnation of the tower.

A similar situation faces Clamence in The Fall. He tells his auditor that at one time he was a highly respected lawyer who accepted only noble cases – specializing in widows and orphans who could not pay for his services – and who went out of his way to help the needy. This gave him a feeling of moral superiority and satisfied his desire for the love and recognition of others. His “fall” came one night as he was crossing a bridge and failed to attempt the rescue of a young woman who was committing suicide. Since then his life has not been the same; and he is haunted by a disembodied laughter that mocks the very idea of his once-cherished innocence. To silence the laughter, he has become what he calls a “judge-penitent” (Fall 130), someone who judges others in order to diminish relatively the seriousness of his own guilt. He explains the rationalization of the process this way: “Inasmuch as one [can’t] condemn others without immediately judging oneself, one [has] to overwhelm oneself to have the right to judge others. Inasmuch as every judge some day ends up as a penitent, one [has] to travel the road in the opposite direction and practice the profession of penitent to be able to end up as a judge” (Fall 138). The rest of his life is spent seeking out unsuspecting bourgeois, telling them his story, and thereby implicating them in what he sees as the mirror of his narrative: “I have no more friends; I have nothing but accomplices” (Fall 73). In this way, Clamence is able to live with himself by cleansing his guilt, so to speak, in the wash of mutual culpability. Yet it is important to note that the purpose behind this act is not merely moral comfort, but a means toward the privilege of pointing his finger at others.

Both Clamence and Quentin use judicial rhetoric to describe the conditions in which they find themselves. Both of them plead a case to silent jurors, who, paradoxically, are brought onto the stand as fellow criminals, and before whom they argue their innocence and guilt. Both of them also play the part of the judge just as much as that of the defendant, giving their roles a double or reflexive quality.¹⁶ The texts, therefore, become a series of interconnected accounts presented as both prosecutorial and defensive evidence. Quentin, in fact, refers to his experience as such – “What I resent is being forever on trial,” he tells Louise (After 40) – but it is not so much a conventional trial, where one makes a case in front of peers, as an existential one:

You know, more and more I think that for many years I looked at life like a case at law, a series of proofs. [...] But underlying it all, I see now, there was a presumption. That I was moving on an upward path toward some elevation, where – God knows what – I would be justified, or even condemned – a verdict anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day – and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that remained was the endless argument with oneself – this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench. Which, of course, is another way of saying – despair. (After 3)
As with Camus’s judge-penitent, elevation is equated with judgment in the symbol of Christ. “[T]oo many people now climb onto the cross merely to be seen from a greater distance,” Clamence warns his interlocutor (Fall 114), and at times Quentin is all too willing to play that martyr. In his relationship with Maggie he refuses to see her as anything but the innocent girl he first met, even after her recording career takes off and it is obvious that she is using him. He is never able to admit to her what she feels herself to be — “a joke that brings in money” (After 92) — and deals with this inauthenticity by submitting himself to her increasingly meaningless wrath. Playing the part of a Christ figure, “he turns and spreads his arms in crucifixion” and then laughingly asks his Listener, “What the hell am I trying to do, love everybody?” (75–76). Quentin becomes, like Clamence, a poseur martyr, one who willing takes on others’ troubles, but who does so in a demonstrative manner and knows that it will suit his purposes.

The irony behind Quentin’s actions is that, again like Clamence, in playing the role of the victim he is at the same time playing the role of the judge. Maggie’s death is associated with his Christ-like posture (11), and in her accusations against Quentin she realizes, consciously or not, what Quentin fails to grasp at first and what Clamence learns all too well: that in a universe where, metaphysically speaking, the “bench” is empty, the penitent usually assumes the role of the judge. The Nazis were especially adept at playing the victim to the “alleged” social and financial stranglehold of the Jews. What is the Holocaust, Holga challenges Quentin to ask, if not the innocent construction of bricks and mortar into a factory of death? “Each of us insists on being innocent at all cost,” Clamence tells his compatriot, “even if he has to accuse the whole human race and heaven itself” (Fall 81). This is also the advice that Mickey gives Quentin immediately before sitting in front of the Un-American Activities committee to name names: “There’s only one thing I can tell you for sure, kid — don’t ever be guilty” (After 57). The difference between Quentin and Clamence, however, is that the latter consciously understands the moral dynamics involved in such a move. He intentionally assumes the guise of a sinner, the better to seek out fellow sinners so that he may reflect back to them the truth of their existences. He is aware of all the implications of the empty bench, the absurd condition of humanity. Quentin, on the other hand, is more or less ignorant of the stakes involved, which helps to explain his feelings of alienation or disjointedness. (Several times during the play Miller foregrounds Quentin’s sense of alienation. This makes Quentin — much like Mersault, another Camusian hero — an existential Everyman detached from his emotions.17) He does not realize at first how his play for innocence has blinded him to the accusatory side of his behavior. “In whose name?” he asks his Listener. “In whose blood-covered name do you look into a face you loved, and say, Now you have been found wanting, and now in your extremity you die!” (101).
Quentin's moment of awakening, his fall from grace, if you will, comes when he tries to stop Maggie from killing herself. During Maggie's penultimate attempt at suicide, Quentin seems reluctant to take the pills from her, and she senses this. "You — you could have the pills if you want" (106), Maggie appeals to Quentin, and the audience senses, as does Quentin, that he really does not want to do so. By letting her kill herself, he implicates himself in her death. What is more, he can see her violent actions only in light of his own ego. When she swallows the pills, his only response is, "Drop them, you bitch! You won’t kill me! [...] You won’t kill me! You won’t kill me!" (111, stage directions omitted). Seeing her attempts at suicide as a desire to destroy him, he grabs her by the throat with every intention of murdering her, and then reels back in horror as he realizes what he is capable of. Then he ruminates with himself, answering the question he had earlier asked, "And the name — yes, the name! In whose name do you ever turn your back — he looks out at the audience — but in your own? In Quentin's name. Always in your own blood-covered name you turn your back!" (112). With this acknowledgment he comes to the point of what Camus calls "reasonable culpability," an admission of the darker side of freedom that, as in the reality of political death camps, is likely to erupt at any time. Just prior to this acknowledgment Maggie had derisively called him "Judgey" and fingered him as the source of her own existential death — "You're still playing God! That's what killed me, Quentin!" (108-9); but now he sees the dangers inherent in hanging on to a martyred innocence. "He's God, see," he reasons to Maggie, "and God's power is love without limit. But when a man dares reach for that ... he is only reaching for the power. Whoever goes to save another person with the lie of limitless love throws a shadow on the face of God" (107). The inference here, for Miller, is that one can easily substitute the word "judgment" for "love." This, in fact, is what Camus does with Clamence in The Fall, and what he accused many of his intellectual contemporaries of doing. Making an absolute of history, as, he argued, messianic Marxism did, allows for the possibility of tyranny in which, to put it plainly, the end would always justify the means. A revolution committed in the name of an abstract universal brotherhood runs the risk of becoming an all too concrete excuse for enslavement: "By dint of argument, incessant struggle, polemics, excommunications, persecutions conducted and suffered, the universal city of free and fraternal man is slowly diverted and gives way to the only universe in which history and expediency can in fact be elevated to the position of supreme judges: the universe of the trial." 18

Here is where After the Fall becomes an embodiment of Camusian, not Sartrrean, existentialism. Camus may have taken his metaphorical rebel more obviously into the battleground of history and contemporary politics, but Miller anchors his version of the fall in a larger ontological realm to illustrate an individual's place in the world. Quentin is an existential Everyman who, confronted with his guilt, must choose which actions to take. If the play is
indeed a trial where he has pleaded his case to a silent jury, then his sentence is both a condemnation and an acquittal. He finds himself guilty on the charges of murder; yet at the same time he recognizes that this is the condition of every living being, as Holga constantly reminds him, and therefore he is finally able to join the larger community of man. This is where Miller picks up and continues from the fall of Camus’s judge-penitent.\(^9\) Clamence’s self-imposed sentence is a life in the “little-ease,” a Medieval dungeon cell that is not quite high enough for him to stand nor wide enough for him to lie down. In this way, “[e]very day through the unchanging restriction that stiffened his body, the condemned man learned that he was guilty and that innocence consists in stretching joyously” (Fall 109–10). But, as Camus was well aware, Clamence is not the end-point of existence. As his name suggests,\(^2\) he is another John the Baptist announcing the arrival of a new hope that will bring, if not absolute salvation, at least a possible way through the entanglements of the mid-twentieth century. The way out for Quentin is revealed early on in a dream recounted by Holga, the play’s moral center. In it, she has an idiot child whom she is unable to love and keeps pushing away, but who always finds a way back into her lap and will not let her rest. Then she tells him, in a passage that stands as the ethical centerpiece to the play, “I thought, if I could kiss it, whatever in it was my own, perhaps I could sleep. And I bent to its broken face, and it was horrible ... but I kissed it. I think one must finally take one’s life in one’s arms” (After 22). In similar ways, Quentin “kisses” his own unattractive life by accepting the fact of his own complicity and using that knowledge as a pretext for a new beginning. The loss of innocence does not preclude the loss of hope, as he says in his final speech to Holga:

> I wake each morning like a boy – even now, even now! I swear to you, I could love the world again! Is the knowing all? To know, and even happily, that we meet unblessed; not in some garden of wax fruit and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the Fall, after many, many deaths. Is the knowing all? And the wish to kill is never killed, but with some gift of courage one may look into its face when it appears, and with a stroke of love – as to an idiot in the house – forgive it; again and again ... forever? (113–14)

He approaches Holga with what the stage directions call a greeting of “great love” and, despite the painful “whispering” from his past, nonetheless “walks toward her, holding out his hand” in what can be read as an act of acceptance and solidarity (114).

However, it is significant to note that these last emotional words of Quentin’s are expressed in the form of questions and not statements. It would be too easy to suggest that Miller’s message here is unequivocally affirmative, that Quentin has completely solved his problem and that Holga in some angelic way has led him out of his troubles. By the end of the play Quentin may be
more hopeful in his abilities to deal with the issues that so plague him, but there is nonetheless the possibility of his insensitivities again getting the best of him, of the dark stone tower coming to light once more. Miller is aware, much like Camus, that one must always be vigilant in negotiating one’s own moral relationship to others. There is no easy fix. He demonstrates this in the text as a warning, having Quentin conclude his final speech to Holga with the rumination, “No, it’s not certainty. I don’t feel that. But it does seem feasible ... not to be afraid. Perhaps it’s all one has” (After 114), and by ending the play, after Quentin holds out his hand, in the stage direction that immediately follows: “Darkness takes them all” (114). In this way, Miller’s affirmative ending comes with the caveat of an ongoing awareness, making of Quentin something of a Sisyphean figure, burdened with an existential responsibility of reasonable culpability.

Yet if Camus leaves his Sisyphus with the bittersweet plea, “One must imagine Sisyphus happy,” Miller’s message is likewise tentatively affirmative. The ending of After the Fall suggests the possibility of an intersubjective connection through an individualism aware of its own responsibilities. In this way, Miller’s philosophical aesthetic is similar in kind to Camus’s. Both men, as a result of similar historical moments, sought to abjure the lie of absolute freedom that always runs the danger of evolving into an absolute justice. In its place, they proposed a tempered reality of limits where the individual and community co-exist in a symbiotic relationship of mutual definition and responsibility, a state of existence that is captured in the Cartesian edict of Camus’s rebel: “I rebel — therefore we exist.” Here is the French author’s, and Miller’s, existentialist ethic: only through an awareness of our human responsibilities to others can we define ourselves, both singularly and collectively.

NOTES

4 Steven R. Centola is perhaps the best example of this. In a number of persuasive articles, he has used Being and Nothingness, Sartre’s primary existentialist text, as a basis for interpreting many of Miller’s plays. See, for instance, his essays “Compromise as Bad Faith: Arthur Miller’s A View from the Bridge and William Inge’s Come Back, Little Sheba,” Midwest Quarterly, 28:1 (1986/1987), 100–113; “Confrontation with the Other: Alienation in the Works of Arthur Miller and Jean-Paul Sartre,” Journal of Evolutionary Psychology, 5:1–2 (1984), 1–11; and “Unblessed Rage for Order: Arthur Miller’s After the Fall,” Arizona Quarterly, 39:1 (1983), 62–70. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenome-
nological Ontology, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1957). It is also
worth noting that in the many dialogues collected in Conversations with Arthur
Miller, ed. Matthew C. Roudané (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1987), it is by and
large Sartre to whom most interviewers compare Miller.
Miller’s own words caution against a strictly Sartrean reading of his drama. In sev-
eral interviews found in Conversations with Arthur Miller (see note 4), he mitigates
any affinity between the two. See in particular “The State of the Theatre: A Con-
versation with Arthur Miller,” interview by Henry Brandon, 56–67; “After Com-
mitment: An Interview with Arthur Miller,” interview by V. Rajakrishnan, 332–42;
and “The Will to Live: An Interview with Arthur Miller,” interview by Steven R.
expresses his reservations over the Marxist rendering Sartre gives to his screenplay
of The Crucible.
6 Albert Camus, The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt, trans. Anthony Bower (New
York: Random, 1956), 289; originally published as L’Homme révolté (Paris: Galli-
mard, 1951).
7 Ibid., 11.
8 It is interesting to note that Miller was once asked by Walter Wanger to write a
screenplay based on The Fall, an offer he turned down. Miller, Timebends, 483 (see
note 5).
9 Ibid., 484.
10 See, for instance, Allen J. Koppenhaver, “The Fall and After: Albert Camus and
Arthur Miller,” Modern Drama, 9:2 (1966), 206–9; C.W.E. Bigsby, “The Fall and
After – Arthur Miller’s Confession,” Modern Drama, 10:2 (1967), 124–36; and
Alfred Cismaru, “Before and After the Fall,” Forum [University of Houston],
of illustrating the parallels between The Fall and After the Fall but of contextualiz-
ing Miller’s play within other writings of Camus’s.
11 See note 4.
13 After the Fall, final stage version (1964; New York: Penguin, 1992), 2. Subsequent
references are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text as After.
14 Albert Camus, The Fall, trans. Justin O’Brien (New York: Knopf, 1957), e.g.,
42–68 passim. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text as Fall.
15 Camus defines the absurd as an awareness of the limits of reason and meaningful-
ness in the universe, which in turn causes an “exile” or “divorce between man and
his life, the actor and his setting.” Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus,” in The
Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays, trans. Justin O’Brien (New York: Vintage,
1955), 5; essay originally published as Le Mythe de Sisyphe (Paris: Gallimard,
1942).
16 At various times in the texts, both Quentin and Clamence refer to themselves as
mirrors, suggesting both a two-sidedness to their character and a reflection of accu-
sation to their audience.

18 Camus, *Rebel*, 240. Although Camus does not mention Sartre by name, the obvious targets of *The Rebel* were the intellectuals who, Camus believed, were becoming increasingly sympathetic to Stalin and many of whom were part of *Les Temps modernes*. With *The Fall*, however, his intended mark is less ambiguous. See Per Nykrog, “Sartre Penned by Camus, 1953–1955,” *L’Esprit Créateur*, 29:4, (1989), 65–74, for an insightful essay on how Camus used his troubled relationship with Sartre as a basis for *The Fall*.

19 Here I disagree with the readings of Alfred Cismon, who argues that Quentin does not learn to “offer comfort or solace to the others and thus [does not] descend from his privileged summit” (71), and C.W.E. Bigsby, who sees Clamence as indeed learning to descend from his (133). See note 10. Miller’s hero, I will argue, does progress beyond his “fall,” or his state of alienation, to a sense of solidarity.

20 The name Clamence refers to the familiar New Testament phrase “*vox clamantis in deserto*,” “a voice crying in the wilderness.”
