USE AND IDENTITY OF THE NARRATOR IN THE WORKS OF HENRY MILLER

JEFFREY ROBERT VINCENT BURSEY, B.A.

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BY

©Jeffrey Robert Vincent Bursey, B.A.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of the first-person narrator (the 'I') in six of Henry Miller's major works. Though Miller is seen primarily as a writer of sensational novels, upon closer examination he proves to be a major figure in American literature and in modern literature generally. Miller's works touch on contemporary literary concerns (such as the self in fiction, the distance between text and author); this thesis however concentrates solely on his utilization of the 'I' to make fiction and biography indistinguishable.

Before addressing the use of the narrator in Miller's work, a re-evaluation of his contribution to literature is necessary. Chapter One begins the examination of the 'I' in his works, while at the same time linking him in this regard with other modernist writers (for example, Wyndham Lewis and James Joyce) with whom he is rarely compared; he belongs with this pioneering group because of his technical innovations and aesthetic concerns. To prove this, I will discuss Miller's writing style, bringing the argument to the point where his place among the modernists is evident - the point at which his use of the 'I' is explained in theoretical terms.

Chapters Two and Three are extensive examinations of the six texts under review. The works are: Tropic of Cancer,

Black Spring, Tropic of Capricorn, and The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy (Sexus, Plexus, and Nexus). Chapter Two explores the metamorphosizing 'I' of the first three books: in Black Spring and Tropic of Capricorn the 'I' is an uneven mixture of narrator and artist. Tropic of Cancer, on the other hand, reveals an 'I' who incorporates life and art, becoming, in Miller's terms, a man.

The 'I' of The Rosy Crucifixion is different from earlier manifestations. Miller's trilogy follows the life of the first-person narrator prior to Tropic of Cancer. Sexus, Plexus and Nexus manipulate the 'I', exposing and playing with the author/narrator figure, and the form of the text. For Miller, image and theme recede to the background of his books as the more important figure of the 'I' predominates. The conclusion to the thesis is that Miller is a neglected figure of undeniable importance in literature.

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Chapter One

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the use and identity of the first-person narrator in six works by Henry Miller. The selected texts are: Tropic of Cancer (1934), Black Spring (1936), Tropic of Capricorn (1939), and Sexus (1949), Plexus (1953) and Nexus (1960) (The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy). Chapters two and three will concentrate on the books themselves, but first it is necessary to provide a context for an analysis of those works. This preparatory chapter has two aims: the first is to consider the various literary influences in his work. Miller has been classified as many things - a romantic, a surrealist, a pornographer - yet he does not, strictly speaking, fit into any of those categories, as will be shown presently. Beginning with examinations of the labels applied to him, and arguments for and against their applicability, this chapter will move forward to advance the second aim, the positing of Henry Miller as a modernist writer. He has rarely been identified with Joyce, Pound, Conrad (and others) in such a way. Success in both those goals requires an examination of the various classifications of Miller, in the hope of arriving at a point where his similarities with acknowledged modernists is obvious. That point coincides with a detailed look at Miller's purpose behind the use of

the first-person narrator, an understanding of which is essential for the later chapters.

I

The opening of Tropic of Cancer has an epigraph from Emerson,[1] a presence, like Whitman, throughout the book. For Miller, these two figures are the most important American writers. To take Whitman first: he is the perfect symbol of artistic freedom for Miller, particularly when set against the backdrop of the United States. Tropic of Cancer is Miller's Song of Himself, and a pointed allusion to singing appears at the beginning of Miller's book (p.2). Miller sees Whitman as standing separate from the world around him, and himself as a literary heir of the poet's individualism. Whitman, for Miller, is the "first and last poet,"(p.217) the "one lone figure which America has produced in the course of her brief life." (p.216) As for Emerson, Miller uses some of his words and ideas in his first book (see pp. 57,63, as well as the epigraph); in later works, for example Sexus, Miller takes on oratorical flourishes which stem from Emerson's essays on the artist and the individual. In a conflation of Whitman's individualism and Emerson's mystical leanings there is, as Paul R. Jackson phrases it, a pronounced "indebtedness to general Romantic and Transcendental modes of thought"

which, in Miller's work, appears most often in his "prophetic announcements."[2] That remark is particularly accurate of Miller's work from the forties where, in several books, he exhibits a view of the world and its problems in a way that unites Whitman and Emerson with "Krishnamurti, Nostradamus, Mme Blavatsky and John Cowper Powys."[3] The result is a loose 'philosophy', quasi-religious and extremely vague, except to like-minded adepts; Miller, throughout the forties, often does not define his terms, forsaking intellectual rigour for enthusiastic sponsorship of conflicting and contradictory beliefs. At times he makes his most eloquent pleas for more love among humanity when he is calm and working from deeply personal experience. Absent in the forties to some degree is Miller's bitter and biting wit which contributed strength to his apocalyptic visions of the thirties.

In the differences between the writings of the thirties and the forties lies an important paradox. Miller continually feels justified in his pessimistic assessment of humanity (opinions reinforced by the Second World War), yet draws hope from both eccentricities among people and from certain arcane traditions. The Air-Conditioned Nightmare (1945) is a gallery of the unusual, as is its companion volume Remember To Remember (1947). Miller's vivid imagery, language and attitudes are given added impetus by romantics (Whitman, Emerson) visionaries

(Nietzsche, Spengler, Dostoevsky) and anarchists, particularly Emma Goldman. Miller's encounter with Goldman, and the subsequent purchasing of anarchist pamphlets and philosophy books,[4] had permanent effects. It should be pointed out, however, that Miller only chose elements from anarchism which he found to his liking, and did not believe in anarchism as a way of life or as an answer to every problem. For him, the violence and unleashed energy of the anarchists mattered more than plans and programs of action. Goldman, and others, exposed Miller to alternate methods of thinking and acting which were blocked by his upbringing. A great deal of the dynamic energy and force of Tropic of Cancer, Black Spring and Tropic of Capricorn comes from a pessimistic and visionary propensity coupled with an anarchistic perception of the world. In the forties, as has been stated, a change in temperament is noticeable; Miller is much more hopeful than he was before, though the change is more one of a shift from a negative view to a less despairing one.

To some extent that shift has been noticed by literary critics. Leslie Fiedler remarked that Miller belonged in the camp of those who had "manufactured homegrown religions,"[5] and Martin Seymour-Smith believes that his romanticism "has developed a defensive, nihilistic edge,"[6] the exact opposite of Miller's true attitude. Mary Allen's essay, "Henry Miller : Yea-Sayer," better captures the struggle

inside Miller between pessimism and optimism when she writes, of Miller's trip across America, that "his natural urge to rejoice prevails" and that he "goes from a haughty antagonism to a song of wonder."[7] A fourth reaction to the 'nihilism' of Miller, one that does not take into account many later works, starkly outlines major preconceptions about his world view. Though slightly extreme, and not representative, Peter L. Hays's version of Miller's beliefs is worth considering and countering as a prelude to a presentation of Miller's actual beliefs. In "The Danger of Henry Miller" Hays writes:

> No, the sexual portions of Miller do not disturb me as much as his anarchy does, his celebration of life, energy, passion, ecstasy, and his condemnation of anything that restricts free enjoyment... Miller worships energy, explosions of energy, that result in ecstasies of sadism, and the only things created are more pain and confusion.8

Previously, Hays had expressed a desire for an author to indicate, "if only by negation, how life should be lived" (p.255); that is, Miller should present a system of morals to correct or instruct people. In the aesthetic sense too, Miller is an anarchist since he is against shaping his art (p.255). The critic wishes "that what Miller wrote was more like literature" (p.255) because he wants balance and order in what he reads, not the anarchy, absurdity and formlessness which he gets enough of in life. For Hays, there is no need to mirror reality, less of a need to be

anarchic where the world is concerned. Hays is troubled by the impulses in Miller which could result in absolute chaos (p.257).

Put against that criticism of Miller's lack of didacticism, his anarchism and the formlessness of his writing is Geoffrey Nash's contrasting opinion:

> There has been no more pungent a critic of the United States and its social mores than Henry Miller, arguably the greatest American writer of the modern age... Miller's view of the world in fact puts him in the company of European Romanticism, for he is a lover of nature and art, and his writing displays a vitalistic insistence upon visionary intensity... [Miller's] outlook has made him a friend of the Black and of the American Indian, and it lends his work a moving dignity that might surprise those who are otherwise dissuaded by his reputation. Above all, Miller detests the inhumanity of capitalism, its hatred of individuality and spontaneity, its sick debasement of the image of God within us all.9

The differences between Hays and Nash are immediately obvious in their respective conclusions as to whether Miller's writings possess moral content. To some extent their arguments are shaped by the material each has consulted. Hays uses Tropic of Cancer extensively with two quotes from other works, and references to five other books, for a total of eight sources; Nash relies on The Air-Conditioned Nightmare and refers to Tropic of Capricorn once. Essentially, the first critic limits his analysis of Miller's Weltanschauung to one book which is explicitly apocalyptic,

and merges narrator with author; the second critic uses an explicitly non-fiction book and capsulizes the author's feelings, based on his interpretation of that book. With Tropic of Cancer it is problematical how much is persona and how much is the author, yet Hays makes no allowance for distinguishing between author and narrator. Inadvertently, Hays article illustrates the complexity of reconciling Miller's 'known' works with those works that are less popular. Regrettably, Hays does not discuss the books Nash relies on, and the impression left by his essay is that Miller is solely an anarchist. As for Nash, he believes Miller to be spiritual and prophetic, noting the moral tone of his work.

When compared to Miller's writings, Nash's view is representative and faithful to Miller's own words. Throughout certain books of the forties - The Colossus of Maroussi (1941), The Wisdom of the Heart (1941), The Air-Conditioned Nightmare (1945) and Remember To Remember (1947) - Miller displays his (guarded) hopes for humanity's progress, as in the following passage from Remember To Remember, typical of that book and others from that period. Miller is referring to his belief that a solitary figure will eventually emerge to lead the world to its proper future:

> But in order for such a figure to come into being humanity will have... to reach a point of such profound despair that we will be willing to try at long last to assume the full responsibilities of mankind. That means to live for one

> another in the absolute religious meaning of the phrase: we will have to become planetary citizens of the earth, connected with one another not by country, race, class, religion, profession or ideology, but by a common, instinctive rhythm of the heart.10

"To live for one another..." is, for Miller, the ultimate aim of life. He does not advocate the destruction of the present as an end in itself. Hays has fallen into the crevice between what is known about Miller's world view and what his world view is. This world view is in an embryonic stage in Tropic of Cancer. As George Orwell noted, the narrator has an almost complacent belief that a new spirit of peace will soon prevail. Miller, on the margin of civilization, stands apart from the affairs of the world. "In his book," Orwell writes, "one gets right away from the 'political animal' and back to a viewpoint not only individualistic but completely passive - the viewpoint of a man who believes the world-process to be outside his control and who in any case hardly wishes to control it"[11]; this is the view closest to the "ordinary man" (p.500), and Orwell labels Miller's attitude "a species of quietism, implying either complete unbelief or else a degree of belief amounting to mysticism" (p.521). Orwell wrote this consideration in 1940, shortly before the publication of several books of Miller's which refer to the uniting of people as the only salvation. As seen in the remarks of Fiedler, Seymour-Smith and Hays, Miller's proposed solutions

for peace occasionally suffer unwarranted ridicule or neglect, while his violent forebodings or cries of impending disaster attract more serious consideration. Miller owes a great deal to visionaries like Nietzsche and Spengler for his belief in a new era as much as for his dark picture of the present and near future. The romantic strain in his works takes in the anarchistic and the prophetic, two elements which work easily together.

II

A similar relationship to that between prophecy and anarchy in Miller's writings is the intertwining of naturalism and surrealism. Naturalism in Miller divides fairly neatly into two forms: realism of detail (things, people, behaviour) and obscenity (in speech, act, image). Miller models his use of naturalism on Dreiser, who in Tropic of Capricorn (as shown in chapter two) is a touchstone for one of his early works. Sensitive to the fact that Dreiser's style sprang from his personality and suited his subject matter, Miller wrote in defence of An American Tragedy in 1926. According to Miller, Dreiser "uses language, consciously or not, in the manner which modern writers, notably Joyce, use deliberately; that is, he identifies his language with the consciousness of his characters."[12] Miller recognized that it was possible to misunderstand Dreiser's stylistic effects, to confuse the author with

depicted reality. Miller, in fact, rejects the statement of one Dreiser critic that Dreiser's habit of "'mixing slang with poetic archaisms, reveling in the cheap, trite and florid'" indicates that Dreiser himself was "'correspondingly muddled, banal and tawdry'" (p.306).

With a change of names one could apply this criticism of Dreiser's use of language to Miller's use of realistic or graphic language which describes, with no attempt at discretion, real and graphic actions. Beginning at that point of graphic representation is the thin line which separates realism from obscenity in Miller's work. To one critic Miller's language is spoken not by ordinary people but by "men without women: sailors, for example, or possibly men in heavy industry,"[13] limited to "half of the population" (p.159); another finds Miller best at "surrealistic prose, which makes no formal demands, or in the straight account of an event."[14] In his works, Miller displays similarities with naturalist writers in, as one critic has phrased it, "the evocation of his immigrant childhood and life as an urban rogue in Brooklyn."[15] Miller's "Reunion in Brooklyn" describes the reunion with his family (father, mother, sister) in 1940; the emotions, though very strong, are never forced, the tale a sad, melancholy affair saved by a slight, wry, almost 'tired' humor, as if it was all the narrator could do to maintain self-control. After the initial tears, things return to normal. "The table was set; we were to eat in a

few moments. It seemed natural that it should be thus, though I hadn't the slightest desire to eat. In the past the great emotional scenes which I had witnessed in the bosom of my family were always associated with the table. We pass easily from sorrow to gluttony."[16] Though there is more to Miller's writing than pictorial representation without exploration, "Reunion in Brooklyn" and other pieces indicate "the proletarian novelist [Miller] might have been but refuses to be."[17]

As for obscenity, it clearly has less significance in Miller's own work than, for example, criticism of America. Obscenity has a specific purpose:

> When obscenity crops out in art, in literature more particularly, it usually functions as a technical device; the element of the deliberate which is there has nothing to do with sexual excitation, as in pornography. If there is an ulterior motive at work it is one which goes far beyond sex. Its purpose is to awaken, to usher in a sense of reality.18

Sex in Miller's writings neither arouses nor excites, for it is too graphic to qualify as erotic, and at other times too tongue-in-cheek to be taken seriously. There is simply not enough tension for prurience. In "Astrological Fricassee" Miller plays with his reputation as the author of 'dirty' books. Having said that he's a writer, he is asked by an actress at a party what kind of books he writes:

> "Naughty books." I said, trying to blush deeply.

> "What kind of naughty books? Naughty-naughty - or just dirt?"
> "Just dirt, I guess."
> "You mean Lady Chatterby, or Chattersley, or whatever the hell it is? Not that sort of swill you don't mean, do you?"
> I laughed. "No, not that sort... just straight obscenity. You know- duck, chit, kiss, trick, punt,..." 19

Miller's treatment of sex is not the concern here except in its connection with verisimilitude. In Miller's writings sex and obscenity take on a classical and European flavor, with an American rambunctiousness. Rabelais and de Sade come to mind and, as Sir Herbert Read pointed out in an essay on Miller, there are echoes of "Catullus, Petronius, Boccaccio."[20] In Miller's work, Read writes, obscenity is an important "part of the process of realization, a natural consequence of [Miller's] devastating honesty..." (pp. 253-254), an essential portion of the whole person.

III

While Miller uses realistic detail to supply a vivid picture of the external world, it is through surrealistic techniques that he shows the more important inner feelings and thoughts of the 'I'. Miller needed radical forms of expression which corresponded to the alienation and isolation the narrator felt; in turn, visions and anarchistic attitudes required unconventional modes of communication. Miller is an atypical American writer in his use of surrealism, Nathanael

West being his only other (American) contemporary whose writings show a surrealist influence. Miller relies on automatic writing, dream transcription and other devices in Tropic of Cancer, but it is in Black Spring and Tropic of Capricorn that his utilization of surrealist methods is more evident. Black Spring contains word-play and dreams, as well as numerous metaphors and imagery which emanate from the unconscious. Throughout the six books under review surrealism is employed in varying degrees to reflect the sensibility of the narrator, and much of Miller's poetic language and vitality reside in his better surrealistic passages.

In literature, surrealism is often regarded as "an exceedingly Gallic phenomena... which critics take too seriously at grave risk,"[21] particularly with its constant manifestos and its extravagances of personalities, actions and art-objects. A different view, one which takes surrealism very seriously indeed, holds that it is both companion to two other twentieth-century movements (communism and neo-Thomism) in its revolutionary characteristics and effects, and is the "most vital and renovating movement of modern thought and art."[22] Whatever the general opinion of surrealism, Miller has drawn his share of praise and criticism for his employment of it.

A review (1936) by George Orwell of Black Spring attacked the book for its unrealistic style. Orwell

reproached Miller because events no longer occurred "according to the ordinary laws of space and time."[23] Orwell found himself in a "Mickey Mouse universe" (p.230) which lacked the intelligibility of Mickey Mouse films. He objected to Miller's writing style in Black Spring on the grounds that "the written word loses its power if it departs too far, or rather if it stays away too long, from the ordinary world..." (p.231) Orwell has missed Miller's intent to reveal the narrator in his own universe, through his dreams, memories and verbal activities. (For a further discussion of that aspect of Black Spring, see chapter two.) In Black Spring, the violently distorted ordinary world is normal for the narrator; that is, the narrator's world embraces those very elements that Orwell denies when he writes dismissively that "metaphysical discussions about the meaning of 'reality'" (p.231) are unnecessary. Here, Orwell's critical intelligence deserts him, for he fails to discern the reason behind the book's construction. Miller's language and metaphors are natural to the character, particularly the anarchic impulses, the visions and the individualistic stance, all of which have disturbed Orwell, who would rather read "the adventures of [Miller's] disreputable friends..." (p.232) than meet the narrator on a personal level.

Norman Mailer, usually a sympathetic commentator on Miller's work, has his own reservations about surrealism in

Miller's writings, notably the presumed source of his surrealism. Conceding that Miller was partially surrealistic before he went to Paris, and that Paris itself encourages hothouse growths of all kinds, Mailer nevertheless blames Anais Nin for inculcating "literary delicacies"[24] of her own in Miller, delicacies which come perilously close to "literary vanities" (p.368). Mailer continues:

> [Miller] began to write fancy. Tropic of Capricorn is the book which could have been better than Cancer and in the same terms - even today, at its least, it is a tidal wave of prose. But it is spoiled by avalanches of over-writing. The man with the latest and best balls to come along in American letters turned arty in Paris... [He took on] all forms, all manners, even all vices of avant-garde writing. (p.369)

Included among these vices are the techniques of surrealism. Mailer's denigration is only partially literary. There is something a little xenophobic in his reaction, a prejudice against so foreign and European a style (not to mention the remarks about Anais Nin). Miller is himself aware of the strengths and weaknesses of surrealism. In "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" Miller articulates his perceptions of the limitations of surrealism. Contradicting the true revolutionary nature of surrealism (as postulated by Wallace Fowlie), Miller writes that he is "against revolutions because they always involve a return to status quo. I am against status quo both before and after revolutions."[25] He does not adhere to the belief that there

is such an entity as "Surrealism... there are only Surrealists. They have existed in the past and they will exist in the future. The desire to posit an ism, to isolate the germ and cultivate it, is a bad sign. It means impotency. It is on a par with that impotency which makes of a man a Christian, a Buddhist, or a Mohammedan. A man who is full of God is outside the faith"(p.181). Miller distinguishes between a group and an individual, thing and person, static and active. According to Miller, true surrealists are beyond the confines of surrealism. In a brilliant passage which follows the one just quoted, Miller criticizes the authoritarian aims of Breton et al:

> [The Surrealists] are trying to establish an Absolute. They are trying with all the powers of consciousness to usher in the glory of the Unconscious. They believe in the Devil but not in God. They worship the night but refuse to acknowledge the day. They talk of magic, but they practice voodooism. They await the miracle, but they do nothing to assist it, to bring about an accouchement. They talk of ushering in a general confusion, but they live like the bourgeoisie. A few of them have committed suicide, but not one of them has as yet assassinated a tyrant. They believe in the revolution but there is no real revolt in them.(pp. 181-182)

None of those remarks apply to the proto-surrealists whom Miller admires, namely Rimbaud and Lautreamount (p.159) and the painters Giotto, Bosch and Grunewald (p.181). In those figures Miller finds the "two elements lacking in the works of the Surrealists today; guts and significance" (p.181). He is far more impressed with the Dadaists who "were more

entertaining. They had humor, at least. The Surrealists are too conscious of what they are doing. It's fascinating to read about their intentions - but when are they going to pull it off?" (p.163). For one critic, Tropic of Capricorn is the surrealist success that Miller waited for Breton and others to provide. Wallace Fowlie finds the flow and "lyric prose"[26] of many passages in that book and in Black Spring indicative of Miller's kinship with the early sources of surrealism in his spiritual and mystical pursuits.

One critic, however, has argued that Miller is not really influenced by surrealist writing as much as by surrealist films and paintings, and limits even that influence in favor of another. Gwendolyn Raaberg questions Miller's "susceptibility to the influence of French Surrealism,"[27] suggesting instead the combined influence of German Expressionism (p.253) - through literature and the paintings of George Grosz - and the films of Luis Bunuel (p.254). This idea, though plausible, does not satisfactorily explain either why there are few references in Miller's works to German Expressionists or their influence on him, or supply reasons for the increased use of surrealism in Miller's writings the longer he stayed in Paris. Miller stated in "The Golden Age" that Bunuel's (and Dali's) film L'Age d'Or (1930) "opens up before us a dazzling new world which no one has explored,"[28] and it had a lasting and positive effect on him. Miller takes only what he needs from various

sources, and so it comes as no surprise that pictorial surrealism and surrealist writings and techniques figure in his works. Yet after Tropic of Capricorn surrealistic devices are used less frequently. From the forties on, surrealism, to a large extent, gets left out of his works as Miller concentrates even more than he had before on the 'I'. In Malcolm Bradbury's words, "[Miller's] enterprise, like the surrealist one, went beyond literature into post-literature, beyond art into outrage, beyond reason into the flooded unconscious, beyond form into an apocalyptic randomness, a second-order chaos of the new, transformed world."[29] The phrase "beyond literature" contains a special meaning when applied to Miller and his works: his purpose was to unite author and narrator; his works reflect that purpose and to a high degree carry it out. At the points where narrator and author merge, and 'literature' is left behind, Miller emerges as a modernist. Before demonstrating that, it is advisable to establish what modernism is.

IV

A majority of critics would agree with Frederick Karl that modernism is "anti-intellectual"[30] and to a certain extent anti-art when it confronts established and respected artistic conventions. As Frank Kermode phrases it, in

modernism there is a "rejection of mesure, of art in a pejorative sense."[31] A balanced and concise essay by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane clarifies what modernism is and what its presence in (literary) history means. Summing up one section of their argument, they write:

> ... Modernism is less a style than a search for style in a highly individualistic sense... The qualities which we associate with [modernists] are indeed their remarkably high degree of self-signature, their quality of sustaining each work with a structure appropriate only to that work. The condition for the style of the work is a presumed absence of style for the age; and each work is a once-and-for-all creation, subsisting less for its referential than for its autotelic constituents, the order and rhythm made for itself and submerged by itself.32

An addition to that list of qualities is an intensified exploration of the self, resulting in writing in which the "... inner life of man was ... given as much weight as the outer world; and the unconscious mind given its place, alongside, or underlying, conscious modes of thought."[33] Inwardness of vision imbued modernist works with an esoteric dimension, the much remarked upon "difficulty of access."[34] Though the 'difficulty' is less now than it once was, there is still a requirement for the "priestly industry of explicators, annotators, allusion-chasers, to mediate between the text and the reader."[35] The nature of much modernist literature is prophetic, private and exclusive, as cryptic as the oracles of Delphi. Yet Ulysses, for all its

difficulties, holds a universal significance. Its hermeticism is a part of the age it came out of; the problem of access should not be seen as detrimental, as "specialism and experimentalism can be held to have great social meaning; the arts are avant-garde because they are revolutionary probes into future human consciousness."[36] The artist felt separate from his/her own society, if not as a result of choice then through necessity; he/she is usually (self-) exiled from the country of birth, resulting in the exile, the enemy, the expatriate. Such stances can be found in the figures of Joyce, Lewis and Miller.

Stance alone proves little: style and technical experimentation provide sounder evidence of actual relations amongst writers. Concentrating on the inner workings of the mind, usually through a central character (who may or may not be a substitute for the author), subjective impressions dominate such writings as A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Remembrance of Things Past, with the central character's consciousness claiming absolute sovereignty over actions and events. Conventional language, imagery, plots, temporal states, etc., were ignored or drastically altered in exchange for "celebration of private, subjective experience over public experience,"[37] expressed through nuances of tone, shifting points of view, irony and ambiguity, use of nonsense or absurdity (words, images), and poems and prose recaptured from nearly forgotten

languages. Modernists sought to "irrationalize the rational, to defamiliarize and dehumanize the expected..."[38] through their abandonment or untraditional utilization of traditional devices. Not content with the state and form of novels, poetry and theatre, modernists decided to make them more inclusive. "Literature had to... emulate the international quality of art and music."[39]

Henry Miller's works exhibit stylistic and technical innovation, and almost exclusively rely on one character to filter, organize and present material. Miller also eschews conventional metaphors and plotlines in favor of radical imagery and attitudes. His narrator views the world in a manner that, while seemingly idiosyncratic and too subjective to be common, is, upon closer examination, more universal than generally acknowledged. To achieve his picture of the world as well as to adequately reflect the narrator's character, Miller appropriated many devices common to other modernists (as noted above) and incorporated the devices he found useful from romanticism, anarchism, prophecy, naturalism and surrealism. At all times, Miller takes what he likes from those sources and leaves the rest, joining in the freedom of a movement, sharing its enthusiasm, but not its rules, its programs and its consequences. In writing about Count Hermann Keyserling, Miller provides a commentary that might apply to himself. After stating that readers could easily be vexed by the "variety of media"[40] in

Keyserling's works, he says that "People have accused [Keyserling] of being derivative, assimilative, synthetic. The truth is that he is analgesic and amalgamatic." (p.77) Indeed, Isadore Traschen makes much the same point in an essay on Miller. According to Traschen, "very few novelists have borrowed as much from other writers as [Miller] has."[41] However, in the unifying of several modes of expression, Miller shares another technique of modernists; in the works of Joyce, Pound and Eliot (to cite only three) the same synthesizing process is evident. Each of those writers could be charged with being derivative or with borrowing too much. There is a synthesizing not only in their use of past and contemporary influences but also in the "variety of media"; modernists were intensely aware of other art forms and put their interpretations of these forms into their literature. Wyndham Lewis blended painting and writing into a literary style which emphasized details and externals, and was geometrical in shape; the resulting prose is sculptured, polished and exact. Concrete poets add meaning to their work by changing typography from within conventional margins to form a shape complementary to the content of poems; and of course, foreign languages and ancient cultures and civilizations help broaden and deepen the character of modern literature, furthering its international, inclusive, esoteric/exoteric nature.

Another of the "variety of media" is cinema. With regards to American literature, one needs to look at John Dos Passos, the first to test its potential in Manhattan Transfer, a potential fully developed in the U.S.A. trilogy. His adaptation of film techniques (montage, motion, editing) and film forms (the Newsreels and Camera Eye) was innovative and highly suitable to both his material and his vision of society. He is one of a small number of American writers who in the thirties experimented at any length in a fashion that bears comparison to European modernists; Nathanael West, and William Faulkner in particular, are two others. Conspicuous by his absence in almost all discussions of modernism is Henry Miller. Frederick Karl, in his book American Fictions : 1940 - 1980, discusses modernism and gives certain characteristics that he thinks are common to modernist writers, none of which, in Karl's opinion, Miller shares. Briefly, the characteristics are: the reading of modernists in English (Joyce, Eliot); exposure to and command of a foreign language; and the reading of European modernists in translation.[42] Miller meets Karl's requirements exactly, and would seem to be a true modernist. Miller could read and speak German[43] and, once in Paris, became immersed in surrealism and exposed to various other influences. He read Proust in French[44] and his writing shows the rhythms, diction and cadences of other languages and other cultures.[45] Because Karl believes that Miller's

style is just part of a "general freeing process in language, sexual notation [and] rhythms," (p.24) he ignores the unique aspects of Miller's work and indeed ignores him.

Miller fits in with modernist sensibilities particularly in his use of what John Barth calls the "priestly, self-exiled artist-hero,"[46] though in Miller's hands such a figure has a slightly different form and purpose. In Tropic of Cancer, where author-Miller and narrator-Miller first meet, scant information is supplied about the background of the narrator. In the book he is essentially a static individual; the reader does not witness any growth on the narrator's part despite the number of adventures. The learning process has occurred before the book opens; nothing happens to change the narrator because he has changed already. Achievement is presented, but not process. Questions about the narrator's past are not answered; consequently, there is a curious sense of being in a void, and the urge is to step outside the text and consult biography to ascertain what is fiction and what is fact.

From the outset of his career, Miller encouraged the assumption that he and the 'I' of his books were the same individual, both throughout Tropic of Cancer (pp. 1-2, et passim) and in a response to a review by Edmund Wilson. In his reply to Wilson's favourable notice of Tropic of Cancer, Miller wrote:

> The theme of the book, moreover, is not at all what Mr. Wilson describes: the theme of the book is myself, and the narrator, or the hero, as your critic puts it, is also myself... I don't use "heroes," incidentally, nor do I write novels. I am the hero, and the book is myself.47

Miller thus dismisses Wilson's attempt to distinguish between narrator and author. Following this dictum, critics continue to struggle with that distinction; perversely, Miller later cautioned his readers, in Tropic of Capricorn (1939) and at intervals throughout his career, that the author and the 'I' were not one.[48] Insistence on the oneness of author/narrator is offset by the caution that the truth-teller is a potential liar. Since chapters two and three deal extensively with the role of the 'I' in Miller's books, and the blurring of author with narrator, it is advisable now to explain Miller's position on the use of the first-person narrator before that examination begins. Simultaneously, further evidence of Miller as an overlooked modernist writer will be brought forth.

Miller's views on his use of the 'I' in his books are outlined with clarity and forcefulness in The World of Sex (1940) and in "Reflections On Writing", in The Wisdom of the Heart (1941). Miller sought to represent the world which he felt crumbling around him in an aesthetically and philosophically appropriate manner. In discussing modernism, Malcolm Bradbury writes of "the sense of cultural stress and

strain" that produced "the need for a new art, an art of fragments and images, an art of language retrieved from chaos and misuse."[49] In his essay "Reflections on Writing", Miller writes in a way that anticipates Bradbury:

> With us the soul problem has disappeared, or rather presents itself in some strangely distorted chemical guise. We are dealing with crystalline elements of the dispersed and shattered soul... I felt compelled, in all honesty, to take the disparate and dispersed elements of our life - the soul life, not the cultural life - and manipulate them through my own personal mode, using my own shattered and dispersed ego as heartlessly and recklessly as I would the flotsam and jetsam of the surrounding phenomenal world.50

For Miller, disintegration of society can be reflected best through an individual; that individual is more reliable than society, tradition, art and other people. Only the individual's soul can remain reasonably secure, though it is not immune from splitting into sections and becoming dispersed. There is in Miller the suspicion that the soul is not entirely trustworthy. Like other modernists, Miller relies on memory to piece the "shattered soul" back together. He sees re-unification as intensely private for every person who attempts it. One conclusion Miller reaches is that due to reintegration, "[e]very one writes his own history of world events. If it were possible to compare accounts, we would be dismayed to discover that the historical has neither reality nor authenticity, that the

past, private or universal, is an impenetrable jungle."[51] To understand the inner life, to "reach the heart of the labyrinth," (p.88) is the fate of a select group. "To confront the minotaur, and slay him, is to be slain. Thus the past is scotched, and the future too. Nothing that happened, nothing that may happen or will happen, longer [sic] has importance enough to weigh us down." (p.88) That is an accurate assessment of the position of the narrator of Tropic of Cancer. The past exists for him not as a burden of mistakes or even triumphs, but simply as actions that had their importance but do not carry any meaning in the present. He dwells on his past infrequently, underlining how he has changed. Memory is not a cumbersome thing; it is not lost or found, defeated or victorious, only there. The past exerts no pressure, nor, for that matter, does the future. The present is the only thing that presses down on the narrator, and even then does not press for very long. The narrator watches the world fall apart and contentedly and passively waits for the end. He experiences rebirth through that looming cataclysm, becoming whole, a new being adapted to a new world. "I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive," (p.1) says the narrator of Tropic of Cancer, as he dismisses the world's problems and concentrates on the "soul life" of man.

As Miller puts the shards of his life together into

a new form that aligns with the new world, the 'I' adjusts to the demands of new literary forms. Favoured from Tropic of Cancer on are the 'artless' books that address life and emphasize the "triumph of the individual over art," as the narrator says in Tropic of Cancer (p.10). In his response to Edmund Wilson (however modified later) Miller stresses the fact that he is the theme and the hero, and further, that he is not an artist but a man who happens to be a writer. "Art is only a means to life, to the life more abundant. It is not in itself the life more abundant. It merely points the way, something which is overlooked not only by the public, but very often by the artist himself" ("Reflections," p.24). Art is a means into reality, into life, a more vital activity than isolating oneself and writing about life without being part of it. "Nobody can drown in the ocean of reality who voluntarily gives himself up to the experience" (p.29), Miller writes, and that surrender to the flow of life is a leitmotif throughout his works.

The emphasis on life above art makes the form of Tropic of Cancer an odd one. Peter Bailey's words on Joyce's achievement in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man can be applied to Miller as well: "the self can be fictionalized, metaphorized, molded into more or less objective aesthetic configurations if imagination and craft enough are applied to the task."[52] Bailey cites such

diverse writers as Borges, Sukenick, Conroy, Exley and Updike as beneficiaries of Joyce's breakthrough. After an examination of Conroy's and Exley's books (Stop-time and A Fan's Notes, respectively), Bailey concludes that

> novels - as - autobiography... undermine the traditional and largely spurious authority of the novelist by depriving him of his privileged position above and beyond the work... And secondly, they narrow the gap which exists between fiction and autobiography, a gap which... may have been artificial to begin with. (pp. 91-92)

Unfortunately Bailey jumps from Joyce (1916) to Conroy (1967) and Exley (1968), omitting any consideration of Miller (1934), who seems the logical if forgotten precursor to Exley and Conroy. Over thirty years before, Miller had undercut the distinctions dividing fiction and biography, just as he had challenged the "authority" of the novelist and his "privileged position."

Miller's place in his own fiction does not always go unregarded. Russell Banks (who also noted Conroy's Stop-time) appreciated Miller's contribution to what Banks termed "non-allegorical fiction,"[53] fiction written by those who "swear a new allegiance ... to a continuous, on-going discovery of self." (p.81) Similarly, Ronald Sukenick credits Miller with re-establishing links between people and literature:

> Experience begins with the self and Miller put the self back into fiction. For a writer the whole point of

> literary technique is the fullest possible release of the energy of his personality into his work, and when one comes into contact with that force, the whole superstructure that one had assumed to be the point of literature begins to burn away.54

To shake the foundations of fiction and biography and expose his own "shattered and dispersed ego" is fundamental to Miller's purposes. Above all else in the beginning was Miller's need "to express [himself]" (Tropic of Capricorn, p.13) and writing was the "only outlet open to me, the only task worthy of my powers... a plunge to the source where the waters were constantly being renewed, where there was perpetual movement and stir" ("Reflections," p.29). Miller is, however, characteristically twentieth-century in his use of irony to undercut his confessions, sometimes to the point at which fabrication is quite evident. The narrator, then, is a creature of some ambiguity and mystery, for he cannot be believed entirely yet it is hard to find where facts begin and end. The serious reader must decide whether to seek verification inside the book, or both inside and outside. Escalating the problem is the fact that the texts are neither 'novels' nor 'autobiographies'. Consequently, some critics conclude that Miller's works are "anti-literature"[55] or "antinovels."[56] In Miller's books, meaning resides equally in the narrator's absolute centrality and the absolute control of the author, not in imagery or theme. The "power of the author to set down what

he likes...," writes Jonathan Culler, "could easily be expanded to the claim that the true order is not that of the conventions of a genre but that of the narrative act itself, whose freedom is governed only by the limits of language... The text finds its coherence by being interpreted as a narrator's exercise of language and production of meaning."[57] Culler's words, although located within the context of structuralist criticism, could well apply to Miller's books. Genre traditions and distinctions are less important when the focus of attention is on an "exercise" of the narrator and the author's handling of language. Classification is even more difficult when the author leans more to Life than to Art. Despite Miller's warnings that the words spoken and episodes related by the narrator are not entirely factual, he is often considered the same man who appears in his books. In 1973 Malcolm Cowley affixed the label "memoirist"[58] on Miller; seven years later, Paul Theroux contradicted Cowley. For Theroux, Miller was an "imaginative novelist instead of a noisy memoirist."[59] Yet Miller is neither of those things. Writing about himself, Philip Roth nevertheless suggests much that is relevant about Miller's 'I'. Roth informs readers that

> a writer is a performer who puts on the act he does best - not least when he dons the mask of the first-person singular... Some (many) pretend to be more lovable than they are and some

> pretend to be less. Beside the point. Literature isn't a moral beauty contest. Its power arises from the authority and audacity with which the impersonation is pulled off; the inspiration it inspires is what counts.60

Roth's words, though such is not his intent, echo in a way Miller's thoughts on the subject of the 'I' in his writings, and provide more insight into Miller's conception of the narrator-author figure than most commentators.

One implication of the 'I' in Miller's works is the anarchy created when, to use Sukenick's words, "the self [is brought] back into fiction." The 'I' is the ordering principle or centre of the narrative, and its power is limited only by "the limits of language," as Culler says (p.149). Because of that limitation, another aspect of Miller, his desire to be silent, is important to understand. For Miller, art is only a "substitute, a symbol language, for something which can be seized directly," ("Reflections," p.24) perceived by the man above or beyond art, a man who is a "prime mover, a god in fact and deed." ("Reflections," p.24) What is 'sayable' (intellectual) will be left behind by the religious man who encompasses all life and thus the materials of art. Art will then be superfluous. What is 'unsayable' (instinctive) is favoured. Miller, not yet that religious man, strives to attain that state and therefore reach a point where his own writing becomes unnecessary. He considers music the most sublime art form, closest to

perfection, "sufficient unto itself [and tending] towards silence."[61] When Miller writes that he is "aiming always toward a real, inner harmony, an inner peace - and silence," ("Autobiographical Note," p.371) the obverse is that art is the product of a soul in distress. Miller seeks tranquility. A related goal to the peace Miller speaks of is to "make the written word convey the full essence of truth and sincerity [at which time] there will cease to exist any discrepancy between the man and the writer, between what I am and what I do or say."[62] That Miller never reached these goals of inner peace and total union of man and writer does not make such tasks any less serious or worthy of consideration. "Art," says Ihab Hassan of Miller and Beckett, "goes begging at Life's door."[63]

Miller's prophecies, patently more than aesthetic principles, were expressed in 1939 and 1941, only a few years after the publication of his first book, well before the majority of his works were issued. He invested considerable energy, time and ingenuity towards the merging of author/narrator, and while not wholly successful, went a long way to that almost impossible goal. That he tried such a venture is worthy of far more extensive study than has so far been attempted, touching as it does on the self in fiction, distance between text and author and the inadequacies of language. However, his very formulation of the wish to disappear as a writer, leaving only the man, and

his efforts to solve the discrepancy, are so exuberant that one senses a countering force in the works under consideration, an opposing urge to continue speaking, perhaps to fill a void rather than become silent.[64]

Comparing Miller, Faulkner and Wolfe, Alfred Kazin writes:

> [T]hey are all big men in the colloquial tradition of American demigods - living big, writing big, exuding a power somehow more than their own, a national power which they share. Colossal even in their extreme neuroticism, they retain all the epic force that went into the making of the great legends of American power and the American promise.65

Miller's energy combats his plan to stop writing after merging author and narrator into one. In the six "autobiographical novels"[66] (Miller's phrase) under consideration, an examination of his "'I of my I'"[67] as it/he progresses towards a never-reached destination will reveal the innovation of Miller's philosophical and aesthetic techniques while at the same time clear away some confusion surrounding the place in literature of this remarkable writer who possessed skill, insight and daring.

Obvious from the start of this thesis is this author's deliberate refusal to refer to Tropic of Cancer, Black Spring, Tropic of Capricorn and Sexus, Plexus and Nexus (The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy) as novels or fiction, biographies or fact. Even the terms 'quasi-autobiographical,' 'autobiographical romances' and 'autobiographical novels' have been discarded for reasons

discussed at the conclusion of chapter two. Nor are Miller's books to be considered part of the "literary genre of faction,"[68] a form which fictionalizes the life of an author by combining "factual and fictional elements" (p.4) due to the fact that "faction" has links with New Journalism and the Nonfictional Novel, (p.1) both of which are far removed from Miller's works. Exactly what type of form Miller's books have depends substantially on the book one is looking at. Truly, the form, less important than the overall technique, is fluid, accommodating the narrator as is required, changing shape constantly, While it can be said that Tropic of Cancer or Plexus fits this or that pattern, there can be no final designation of Miller's canon because the arrangement of each book offers its own peculiarities. Umbrella terms do not work: the question about what kinds of books Miller writes has no adequate answer. At best one can say that 'the form' of his oeuvre is indeterminate, which is a legitimate position and not an evasion of a critical task. For a critic to impose a form on Miller's books would be to deny the singularity of each one of them.

Chapter One Endnotes

[1] Henry Miller, Tropic of Cancer (Paris, 1934; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p.ii. Hereafter referred to in the text.

[2] Paul R. Jackson, "Henry Miller, Emerson and the Divided Self," American Literature, 43, No.2 (May 1971), 232.

[3] Leslie Fiedler, Waiting For The End (New York: Stein and Day, Publishers, 1964), p.38. Hereafter referred to as Fiedler, End.

[4] Jay Martin, Always Merry and Bright : The Life of Henry Miller (1978; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1980), p.38. Hereafter referred to as Martin, Life. Miller publicly denounced Martin and his book in an interview with Roger Jones, "Henry Miller at Eighty-Four : An Interview," Queen's Quarterly, 84, No.3 (Autumn 1977), 353-354.

[5] Fiedler, End, p.44.

[6] Martin Seymour-Smith, Guide to Modern World Literature (London: Wolfe Publishing Limited, 1973), p.121. Hereafter referred to as Seymour-Smith, Guide.

[7] Mary Allen, "Henry Miller : Yea-Sayer," Tennessee Studies in Literature, 23 (1978), 103.

[8] Peter L. Hays, "The Danger of Henry Miller," Arizona Quarterly, 27, No.3 (1971), 256.

[9] Geoffrey Nash, The Phoenix and the Ashes : The Baha'i Faith and the Modern Apocalypse (Oxford: George Ronald, 1984), pp. 52-53.

[10] Henry Miller, "Murder The Murderer," in Remember To Remember (Norfolk: New Directions, 1947), p.146.

[11] George Orwell, "Inside the Whale," in An Age Like This : 1920 - 1940, Vol. I of The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968), p. 519.

[12] Henry Miller, "Dreiser's Style," The New Republic, 28 April 1926, p.306.

[13] Frank Kermode, Continuities (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p.158. Hereafter referred to as Kermode, Continuities.

[14] Isadore Traschen, "Henry Miller : The Ego and I," The South Atlantic Quarterly, 65, No.3 (Summer 1966), 353. Hereafter referred to as Traschen, "Ego".

[15] Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.116). Hereafter referred to as Bradbury, The Modern American Novel.

[16] Henry Miller, "Reunion in Brooklyn," in Sunday After The War (Norfolk: New Directions, 1944), p.68.

[17] Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, p.117.

[18] Henry Miller, "Obscenity and the Law of Reflection," in Remember To Remember (Norfolk: New Directions, 1947), p.287.

[19] Henry Miller, "Astrological Fricassee," in Remember To Remember (Norfolk: New Directions, 1947), p.226.

[20] Sir Herbert Read, The Tenth Muse (Freeport: Books For Libraries Press, 1969), p.253.

[21] Seymour-Smith, Guide, p.466. Cf. Renee Riese Hubert, "Surrealism in the Americas : An Introduction," in Proceedings of the 7th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, I, ed. Milan V. Dimic and Juan Ferrate (Stuttgart : Kunst und Wissen - Erich Bieber, 1979), pp. 237-238. Hereafter this book is referred to as 7th Congress.

[22] Wallace Fowlie, Age of Surrealism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), p.13. Hereafter referred to as Fowlie, Surrealism.

[23] George Orwell, "Review," in An Age Like This : 1920-1940, Vol, I of The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968), p.231.

[24] Norman Mailer, Genius and Lust : A Journey Through the Major Writings of Henry Miller (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1976), p.369. I have taken the liberty of reversing Mailer's italicization of everything except titles and emphasized words in order that it conform to usual standards.

Hereafter referred to as Mailer, Genius.

[25] Henry Miller, "An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," in The Cosmological Eye (Norfolk: New Directions, 1939), p.160.

[26] Fowlie, Surrealism, p.185.

[27] Gwendolyn Raaberg, "Surrealism in the Works of Henry Miller and Anais Nin," in 7th Congress, p.253.

[28] Henry Miller, "The Golden Age," in The Cosmological Eye (Norfolk: New Directions, 1939), p.54.

[29] Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, p.119.

[30] Frederick R. Karl, American Fictions : 1940 - 1980 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p.8. Hereafter referred to as Karl, American Fictions.

[31] Kermode, Continuities, p.159.

[32] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," in Modernism : 1890 - 1930, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976), p.29. Hereafter this article is referred to as Bradbury, McFarlane, "Modernism," and the book as Bradbury, McFarlane, Modernism : 1890 - 1930.

[33] Bernard Bergonzi, "The Advent of Modernism : 1900 - 1920," in The Twentieth Century, Vol. VII of History of Literature in the English Language (London: Sphere Books Limited, 1970), p.44. Hereafter referred to as Bergonzi, "Advent".

[34] Christine Brooke-Rose, "Eximplosions," in Novel VS. Fiction: The Contemporary Reformation, ed. Ronald Schleifer (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, Inc., 1981), p.15.

[35] John Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment : Postmodernist Fiction," in The Friday Book (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), p.199. Hereafter referred to as Barth, "Replenishment".

[36] Bradbury, McFarlane, "Modernism," p.28.

[37] Barth, "Replenishment," p.201.

[38] Bradbury, McFarlane, "Modernism," p.48.

[39] Bergonzi, "Advent," p.44.

[40] Henry Miller, "The Philosopher Who Philosophizes," in The Wisdom of the Heart (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941), p.77.

[41] Traschen, "Ego", p.353.

[42] Karl, American Fictions, p.23.

[43] Henry Miller, "Autobiographical Note," in The Cosmological Eye (Norfolk: New Directions, 1939), p.365. Cf. Martin, Life, pp. 5-19.

[44] Henry Miller, Letters To Anais Nin, ed. Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), pp. 12-13, 27-28, et passim. As for speaking French, see pp. 9, 10, 15, et passim.

[45] Henry Miller, "Interview," in Writers at Work : The Paris Review Interviews - Second Series, ed. George Plimpton (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), pp. 179-180. Hereafter

referred to as Miller, "Interview".

[46] Barth, "Replenishment", p.199.

[47] Edmund Wilson, "Twilight of the Expatriates," in Henry Miller and The Critics, ed. George Wickes (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), p.29.

[48] Henry Miller, Tropic of Capricorn (Paris, 1939; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p.13. Hereafter referred to in the text.

[49] Malcolm Bradbury, "London 1890 - 1920", in Modernism: 1890 - 1920, p.182.

[50] Henry Miller, "Reflections on Writing", in The Wisdom of the Heart (Norfolk: New Directions, 1941), p.28. Hereafter referred to in the text.

[51] Henry Miller, The World of Sex (1940; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.28. Hereafter referred to either in the text or as Miller, World.

[52] Peter Bailey, "Notes on the Novel-as-Autobiography", in Novel VS. Fiction : The Contemporary Reformation, ed. Ronald Schleifer (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, Inc., 1981), p.80.

[53] Russell Banks, "Symposium : The Writer's Situation", New American Review No. 9 (New York: New American Library, 1970), p.81.

[54] Ronald Sukenick, "Thirteen Digressions", Partisan Review, 43, No. 1 (1976), p.96.

[55] Ihab Hassan, The Literature of Silence : Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), pp. 3 et passim. Hereafter referred to as Hassan, Silence.

[56] Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, p.117.

[57] Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics : Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 149-150. Hereafter referred to in the text.

[58] Malcolm Cowley, A Second Flowering (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p.263.

[59] Paul Theroux, "Henry Miller", in Sunrise with Seamonsters : Travels and Discoveries 1964 - 1984 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), p.217.

[60] Philip Roth, Reading Myself and Others (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), p.145.

[61] Henry Miller, "Autobiographical Note", in The Cosmological Eye (Norfolk: New Directions, 1939), p.371. Hereafter referred to in the text.

[62] Miller, World, p.12.

[63] Hassan, Silence, p.213.

[64] For an extensive view of this, see Hassan, Silence.

[65] Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1942), p.468.

[66] Miller, "Interview", p.189.

[67] Henry Miller, Plexus (Paris, 1952; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.600.

[68] Lawrence Shifreen, "Faction in the Villa Seurat", Deus Loci : The Lawrence Durrell Quarterly, 2, No.2 (December 1981), p.2.

Chapter Two

Henry Miller's first book begins the long series of similarities between the narrator (and his world) and the author (and his world) which did not stop (for the purposes of this thesis) until Nexus (1960). Tropic of Cancer (1934) opens in a frank manner that establishes bonds uniting narrator and reader. There is a presumed familiarity with the audience on the narrator's part that allows him to speak in a confessional way to the reader. Despite the closeness of speaker to reader, the narrator's name is not revealed until nearly a third of the book has passed,[1] and then only by a minor character. When the 'I' is shown to bear the same name as the author, a question arises as to what type of book Tropic of Cancer is.

That question can be answered partially through categorization. Tropic of Cancer fits roughly into two genres, as episodic picaresque and (incomplete) bildungsroman. With regards to the merging of narrator and author, Miller's first book is the capstone of Black Spring, Tropic of Capricorn, and The Rosy Crucifixion. Tropic of Cancer also fits Steven Kellman's definition of a self-reflexive work, which is "an account, usually first-person, of the development of a character to the point at

which he is able to take up his pen and compose the novel we have just finished reading."[2] In a self-begetting work one reads of the experience of growth (in many forms) and its acknowledgement in a novelistic way. Art and life combine. Tropic of Cancer, however, is not completely reflexive: at the end of the book, one feels that the narrator has arrived at the ability to write a book, but one knows that it is not this particular book. By not doubling back on itself, and by remaining 'incomplete' in some ways, Miller's book, for all its recognizable roots, eludes exact taxonomy. The centre of Tropic of Cancer is neither structure nor plotline, then, but the identity and function of the first-person narrator.

At the point when it becomes clear that author and narrator are closely linked, queries surface about the book's factual (biographical) content. The 'I' in a first-person narrative generally serves as a testimonial to a text's truthfulness; first-person narrators, and narratives, through the implicit truthfulness of the narrator and the work itself, demand a certain amount of collaboration from the reader, more so than most other forms. Miller works against that supposition; he holds off revealing the narrator's identity for some time, bringing the reader into a pact not with a narrator but with the author. That closeness starts at the beginning with the epigraph from Emerson, an epigraph at one and the same time

apparent yet submerged within the text:

> These novels will give way, by and by, to diaries or autobiographies - captivating books, if only a man knew how to choose among what he calls his experiences that which is really his experience, and how to record truth truly. (ii)

Readers and critics are forced into determining whether Tropic of Cancer is fiction, biography or a hybrid of the two. If it is fiction, then it is a curious type, for there is no easily discernible plotline or structure; as for autobiography, despite the conversational style, Miller's book does not follow the usual course of that genre - there is little recitation of past events and little chronological progression. The question of whether this book is fact or invention can be unravelled through an exploration of the narrator's identity and through the subsequent use of the figure of the narrator by the author.

Obvious from the first pages is the narrator's enjoyment of Paris despite the fact that he has "no resources" (p.1) and consequently must beg meals off his friends. His jobs as handyman (pp. 72-89), proofreader (pp. 131-168) and teacher (pp. 240-260) are of short duration, due mainly to the narrator, whose spirit finds employment confining. In between jobs his solution is to "do nothing else but concentrate on food [which] would prevent me from falling to pieces.... Trust to Providence for the rest!" (pp. 168-169) The narrator's condition is

presented in a matter-of-fact way with a light humorous touch that excludes self-pity:

> High noon and here I am standing on an empty belly at the confluence of all these crooked lanes that reek with the odor of food. Opposite me is the Hotel de Louisiane. A grim old hostelry known to the bad boys of the Rue de Buci in the good old days. Hotels and food, and I'm walking about like a leper with crabs gnawing at my entrails... Long queues of people with vegetables under their arms, turning in here and there with crisp, sparkling appetites. Nothing but food, food, food. Makes one delirious. (pp. 34-35)

As part of his programme to be provided with meals, he has made a (short-lived) deal with his friends that if they feed him they need see him only one day a week. (p.49) Though his spirits rarely flag, thoughts of his past life with his wife reveal the pain he felt during his life with her:

> My world of human beings had perished; I was utterly alone in the world and for friends I had the streets, and the streets spoke to me in that sad, bitter language compounded of human misery, yearning, regret, failure, wasted effort. (p.166)

Those sorrowful feelings were part of the narrator in the past; now, his present attitude is optimistic, arrived at through suffering, loneliness and deprivation. He has discovered who and what he is, and in the following key passage from Tropic of Cancer enunciates a powerful description of himself:

> I made up my mind that I would hold on to nothing, that I would expect nothing, that henceforth I would live as an animal, a beast of prey, a rover, a plunderer... My back is to the wall; I can retreat no further... I am only spiritually dead. Physically I am alive. Morally I am free. The world which I have departed is a menagerie. The dawn is breaking on a new world, a jungle world in which the lean spirits roam with sharp claws. If I am a hyena I am a lean and hungry one; I go forth to fatten myself. (pp. 89-90)

In that passage, and in similar ones (see pp. 24-25, 218-222 for examples), the narrator speaks very definitely about his nature. He is pragmatic and self-centred, with none of the trappings or expectations of society encumbering him. He is almost the perfect existential man. All that has happened to him before the book opens (very little of which is revealed) has helped him strip away everything superfluous, leaving him in a primitive and purified state. His actions and his words manifest his freedom from moral, social and political obligations: "I haven't any allegiances, any responsibilities, any hatreds, any worries, any prejudices, any passion. I'm neither for nor against. I'm a neutral." (p.138)

While those remarks are certainly true, the narrator is quick to help friends in need, particularly if there is something in it for him. Towards the end of Tropic of Cancer he helps Fillmore, a fellow American, elude the grasp of a pregnant French girl (Ginette) and her family. Fillmore

is completely helpless and the narrator becomes a man of action, which is rare because throughout the book he is passive. In this instance he is not simply reacting to a situation but engineering a solution. "'Don't worry. I'm going to get you out of this fucking mess,'" (p.278) he tells Fillmore, and in whirlwind fashion arranges for him to get back to New York via London. Twenty-eight hundred francs, intended for Ginette, are left in the narrator's hands but do not reach her, an example of the narrator's sense of self-preservation. Instead, after the frenzied activity of getting Fillmore on his way, the narrator decides to take a cab through the Bois and along the Seine, eventually stopping for a drink at a beer garden. In one of the most graceful and sublime sections of the book (pp. 286-287), he watches the river run and the sun set, experiencing an interlude of "golden peace," (p.286) feeling the past flow through him as the Seine flows through the land. These descriptive passages which close Tropic of Cancer rely on the natural world and the narrator's relationship to it for their effectiveness; deftly, the narrator's sensations are shaped to resemble the scene around him. In an earlier passage he had quoted Joyce and agreed with him: "Yes, ... I too love everything that flows: rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences." (p.232) By the current of the river Seine the narrator enters into a primitive, mystic state where a most gratifying joy and calm reside. The narrator

is at his most spiritual. Tropic of Cancer, filled with apocalyptic imagery, scatological references and cruel acts, a book done in a rushing, tumultuous style, mixing philosophy with vulgarity, ends on an entirely fitting note. The narrator, an open receiver of all sensations, has arrived at a moment of transcendent understanding, able, "for a little while... to look around me, to take in the meaning of the landscape." (p.287) The course of the Seine is fixed, the narrator transfixed, his inner mood expressed in the natural world. Earlier on he had written, "I love everything that flows, everything that has time in it and receding, that brings us back to the beginning where there is never end... The great incestuous wish is to flow on, one with time, to merge the great image of the beyond with the here and now." (pp. 270-271) For he has that wish: "I feel this river flowing through me - its past, its ancient soil, the changing climate." (p.287) His past and what he is made of, his own resources, are immutable; he is nourished continually by them. As for the climate, that is always changing. In the beginning of the book Boris's opinion on the weather is that it "will continue bad" (p.1); the narrator does not care, for the only permanent thing is the self which the "weather" - that is, the events of the world - can not harm.

Tropic of Cancer, if taken as autobiography, offers an unappealing view of author-Miller. He is shown as a bum,

as a con artist, as an amoral man and lastly as a writer. Viewing the narrator through a slightly different lens one might conclude that he is a selfish, sexist braggert and a self-aggrandizing writer. His actions could be seen as lacking propriety: as a writer the confession of such things with no humility or embarrassment seems the height of arrogance, indicative of low moral and aesthetic standards. It is precisely those 'objectionable' qualities that set Tropic of Cancer apart from autobiographies. Miller's display in public of private acts (sexual behaviour, predatory conduct) is open to censure and condemnation. However, his purpose, as discussed in Chapter One, is to reveal the whole person. As Stephen Spender writes:

> [W]hat one has to defend is the autobiographers who write about the intimate experience of being themselves. They are indiscreet, they are too interested in themselves, they write about things that are not important to others, they are egomaniacs.3

The result of such writing is that when done thoroughly enough and with honesty, the authors are pilloried as "immoralists, exhibitionists, pornographers" (p.118). Hasty readers, and those easily misled, could carry such an impression away from their reading of Miller's first book; they would not appreciate the fact that people like Miller exist or that their opinions are valuable. George Orwell, in an early review of Tropic of Cancer, wrote that Miller's "novel, or perhaps rather a chunk of autobiography"[4]

was about the "sexual life of the man in the street."(p.155) Less than a year later, while reviewing Black Spring, Orwell again described Tropic of Cancer as "a notable effort to get the thinking man down from his chilly perch of superiority and back into contact with the man-in-the-street."[5] Those remarks, concerned with the "frightful gulf" that exists, in Orwell's mind, "between the intellectual and the... average sensual man," (p.230) point out a minor though essential truth, that Tropic of Cancer had articulated the feelings of a till-then scarcely recognized individual.

In Tropic of Cancer Miller deliberately reveals himself as a potentially unsavoury character in order to broach opinions and truths that would have little credibility or impact if put in other ways. Obscenity, in image, word and deed, is integral to Miller's exposition of the narrator's character and of the world he inhabits. Artlessness, or more accurately, formlessness, perfectly suits the episodic and anarchic forces within the book; shape, in any formal sense, is seldom present in the book's structure. The narrator, commenting on a character by the name of Mr. Wren, says: "His voice is raucous, scraping, booming, a heavy blunt weapon that wedges its way through flesh and bone and cartilage," (p.12) not unlike how Miller wedges his approach to art through the form of the novel. While novelistic structures are very elastic, Tropic of Cancer pushes against

several limits and breaks through some, creating something new that requires intense examination and leaving behind complacent views as to what constitutes fiction. Tropic of Cancer seems to be autobiographical with some use of fictional elements; or, it may be fiction with autobiography as its foundation. Choosing between biography or fiction has been made hard for readers and critics by Miller's persistent use of the 'I' in his work. In Black Spring, his next major work, the choice becomes even more difficult, not only because Miller has mixed his life with his writing in a more complex way, but also due to the contents of that book, which must be explained at some length before conclusions of any kind - about the effectiveness of his techniques, the success and importance of his material, etc. - can be reached.

II

Defining Miller's books is never easy: his first is not a novel and his second is not a collection of short stories. In this thesis Black Spring (1936) will be described as a collection of short pieces. Black Spring operates on a different set of principles than Tropic of Cancer does. Instead of the continuous picture of the narrator that comprised Miller's first work, Black Spring favors a jumping and cutting from past to present to future.

That is, the narrator's past life (rather shadowy before) is parceled out, albeit in odd and disjointed fashions. The process is akin to that of moving panels which can be arranged at whim showing multitudinous permutations of someone's life. Each ordering of the panels reveals facets unobtainable in any other postulated design. Black Spring is an analysis of Henry Miller prior to reconstruction and remolding. It is a work which anticipates the narrator's completeness in Tropic of Cancer. In that book, Miller noted a book he saw displayed in a bookstore window; in the following passage one can discern a foreshadowing of Black Spring:

> In the same window: A Man Cut in Slices! Chapter one: the man in the eyes of his family. Chapter two: the same man in the eyes of his mistress. Chapter three: no chapter three... You can't imagine how furious I am not to have thought of a title like that!...
>
> I wish him luck with his fine title... I'm going to remember this title and I'm going to put down everything that goes on in my noodle - caviar, raindrops, axle grease, vermicelli, liverwurst - slices and slices of it. (p.36)

Miller's Black Spring is his own version of A Man Cut in Slices[6], and is a book which marks the true beginning of the long explanation of the 'I' in Miller's books. Several avenues lead to the narrator's inner self in Black Spring through the manifold presentations of material and the singling out of particular subjects to relate. The splitting of the narrator into sections, prefigured in

Miller's first book, is enunciated in the following passage from "Third or Fourth Day of Spring":

> There are huge blocks of my life which are gone forever. Huge blocks gone, scattered, wasted in talk, action, reminiscence, dream. There was never any time when I was living <u>one</u> life, the life of a husband, a lover, a friend. Wherever I was, whatever I was engaged in, I was leading multiple lives. Thus, whatever it is that I choose to regard as <u>my</u> story is lost, drowned, indissolubly fused with the lives, the drama, the stories of others.7

Miller works from that passage to expose his life in the literary equivalents of dream, action etc.. The result is that style and not substance proves to be the chief obstacle to understanding <u>Black Spring</u>. Using various techniques Miller took his self and separated it into several segments, each segment having its own piece, each piece having its own form. His experiments in styles of writing necessitated an abandonment of conventional devices: straight-forward chronology, for instance, occurs infrequently in the book, left out in favor of a more flowing treatment, the purpose being to catch the narrator in flux at assorted times in his life. One consequence of this attention to style is the absence of an easily identifiable centre. <u>Black Spring</u> offers only the narrator as the common bond among the ten pieces. There seems to be no storyline, no sequence of events, not even digressions because there is nothing to digress from; it is a monologue composed of

disjointed presentations and manic ruminations. Ihab Hassan's opinion of Black Spring is that it "is a mixed bag of tricks and treats, ten essays or sketches - call them what you will - bound between two covers," that it is "without formal breeding," (p.67) though exhibiting, even in its chaos, "some uncouth unity."(p.67) The unity the book undeniably has emanates from the narrator. This book's obvious unity springs from Miller's attempt accurately to reflect the narrator's condition in a matching prose style. Through each piece the 'I' changes as it moves from state to state though it is never complete, for the book does not present a full picture of the narrator. It is necessary now, in order to understand the function of the 'I' in Miller's works as a whole, to examine at some length the transformations of the 'I' in Black Spring, for in his stress on the growth of the narrator as a man and as a writer, there is the initial sounding of themes present in a great many of Miller's works.

Epigraphs, as one reads more of Miller's works, set things in motion and give clues to the content of the book or piece they preface, although it must be noted that they are often ironic or ambiguous. The quotation from Miguel de Unamuno (p.vii) is chosen by a writer familiar with literature, as was the Emerson quotation at the beginning of Tropic of Cancer. Immediately it states a 'thesis', so to speak; whether it is a problem to be solved, already solved or reflected in what follows is of course not

yet clear. "Can I be as I believe myself or as others believe me to be?" A problem of identity then, perhaps of growth as the title of the book partially indicates, spring being the time of creation. Yet, "[h]ere is where I create the legend wherein I must bury myself" (p.vii). The notion of death, or at least petrification in myth, colors the green spring, changing it to a black one; the title's meaning is slightly explained and could, when considered with the epigraph, help in the interpretation of the book.

The first piece, "The Fourteenth Ward," has its own epigraph, "What is not in the open street is false, derived, that is to say, literature" (p.1). The emphasis on truth in life as opposed to fiction in art jars with the Unamuno epigraph, for the latter is evidence of a mind that has focussed on literature yet attempts to turn away from it. It is exactly the same technique used in Miller's first book, where the book is not a work of art but an insult (Tropic of Cancer, pp. 1-2). The epigraph possesses ambiguity, for throughout Black Spring there are numerous references to writers, painters and musicians; in "The Fourteenth Ward" Dostoevski's name is invoked, "[u]nostentatiously. Like an old shoe box" (p.13). Miller's use of artists is never unostentatious. This first piece is a nostalgic one, concerned with boyhood days at the turn of the century, written in a style that combines realism with evocative imagery, generally of a pleasant, subdued kind. The narrator

remembers a golden time, a moment of childhood peace, aware that with age childhood innocence and childhood joys are forever lost and can never be re-experienced. "The Fourteenth Ward" is a quiet, restrained piece, ending on a slightly bitter-sweet note. The imagery at the end maintains the prevailing nostalgic emotions while providing a foreshadowing of the next piece.

There is a long passage in "The Fourteenth Ward" that echoes both the epigraph to the book and the piece itself, thus reverberating throughout Black Spring. The narrator is speaking about memory and how he has changed from the child he was:

> [S]uddenly, but always with terrific insistence and always with terrific accuracy, these memories intrude, rise up like ghosts and permeate every fibre of one's being... Henceforward we walk split into myriad fragments, like an insect with a hundred feet... we walk against a united world, asserting our dividedness. All things, as we walk, splitting with us into a myriad iridescent fragments. The great fragmentation of maturity. The great change. In youth we were whole and the terror and pain of the world penetrated us through and through. There was no sharp separation between joy and sorrow; they fused into one, as our waking life fuses with dream and sleep. We rose one being in the morning and at night we went down into an ocean, drowned out completely, clutching the stars and the fever of the day. And then comes a time when suddenly all seems to be reversed. We live in the mind, in ideas, in fragments. We no longer drink in the wild outer

> music of the streets - we <u>remember</u> only.
> (pp. 8-9)

That division of oneself and the value of memories continue in the second piece, and are motifs which wind through the book. "Third or Fourth Day of Spring," like the first piece, recalls younger days, and amplifies the ending notes of "The Fourteenth Ward," abandoning the romantic, descriptive style of the first piece in favor of a slightly expressionistic manner which contains praise for a quickly fading past and disparagement for the figures from that past. The title highlights the growing awareness of the narrator who has become judgemental and capable of distinguishing things for himself. He is between youth and adulthood, seeing things with the eyes of an adolescent. The mixture of youth and maturity is evident in the narrator's strong emotions as he moves from familial descriptions to inward assessment.

"A Saturday Afternoon" takes place in Paris though, as with the previous pieces, New York is present in the narrator's mind, mainly in the form of school toilets (pp. 41-43). The third piece begins with the following epigraph: "This is better than reading Vergil." (p.31) The "this" is "eating outdoors under an awning for eight francs at Issy-les-Moulineaux" (p.33). Cast in an idyllic mode, this piece is a bicycle tour of the best public urinals in Paris. The epigraph to "Third or Fourth Day of Spring" refers to Trimalchio: "To piss warm and drink cold," (p.17) which would apply nicely to "A Saturday Afternoon." In this

third piece the narrator states: "I am a man who pisses largely and frequently, which they say is a sign of great mental activity." (p.38) What follows is a paean to France's urinals and advice on how to use them, particularly if one wants to read in them. Via scatology Miller indulges in literary criticism, with the hidden implication that criticism is something brought from the toilet to the paper. "All my good reading, you might say, was done in the toilet." (p.42) His "good reading" consists of "Boccaccio, of Rabelais, of Petronius, of The Golden Ass... [and] passages in Ulysses which can be read only in the toilet - if one wants to extract the full flavor of their content." (p.42) Great books do not suffer in such conditions. What gives him diarrhoea are "the Atlantic Monthly... Aldous Huxley, Gertrude Stein, Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Dreiser, etc., etc..." (p.43) The alignment of certain literary works and writers with the toilet is rather humorous, though the subsequent dismissal of some figures would be glib and perhaps betray an unattractive envy on Miller's part were it not for the fact that in the next piece Miller offers his own writing for criticism.

"The Angel is My Watermark" (no epigraph) explains the genesis of Miller's own creations and is an amusing, slightly self-deprecating account of the narrator and his writing process, complementing the literary criticism of "A Saturday Afternoon". Miller's tale is of a painting that

starts out as a horse and finishes as a picture of a volcanic world inhabited by trees, clouds and bedbugs. The ruined painting is then held under a tap, thereby causing the colors to run together and obscure everything but one lone figure, "the bleak blue angel frozen by the glaciers." (p.67) The angel has a symbolic importance for Miller, signifying that beneath works of art, no matter what their worth or purpose, there is a divine being, a creator who is at the core of all matter, whether that matter be organized coherently or not. Separate from the work itself, the angel can be looked upon as a shape (in painting) or as a voice (in writing). For Miller, the angel is his true identity around which is built the tale he is telling. "The Angel is My Watermark" is placed strategically in Black Spring, between the first three pieces which have relatively simple structures and the next six pieces which are much more complex. This transitional piece serves firstly to illustrate the gradual maturation of the narrator, and secondly to point out, in an admittedly oblique fashion, the difficulties that can be encountered when dealing with the preceding pieces. There is a noticeable difference from the beginning of "The Angel is My Watermark" through the rest of the book: indeed, this piece heralds the beginning of a new epoch in Miller's work, "epoch" being used here with the connotation of a turning-point. From "The Angel is My Watermark" on till the conclusion of Black Spring (and, to look forward briefly,

Tropic of Capricorn as well), the narrator's frames of reference become increasingly idiosyncratic, and his thoughts, correspondingly, are expressed in bizarre and surreal forms. "The Angel is My Watermark" balances the 'literary criticism' of "A Saturday Afternoon" with an act of literary creation: additionally, it makes a firm distinction between the first pieces and the bulk of the book, and between familiar forms and technical experimentation. While not a locus for the text, "The Angel is My Watermark," located roughly at the half-way point, is of importance in any analysis of Black Spring. Within the confines of the book it is a watershed piece, providing a point of reference for what has come before and what will follow. Prior to this piece, Miller had worked with more or less conventional patterns; after "The Angel is My Watermark" the work becomes much more adventurous. "The Angel is My Watermark" closes off the conventions of the first pieces and opens up the inventions of the remaining ones.

Similarly, "The Tailor Shop" both picks up and drops the Brooklyn thread from "The Fourteenth Ward" and "Third or Fourth Day of Spring," but with major adjustments in style and emotion. The narrator has moved from idolizing the "real heroes" ("The Fourteenth Ward," p.4) of the street to chronicling death and disease in his family ("Third or Fourth Day of Spring"), a movement from memories suffused with gold to those of bleached colors. The innocent youth

of the first two pieces, through maturity and hints of mortality, has left his luminous childhood behind, and in "The Tailor Shop" Miller recounts his days in Brooklyn, seen not in the excitement at the turn of the century but in the time shortly before the First World War. The narrator is trapped in his father's unsuccessful tailoring business. "The day used to start like this: 'Ask so-and-so for a little something on account but don't insult him!'" (p.71) With home life unpleasant, the narrator's only enjoyment is his attachment to some of the clients and to a few fellow workers, and it may be that their resemblance to his father, who, like them, is in that grey area between existence and failure, prompts his sympathy. The use of broad humor and caricature does not diminish or deny the basic dignity of these people; on the contrary, it brings their personalities into the foreground. For a little while the narrator lets other characters come forward, turning his attention to something outside himself. It is not long before he resumes his attacks on certain relatives, those "other freaks who made up the living family tree." (p.91)

As in the first paragraphs of "Third or Fourth Day of Spring" there follows a litany of diseases, ailments, perversions, vocations - "and finally there was Uncle George and Tante Melia. The morgue and the insane asylum." (p.91) At this point the narrator's feelings, never far from the surface, overcome him, and the piece reflects the strain

caused by various pressures. While it would be wrong to say that his family and their troubles press down tremendously on him, it is fair to state that the narrator is placed in some unpleasant positions due to them. Tante Melia's husband Paul had run off with another woman, and this affected her already slightly unsteady mind: shortly after running off, Paul hanged himself, at which point Tante moved from eccentricity to insanity (p.95). The narrator's uncle, Crazy George, was the product of an incestuous relationship; George's mother was prone to beat him until he started to foam at the mouth and go into fits (p.93). Miller moves from the insanity of the business world to the insanity of family life. The only relief for the narrator is a fairly typical one; on his way to his hated job he pours out his feelings in an unwritten book, an "ancestral book" (p.98), called, with a great deal of appropriateness, Island of Incest (p.98). Until he introduced the family, what had been a humorous piece lacked dramatic edge. Now, with insanity prevalent everywhere, "The Tailor Shop" takes on an entirely different cast. It is sordid and depressing, written mainly in a naturalistic style that omits nothing and leaves one feeling claustrophobic. When the narrator wishes to escape, as in his dream book, the writing immediately becomes surrealistic. References to his family, though always present, hold less power over him once he finds an avenue to freedom. Tante Melia and Crazy George

reappear later in the piece but their treatment is less intense, less painful. Due to the narrator's imaginative escapades they do not oppress him as much, nor does his marriage bother him to the same degree. His very way of thinking, shown symbolically in language and imagery, has undergone great changes, though he will not be free of his environment and his inner restraints for some time yet. "The tragedy of it," says the narrator, "is that nobody sees the look of desperation on my face" (p.111). Since no one is looking at him he will shout. "I'm yowling and screaming - don't you hear me? ... Can you hear me now? Louder! you say. Louder! Christ, are you making sport of me? Are you deaf, dumb, and blind?" (p.112). Of course, no one pays attention because, as he has earlier noted, there are "[t]housands and thousands of us, and we're passing one another without a look of recognition" (p.111). His only recourse is in playing the fool, and by so doing swallowing the pain he feels. It is also a way to attract attention.

Kingsley Widmer, writing on "The Tailor Shop", considers that the "disordered prose"[9] is disproportionate to the situation, since the reason for the narrator's anguish remains "unspecific", although he concludes that the problem is that of "reaching manhood" (p.48). A few sentences later he reiterates that point, concluding that "the emphasis on desperation and rage and outcast state" (p.48) reaches beyond

manhood or hidden guilt. His solution is to define "The Tailor Shop" as a picture of the decline of an entire way of life, the failing tailor shop a microcosm of the decaying world as it heads toward the Great War. Widmer's view can be argued against for a variety of reasons. Miller's piece is not meant to bear the weight of the First World War, nor does it attempt to do so. Such a concern is beyond the narrator's scope, for he is in a particularly stressful situation. There is precious little energy or time for world affairs. Further, Widmer misses something when he calls the prose "disordered" and when he states that Miller switches from the tailoring business and family problems to humor because he is unable "to maintain dramatically intense narrative" (p.47). Widmer overlooks the implications of Miller's juxtaposing family and business. There is no worth for the narrator in a business he considers stifling; his family life is regarded in the same light. Almost all behaviour in this piece verges on the eccentric, and much behaviour is insane. With no relief to be found anywhere it is no surprise that the narrator (who, judging from internal evidence, would be around twenty-three or so) feels intense pressure on him. His anguish, revealed in the fevered prose (which Widmer considers "disordered"), is natural, which is not to suggest that it is healthy or that it is sick. While the narrator occasionally reveals self-pity, it should be kept in mind that many people at that age feel in a similar way; it is

common to feel that whatever problems one has are experienced, in a way, for the first time ever. Such feelings indicate an inevitable egocentricity, complete with the possibility of overstating a case. Widmer, regretfully, censures the young narrator for not being the older author. He does not recognize that the point of this piece is to reveal the narrator's self at a certain time under certain pressures, nor does Widmer seem aware that in Black Spring Miller is re-inventing his former selves in order to give a picture of the author and the narrator. "The Tailor Shop" has as its epigraph, "I've got a motter: always merry and bright! (p.69). Beginning with the sections dealing with Brooklyn there has been a progression from childhood to manhood, innocence to maturity, accompanied by a movement from blind faith and casual acceptance to skepticism and depression.

At this point it may be wise to look at the ground the narrator has covered. An examination of Black Spring up to and including "The Tailor Shop" exposes four distinct threads entwined with each other in several combinations. The first thread consists of Brooklyn and connected memories; the second thread concerns itself with the narrator, much more at ease with himself, in Paris. Through his life in both places he has formed literary and aesthetic principles which make up the third thread. The fourth thread emerges most forcefully in "The Tailor Shop" and is concerned with writing methods. Black Spring started off in a nostalgic,

romantic manner, changing as each piece demanded to include caricature, scatology, broad humor, self-deprecatory humor and naturalism. Surrealism, seldom present in the first three pieces, is frequently used from "The Angel is My Watermark" onwards, and in "The Tailor Shop" functions as a barometer of the narrator's psychological condition. At the end of that piece, one sees the rough portrait of a maturing narrator and a maturing artist. The merging of the 'I' and the author is well on its way to achievement. What remains is the full integration of these two figures in subject matter, presentation, and psychological/philosophical balance and harmony. One need only compare the equilibrium and contentment of the narrator of Tropic of Cancer with the emotional state of the narrator of "The Tailor Shop" in order to see the amount of growth the 'I' has yet to accomplish. Yet, in that piece in Black Spring, the narrator is mapping out directions for his future life. There are attitudes in "The Tailor Shop", either latent in the earlier pieces and finding firm expression in this piece, or else fostered here, which carry through to Tropic of Capricorn (insanity in the family, extreme pressure on the narrator) and are exhibited in Tropic of Cancer (anger at the world in Black Spring becoming rejection of it in Tropic of Cancer). Apart from attitudes, many of the devices used in "The Tailor Shop" - surreal images, scatological language - free the narrative from conventional restraints. As the following

examinations of the remaining pieces will show, the narrator has only just begun to sharpen his talents and explore new realms of discourse, maturing as an artist and in a different manner, as a man. The five pieces left chart further the dual growth of the 'I' in Black Spring.

The next two pieces demonstrate important stylistic development on the part of the author/narrator: "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" and "Into the Night Life ..." require more detailed analysis than the previous five pieces, reflecting as they do literary and psychological concerns, word play and surrealism in the former, dream dictation and symbolism in the latter. The first piece is a portrait of Cronstadt, a relatively minor character who appeared in Tropic of Cancer, while the second deals with a particularly stressing nightmare the narrator had. To begin with the first piece: "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" has the epigraph "This man, this skull, this music..." (p.113), and from this and the title few things can be drawn. Since many of the words used are unfamiliar or obsolete, a dictionary is necessary to help unlock whatever meaning is in the piece. "Jabberwhorl" breaks down into two words: jabber, to speak volubly and with little sense;[10] whorl, ring of leaves or other organs, round stem of plant, one turn of a spiral, dish in spindle steadying its motion. The most fitting, when paired with jabber, is the turn of the spiral, for this piece is about the turning around of words

and speech. The epigraph for the piece is "This man, this skull, this music..." (p.113); Cronstadt is the man and the skull; as for "this music", it could possibly refer to speech as music of a sort, though one would not want t insist on that explanation. The first paragraph helps a great deal in understanding this piece, and meaning must be teased out of it. Here is the first paragraph in total; analysis will follow:

> He lives in the back of a sunken garden, a sort of bosky glade shaded by whiffletrees and spinozas, by deodors and baobabs, a sort of queasy Buxtehude diapered with elytras and feluccas. You pass through a sentry box where the concierge twirls his mustache con furioso like in the last act of Ouida. They live on the third floor behind a mullioned belvedere filigreed with snaffled spaniels and sebaceous wens, with debentures and megrims hanging out to dry. Over the bell-push it says: "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt, poet, musician, herbologist, weatherman, linguist, oceanographer, old clothes, colloids." Under this it reads: "Wipe your feet and blow your nose.'" And under this a rosette from a second-hand suit. (p.115)

One must start denotatively in the unlocking of that passage before 'explaining' it. The sunken garden is wooded or bushy (the meaning of the word "bosky"), shaded by whiffletrees, spinozas, 'deodors' and baobabs. The last two trees on the list do exist; they are a Himalayan cedar and an African tree (sometimes called Monkey-bread) respectively. However, whiffletrees do not exist, and a 'spinoza' is not a tree but rather a person, Baruch Spinoza, the Jewish

philosopher. The import of Miller's use of Spinoza cannot be ascertained, and it may not have much significance at all; what can be stated is that there are present correspondences of some significance in the use of that figure, elevating his presence from a sheer whimsy to something more. In Tropic of Cancer Spinoza is a touchstone for Cronstadt and his friend Boris, the latter's feet occasionally touching his works as they "graze the bookrack" (p.152). Spinoza is paired with Jews early on in Tropic of Cancer:

> For the Jew the world is a cage filled with wild beasts. The door is locked and he is there without whip or revolver...The cage, he thinks, is the world. Standing there alone and helpless, the door locked, he finds that the lions do not understand his language. Not one lion has ever heard of Spinoza. Spinoza? Why they can't even get their teeth into him. "Give us meat!" they roar, while he stands there petrified, his ideas frozen, his Weltanschauung a trapeze out of reach. A single blow of the lion's paw and his cosmogony is smashed. (pp. 8-9)

Despite the use of Spinoza in Tropic of Cancer and in this piece, one cannot necessarily discern a meaning. While there are similarities between the use of Spinoza in Tropic of Cancer and in "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt", they should not be invested with undue significance. At most one can say that the use of a particular philosopher as a tree creates a comic atmosphere.

Three words follow which need explanation: Buxtehude,

elytras and feluccas. The first is the name of a musician and a composer of church organ music.[11] Elytras and feluccas, a 'matched' set, are quite dissimilar. An elytra is two things: the outer hard wing case of coleopterous insects; and the vagina. Felucca is the name given to a small Mediterranean coasting vessel. The rest of the words are more easily decipherable, with intriguing connotations. "Jabberwhorl" brings to mind Lewis Carroll's poem "Jabberwocky" from Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There (1871), with obscure, nonsensical and everyday words bound together. In "Jabberwock," one finds a companion word to Miller's "whiffletree". Whiffle means to blow lightly and to shift about in varying directions. "Came whiffling through the tulgey wood"[12] (p.191) writes Carroll in the fourth stanza of his poem. In both cases it is not just the words that are odd but the images which are skewed away from reality.

Miller's 'tale' - and it may fairly be called that - operates on the same level as Carroll's, as an exercise in playfulness and an extension of a certain line that does not end with Carroll. As Martin Gardner writes, the

> nonsense poet does not have to search for ingenious ways of combining pattern and sense...The words he uses may suggest vague meanings...or they may have no meaning at all - just a play of pleasant sounds like the play of non-objective colors on a canvas.(p.192, n.11)

The word-play includes the names of the characters.

Apart from Cronstadt and his wife, Jill, there are three German refugees serving as handmaids, Katya, Elsa and Anna. Cronstadt's and Jill's son is named Pinochinni, and their cats are named Jocatha, Lahore, Mysore and Cawnpore.[13] In addition, there are two voices on the telephone and two voices from the garden, Mowgli[14] and his unnamed wife, plus the narrator (unnamed and male), and his friend Dschilly Zilah Bey. After the introduction of Cronstadt himself, more word-play follows, as in the following passage which must be looked at denotatively first. On Cronstadt's mantelpiece is a cigarette-rolling machine, under which lie

> notes written on menus, calling cards, toilet paper, match boxes ... "meet the Cuntess Cathcart at four" ... "the opalescent mucus of Michelet" ... "defluxions ... cotyledons ... phthisical" ... "if Easter falls in Lady Day's lap, beware old England of the clap" ... "from the ichor of which springs his successor" ... "the reindeer, the otter, the marmink, the minkfrog." (p.116)

The 'notes' deal with secretions, most obviously in the references to the vaginal fluid of the Cuntess and the mucus of Michelet, less obviously in other parts of the paragraph. Defluxion means a flowing off or running down, or as a second meaning, catarrh. Cotyledons have a botanical-horticultural meaning; they are cup-shaped cavities, a type of plant and the embryo of phanerogams. For a moment the secretions and discharges are stopped. Vaginal fluid, mucus, discharge and cavity complete a cycle

which may be interpreted as a sexual cycle; phthisical, a progressive wasting disease, combines with "clap", making for a strong cumulative effect. (Lady Day, March 25th, is the feast of the Annunciation. Easter falling on that day would be very early. It is an infrequent occurrence.) "Ichor", while it does have a connection with the fluid flowing in the veins of the gods, has a secondary meaning - a watery, acrid discharge from wounds. From the beginning of this passage, then, there has been a stress on body fluids. One set of associations has been discovered; a second set starts with a wasting disease, continues with sexual diseases and concludes with discharge, associated with immortality and with death. While there may be objections to this interpretation, there can be little doubt that there is a stream of association operating here, the words chosen deliberately. The movement from vagina to illness suggested by this elliptical paragraph cannot be overlooked.

When Cronstadt appears he does so theatrically, like an actor in mid-sentence, saying,

> what time is it though time is a word he has stricken from his list, time, sib to death. Death's the surd and time's the sib and now there is a little time between the acts... Time, time, he says, ... A time for everything, though I scarcely use the word any more... (p.117)

"Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" turns into a virtual monologue upon his entrance, Cronstadt lecturing on newspapers and

poems (p.118-119), haggling over real estate (p.119), and talking about his three German refugees. At one point he stops and addresses his guests about the present:

> "The present? There's no such thing as the present. There's a word called Time, but nobody is able to define it. There's a past and there's a future, and Time runs through it like an electric current. The present is an imaginary condition, a dream state...an oxymoron." (p.120)

Shortly after that he says:

> "You want to know what the present is? Look at that window over there. No, not there...the one above. There! Every day they sit there at that table playing cards - just the two of them. She's always got on a red dress. And he's always shuffling the cards. That's the present." (p.121)

Cronstadt, despite his 'disregard' for time, is obsessed by it. He has a mirror figure in the Mad Hatter from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865), who had had a fight with Time at a concert presided over by the Queen of Hearts. "'And ever since that...," complains the Mad Hatter, "[Time] won't do a thing I ask!'" (p.99).

Carroll's work is mirrored in "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" when the major character points out the girl in the red dress and the man shuffling cards, Alice and Carroll themselves. A further instance is the goose dinner Cronstadt and Jill have prepared for their guests, a dinner that is slow to appear. Jill, rather annoyed at the tardiness of the German girls who are serving the meal, is about to check on them when Cronstadt stops her: "'Never

mind the goose, darling! This is a game. We're going to sit here and outlast 'em. The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday - but never jam today...'" (p.125). Needless to say, Cronstadt and the others never see their goose dinner. Such a situation closely resembles Alice's predicament in Through the Looking-Glass. In that book, the Red Queen introduces Alice to the mutton. Etiquette, insists the Queen, prevents one from eating anything one has been introduced to:

> "I won't be introduced to the pudding, please," Alice said rather hastily, "or we shall get no dinner at all. May I give you some?"
>
> But the Red Queen looked sulky, and growled "Pudding - Alice: Alice - pudding. Remove the pudding!" and the waiters took it away so quickly that Alice couldn't return its bow. (p.331)

The result is that Alice never gets to eat. There are definite similarities between the scene in Carroll's book and the scene in Miller's tale.

Cronstadt's drinking of cognac throughout the piece has by now made him quite inebriated. His monologue has shifted from dinner to a description of the next Ice Age, demonstrating his abilities as a weatherman as the card under his bell-push said. He has already been a poet (at his entrance), musician (capable of playing a tremolo on the piano), herbologist (the taking of cayenne pepper throughout echoing Alice's adventures in the Duchess' kitchen), and linguist (he endows words with new meanings and

gives them away throughout much as Humpty Dumpty does). All that is left for Cronstadt to be is oceanographer, and this is taken care of when he improvises a prose poem about "'two faucets, one called Froid and the other Chaud'" (p.127), which goes on for two pages and ends only when Cronstadt collapses.

The Carrollian atmosphere is evident in "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" in the parallel use of poetry, cards, and chess pieces, all of which occur in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There. Miller's piece is playful, humorously using Carroll's works as convenient jumping-off points for his own love of exotic and nonsense words. "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" is a blending of Carroll and Miller, with a touch of Joyce at the end when Cronstadt's prose poem departs from Carroll's undeniably conventional narrative to the freer-flowing language and experimental forms of Joyce's works. Style is more important here than content: to paraphrase the Duchess in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (p.121), Miller takes care of the sound and lets the sense talk of itself. "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" is a flexing of lexical and stylistic muscles, a display of free association seen throughout Miller's works.

As "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" is post-Carrollian and interested in word experimentation, "Into the Night Life..." is post-Freudian and concerned with the unconscious mind of

the narrator as revealed in his dreams. "Into the Night Life..." is one long dream, or rather, nightmare, that utilizes violent imagery, loose association of memories and quick transitions from one section to another in a manner redolent of surrealist techniques. The major value of this piece is its experimentation, both the author and the narrator advancing in their respective fashions, author-Miller breaking new ground and foreshadowing the brutality of later writers (such as William Burroughs), narrator-Miller exploring his own anxieties and memories. The piece begins with a truly masterful epigraph (later used by Lawrence Ferlinghetti as a title for one of his books), "A Coney Island of the Mind" (p.131). What follows is much like a carnival in content and presentation, a very grim and macabre 'amusement' ride, beginning in a house of horrors that features cobras issuing from a hag's mouth, eyes, hair and vagina (p.134). The snake woman disappears (though she is reincarnated several times), replaced by a man who jabs the dreamer with a stick, causing him pain (p.134). There are two undercurrents carrying through this feverish dream: the hag/woman/animal (see pp. 136, 138, 143 for examples of the latter) who continually provokes resentment and fear in the narrator; and the related fear of castration (see pp. 133, 134, 138, 143 for examples).

The dreamer moves from a delirium of male castration to a state in which his fears are parallelled in an operation

on his child, an operation which involves the exploration of a wound in the young girl's temple and the subsequent sealing of that wound. The penetration of the wound by the surgeon's "long, delicate instrument with a red-hot point" (p.145) causes agony for the girl, making her scream. Yet, the second time the "blade" (p.145) is used the "wound bursts into flames" (p.145) with the child suffering no distress. Her parents react in different ways: the mother faints after the first incision while the father attacks the doctor only after the second incision, one which caused no pain. It is difficult not to view the doctor's first probe of the girl's wound as a painful deflowering and the second probe as an enjoyable one. The sealing of the wound, from the father's point of view, is far more horrible than the probing. Looked at in one way, it may be that the child's wound and blood are representative of vagina and menstrual flow, both rendered non-functional through a radical hysterectomy. The dreamer does not analyze the contents of that particular section of his dream - he simply kills the doctor and rushes out of the office. After that gruesome scene, the dream shifts to a neighborhood the dreamer lived in when he was a child. He finds that it has been transformed into a street of the living dead. From here to the end of the piece the dreamer ranges over a variety of topics, waking from this turbulent dream into feverish prose:

> Bloody and wild the night with all hawk's feet slashed and trimmed. Bloody and wild the night with all the belfries screeching

> and all the slats torn and all the gas mains bursting. Bloody and wild the night with every muscle twisted, the toes crossed, the hair on end, the teeth red, the spine cracked. All the world awake twittering like the dawn, and a low red fire crawling over the gums. All through the night the combs break, the ribs sing...
>
> Out of the black chaos whorls of light with portholes jammed. Out of the static null and void a ceaseless equilibrium. Out of whalebone and gunnysack this mad thing called sleep that runs like an eight-day clock. (p.158)

While the evocativeness of that passage cannot be denied, one must point out that its strengths are not indicative of "Into the Night Life...", and indeed the passage foreshadows the next piece far better than it concludes the piece it is in. Unfortunately, the dream is not adequately developed, and what is promised by the title and epigraph is not delivered. Coney Island, a place rich in suggestiveness as a symbol of dream-life, is used in only a few places, leaving its thematic potential untapped. In that respect, many things are neglected, with images that looked to be unique handled in such a way that they become mundane, stock images (women, snakes, beasts) and anxieties (castration, death) outnumbering original insights. Despite those negative things, there is a worth to this piece, found predominantly in the display of surrealist dream-technique - that is, using what comes to the mind in sleep and turning it into material. "Into the Night Life..." attempts to recount a dream exactly as it occurred, with the same logic

that a dream possesses. Of course, there are signs of modification in the piece, perhaps the combining of several dreams, so the closest it comes to being a dream is being dream-like. There is a purpose here that is non-literary and may in fact be more important than any literary critique of the piece. Bringing his dreams out into the light can help author-Miller expose aspects of himself which would otherwise remain hidden or obscure. "There are huge blocks of my life which are gone forever. Huge blocks gone, scattered, wasted in talk, action, reminiscence, dream" (p.25); this dream then is a reclaiming of part of the narrator's life, a selection of worries and memories. As well, this piece is deliberately composed in a mode more cinematic than verbal. As such a piece, it brings to mind the films of Bunuel rather than literary works. "Into the Night Life...", while not as well-crafted a piece as others in Black Spring, demonstrates Miller's increasing desire and ability to express himself in untraditional forms. His experimentation with nightmarish fantasies can be seen in both Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn; as for Black Spring, "Into the Night Life..." utilizes most noticeably the unconscious and the dream world. The next piece, following naturally from the last words of "Into the Night Life...", does so too.

"Walking Up and Down in China", a nightmarish version of the waking world, begins with an enigmatic epigraph,

"Now I am never alone. At the very least I am with God!" (p.159), a statement that gradually gathers and releases meaning. Situated in Paris, the narrator feels rejuvenated now that America is behind him. He feels "like a man who awakes from a long sleep to find that he is dreaming. A pre-natal condition - the born man living unborn, the unborn man dying born" (p.161). Regeneration happens constantly: at any moment the narrator may find traces of his former life. Because of this continual death and rebirth, he is closer to God, as the epigraph says. However, no sooner has the resurrection theme been announced than it is abandoned. The narrator, musing as he walks, suddenly thinks of his home, which is in the midst of demolition.

> My house is like a human body with the skin peeled off. The wallpaper hangs in tatters, the bedsteads have no mattresses, the sinks are gone. Every night before entering the house I stand and look at it. The horror of it fascinates me. After all, why not a little horror? Every living man adds a new wing to the museum... And so, each night, standing before the house in which I live, the house which is being torn down, I try to grasp the meaning of it. The more the insides are exposed the more I get to love my house. (pp. 163-164)

That passage operates on several levels, the first solely concerned with the narrator's living conditions: on the second, it is a foreshadowing of a 'renovation' of Paris, to speak euphemistically, soon to take place in the narrator's mind: finally, it reveals the state of the narrator. He is

stripped of protective covering as the house is stripped of exterior walls. He is in the fragile state of deconstruction with no reconstruction in sight, even though the first pages suggest that he is a whole person. "Walking Up and Down in China" opens in homelitic fashion, the narrator evangelizing about the "whole world, known and unknown" that is "screaming in pain and madness" (p.167). The only way to stop the prophesied destruction is if "every one, man, beast, plant, mineral, rock, river, tree and mountain wills it" (p.168). Clearly envisaged in the early pages of this piece is Armageddon, which is not simply the fate of this world but of all the universes. As with many visions of impending catastrophe Miller has, there is a spiritual ecstasy present, an ecstasy soon followed by deep depression. In a few sentences the narrator loses the confidence and the frail faith that sustained him. His 'prophetic' stance arises from desperation and not conviction. There is a gibbering sound in the narrator's voice, the sound of someone trying to believe in something in order not to break down from despair.

Out for what is termed a "grand obsessional walk" (p.169) the narrator, like Dante's Virgil, begins a journey through Hades. "I and myself firmly glued together" (p.169) says the narrator, in a statement that is as much of a delusion as his earlier convictions. "I and myself," for there is no God with him now. He ascends the hill of

Montmartre, "St. Anthony on one side of me, Beelzebub on the other" (p.170), and looks over the scene below him: Paris, a great sensual city, "rubbing her belly...smacking her lips...whetting her palate" (p.170), a city that enjoys debaucheries and revelries in its nightclubs and brothels, a Paris that is a body "moving always in its ambiance - a great dynamic procession, like the temple friezes of Egypt, like the Etruscan legend, like the morning of the glory of Crete" (p.170).

Countering that pagan landscape is the Sacre Coeur, its whiteness and religiosity rising "like a still white dream" (p.171), yet it is not a symbol of salvation:

> A late afternoon and the heavy whiteness is stifling. A heavy somnolent whiteness, like the belly of a jaded woman. Back and forth the blood ebbs, the contours rounded with soft light, the huge billowy cupolas taut as savage teats. (p.171)

There is no peace or sanctuary in such a place: the martyrs are in agony and the "whole bulging edifice with its white elephant skin and heavy stone breasts bears down on Paris with a Moorish fatalism" (p.171). The fatalism the narrator feels when he sees the Sacre Coeur matches the night sky, a sky "red as hell-fire, and from Clichy to Barbes a fretwork of open tombs. The soft Paris night, like the ladder of toothless gums, and the ghouls grinning between the rungs" (p.171). On this night, on the high hill of Montmartre, "the great stone horses champ noiselessly"

(p.171). The imagery used throughout transforms the Sacre Coeur from Mother Church to Whore of Babylon, with the stone horses symbolic of the four horses of the Apocalypse. For the narrator, the world is too dangerous to live in, and so he seeks refuge in the womb of a whale, joining others there as they try to escape the destruction soon to come. The narrator finds that there is no escape from the "pounding of iron hoofs... [and] the roar of hollow shells" (p.172). Man is riding the horses of the Apocalypse "in steady procession, with red eyeballs and fiery manes. Spring is coming in the night... on the wings of mares, their manes flying, their nostrils smoking" (p.172). The 'spring' is not a green one but a black one.

While devils play and horses approach, men and women fight in the street. The narrator sees his own body (or so he presumes it to be) lying dead in the road, and wonders if he is dead or sleeping or awake. "<u>If I am not dreaming then I am insane</u>" (p.174), he thinks, shying away from that thought by supposing it is possible to leave the body in death, to have "a soul unattached, indifferent to everything, a soul immortal, perhaps incorruptible, like God - who can say?" (p.174). The death-resurrection theme left off earlier is resumed, though it is cast under some suspicion. In the beginning of this piece the narrator was a man filled with certainty about many things, a certainty which proved boundless. He articulated the same notion then. It now

has the appearance of a desperate need for belief, something to counter the possibility that he may be undergoing a breakdown of sorts; it is the only type of immortality which the narrator can believe in.

Those and other thoughts are in the narrator's mind as he and Carl (familiar from Tropic of Cancer) prepare a modest dinner and talk about the first world war: "We are sitting in Clichy and it is long after the war. But there's another war coming and it's there in the darkness..." (p.181). The conversation has made them think about the past and the possibility that there will be no future. Men will kill each other off and then the animals will go one by one, leaving only a "soft, brooding darkness, an inaudible flapping of wings" (p.182).

"Walking Up and Down in China" is an essential part of Black Spring stylistically and philosophically. For the narrator, this piece is a significant progression from his usual personal concerns to a mature world view; for the author, this piece is the first one in the book that is totally apocalyptic, not anarchic or destructive. Moving from a personal basis at the beginning with his own self vulnerable and in disarray to a vision of the world in much the same condition, Miller shows an awareness of world problems; through a solid grounding in his own fears and anxieties he has managed to make his sensations and impressions universal. "Walking Up and Down in China" is

written in response to enormous fears for himself and humanity, a piece inspired by tensions in Europe. At the same time Miller is practicing his literary skills in his use of the prophetic voice, a voice found in the works of Dante, Blake and other visionaries. Although the imagery is unique, in some ways the material is not. Using Dante and Paris, Miller shapes his thoughts in such a way as to fit in with an established genre yet at the same time remain innovative. The familiar imagery is treated in a unique fashion. The verbal dexterity, powerful imagery and contemporary sensibility are Miller's own. The quiet section at the end returns from an apocalyptic world-view to the personal world in a simple and penetrating manner, with the human acts of eating and conversing; Miller knows that civilized acts gain in significance when momentous events threaten their existence.

"Walking Up and Down in China", an extremely vivid piece, contrasts sharply with the next, "Burlesk", where the narrator's skills ebb noticeably. Working the American note once again, Miller attempts, through raucous humor, to make a statement on his homeland, yet he is unable finally to treat the broad fabric of American life with such broad humor. The epigraph barely resonates: "Now works the calmness of Scheveningen like an anesthetic" (p.183), Scheveningen being a popular seaside resort in the Netherlands, and so quite a contrast to New York. "Burlesk"

jumps erratically from a Christian fundamentalist prayer meeting to a night at the National Winter Garden to a burlesque show; it is only after these jaunts that the narrator settles down to indicting America's belief in "the Burroughs Adding Machine" (p.190) and the promise The Stars and Stripes holds out to all. Faith for most Americans, believes the narrator, rests in money, the country (as symbolized by the flag) and its material resources. There are clams and chop suey, the Great White Way and "gutters running with champagne" (p.192), radios and fantastic medical advancements. "You can have anything you want for the asking" (p.192), and the reason for this is obvious: "Because America is the grandest country God ever made and if you don't like this country you can get the hell out of it and go back where you came from" (p.192). America is a show that runs twenty-four hours a day, a show with sliding pictures, music, sand, the "fastest, cleanest show on earth. So fast, so clean, it makes you desperate and lonely" (p.193). The narrator, caught in this environment, wants contact and achieves it with an anonymous woman at a performance of Wagner's Parsifal. Squeezed together they are "joined in heavenly bliss" (p.194), a bliss "nearer to Boccaccio than to Dante" (p.194).

That allusion to Boccaccio is indicative of the spirit of the next few pages, concerned as they are with the narrator and two friends, Bill Woodruff and Stanley Borowski

(two figures who will appear in later works). Three separate tales told in the spirit of the Decameron are related, the first dealing with a man and his wife, the second reintroducing Tante Melia, and the third about burial. The husband and wife tale involves bribery, supposed frigidness, cuckoldry, sadism and revenge. The narrator's tale is about his visits to Tante Melia at the asylum. His mother would put a bottle of kummel in the picnic box for her, which the narrator invariably drank himself. The mother would, on her visits, ask the aunt how she liked the kummel, to which she would respond that she never had any; yet who could believe a woman in an asylum. As for Stanley and his burial duties for his undertaker father, he would simply dispose of the still-born children by throwing the bodies off a ferry boat, or else by dropping them down a sewer. The medically-inclined would sometimes buy the corpses, for "a still-birth" could be sold "for as high as ten dollars" (p.197). Told in the styles of de Sade and Boccaccio, those incidents bring relief to the narrator, as does the creation of a sequel to The Island of Incest (p.98) entitled A Prolegomenon to the Unconscious (p.1[illegible]), which the narrator discusses at some length in tones of mock seriousness, a pastiche of academic scholarship and literary criticism mixed with metaphysics, pseudo-scientific formulations and astrology. The piece ends with Praxus[15], who may or may not stand for the narrator, shedding his skin.

As he becomes less human and more spiritual, illusions held will disappear. One may read the last paragraph of "Burlesk" as a deliberately obscure self-portrait of the narrator. The picture reveals a new being, one adapted to the world as it will be after the coming war. Following that devastation and the dismantling of the world's armaments, everything will be in readiness for such a figure, including "a new heaven and a new earth. Man will be given absolution. Filed under A for anagogic." (p.200).

Unfortunately, most of "Burlesk" is chaotic and unfocused; the major problem is that what begins as a splenetic diatribe against American values changes to a series of stories concerning the narrator and his friends, and ends in an explication of an imaginary book. As for style, what begins as bombast changes to ribaldry and then to satire. Nothing is sustained long enough for there to be any effectiveness in this piece; apart from pointing out links between symbols and the like, the most one can conclude is that the picture of the narrator at the end, as a Praxus in the making, is a cloudy self-portrait of an astrological/ mystical kind, another definition of self, though more inaccessible than others presented in this book. The hazy impression one gets of the narrator in "Burlesk" is certainly directly opposite to the sharp focus on him provided in the next and final piece, "Megalopolitan Maniac".

The epigraph to "Megalopolitan Maniac", recalls the

amniotic fluid of "Burlesk", and the search throughout this book for the way back to the womb.

> Imagine having nothing on your hands but your destiny. You sit on the doorstep of your mother's womb and you kill time - or time kills you. You sit there chanting the doxology of things beyond your grasp. Outside. Forever outside. (p.201)

"Outside" means loneliness for the narrator: the first step taken after birth is towards death. The piece begins with the idea that the unnamed city (though one presumes, given the time of this piece and the tone of other pieces, that the city is New York) is a large coffin, filled with people dying by themselves, unaware or preferring not to recognize a bond which connects them, the name of God, "God burning like a star in the firmament of the human consciousness..." (p.203). People who profess to work in God's name ignore him, supposedly doing charitable acts yet not truly interested in helping the human race advance. In the city the lonely man builds with his own hands "the last stronghold, the webbed citadel of God..." (p.204). "Megalopolitan Maniac" is essentially about the narrator and his search for a way to heaven or "home" (p.204); one can conclude that his idea of God and Heaven is that of life-sustainer or womb. While most people live in a "perpetual seance," (p.205) where all that counts is the amount of goods produced every day, the narrator lives in a state of transcendence, far above the cares and interests of the material world.

"I study your peace programs which will end in a hail of bullets" (p.207) he says, seeing that the acts done in the name of God throughout history have ended in bloodshed. He sees "the tallest buildings...[the launching of] the biggest battleships...[and the ability to] kill millions of men at once by just pressing a button" (p.207), all done in the name of God, and so a travesty of the song of love as heard "in the manger by the three wise men from the East" (p.207). The God known to most men is a "maneater" (p.207), an unholy creation which abuses the real meaning of His words. Opposite that simulacrum of God is the real God who will supply "a love so great that beside it the mightiest dynamo is but a mosquito buzzing" (p.207). To get close to this God, who exists in everyone, the narrator removes himself from the world and its affairs in order to contemplate his new found peace:

> But tonight I would like to think of one man, a man without name or country, a man whom I respect because he has absolutely nothing in common with you. MYSELF. Tonight I shall meditate upon that which I am. (p.208)

After a great deal of struggle the narrator has managed to make the first steps to self-definition. The end of the book (though not its chronological end) is a resounding affirmation of the primacy of self, an awareness of uniqueness and separateness from the rest of humanity. Though it displays a tendency toward hyperbole, and lapses too often into prosaic speech, "Megalopolitan Maniac" is an

effective way of closing this book because it works with two dominant themes - individuality and detachment - that have surfaced throughout Black Spring and which begin the 'successor', Tropic of Cancer. This last piece might serve as an effective and thematically correct prelude to Miller's first book and indeed all the pieces have links (through style and content) with that earlier work.

Since Black Spring is not arranged chronologically, the last remarks of "Megalopolitan Maniac" come before the despair in Paris (as seen in "Walking Up and Down in China"). Nonetheless, the mood at the end is similar to the mood at the beginning of Tropic of Cancer just as the attempt to find peace of mind has some of the same attributes as peace of mind itself. "Megalopolitan Maniac" ends in a way that makes perfect sense thematically. The book begins with treasured memories of New York and concludes with a renunciation of that city. If the pieces were arranged sequentially the last piece would stick out and conflict with the preceding pieces. Events are ordered nonsequentially so that the narrator can display his artistic and philosophical development. Whereas Tropic of Cancer exhibits proof of growth, Black Spring concerns itself with metamorphoses, the artist maturing while fighting his environment, his friends and his own nature; it is a chronicling of struggles against traditional forms of expression and the search for new ways to speak of new

things. It is by definition or categorization a kunstler-roman, much like Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Through the experimentation of "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" and "Into the Night Life...", and by the use of obscenity, profanity, surrealism and apocalyptic imagery, Black Spring emerges as a more daring work in some ways than Tropic of Cancer. The various pieces comprising Black Spring can be viewed in the context of the entire work and can be detached easily from the rest of the book. With Black Spring, every section is distinct from others, concerned as each is with a prescribed topic and a selected form of presentation. As a result, "Walking Up and Down in China" is a more compelling apocalyptic vision than comparable sections in Tropic of Cancer. The author's concentration on the piece gives it a relentless quality which is pure of any contaminants (sealed off as it is from other pieces) and that allows the narrator's mood to be precisely depicted, not the case in Tropic of Cancer where apocalyptic visions can be bracketed by philosophical disquisitions and scatological humor. "Into the Night Life...", which one critic hailed as "a nightmare of dissolution, of cruel, morbid, and derisive images that anticipate the work of William Burroughs by three decades"[16], benefits from Miller's concentration as well. Those pieces, and a few others, clearly show the author at work, while some ("The Fourteenth Ward", "The Tailor Shop") provide

clues to the narrator's life.

Ihab Hassan's criticism (quoted earlier) of Black Spring as a "mixed bag" of things, overlooks that dual aspect of Black Spring. Though treated unequally, the narrator's life and the artist's life give cohesion to this book. Miller found it unnecessary to trace the narrator from his birth to the point at which he could write the book Black Spring. Such a traditional treatment of what is, in essence, familiar material, would have gone against Miller's purpose, for he is interested in playing with conventional forms of literature. In Black Spring each piece appears separate and unlinked to other pieces; the book's layout - blank pages, title pages, epigraphs - and the use of disjointed chronology and stylistic variation add to the seemingly 'fractured' nature of the book. If the ten pieces had been bridged with additional material, and the placement of each piece left undisturbed, the result would have been a thematically unfocussed book. There would have been no revealing dissection of the narrator into 'slices' because the form would not allow it. As the pieces rest now, however, the narrator is exposed section by section, and each piece draws attention to first one and then another aspect of the narrator. Miller disrupts the conventional pattern of charting the protagonist's evolution, giving some indication of important concerns or attitudes yet making any arrangement of the contents by the reader the result of

close reading and study of the book, without which Black Spring remains a confusing rather than complex work. Even when one rearranges the material and aligns the 'slices' with each other, discrepancies are noticeable. No complete picture of the narrator (whose name is whimsically given as Miguel Feoder Francois Wolfgang Valentine Miller[17], p.36) has been presented: his wife is seldom mentioned (pp. 88-91, 145-146), his departure from America to France left a mystery - in short, he does not recount many events from his life, preferring to detail select occurrences. However, when one compares Miller's portrait of the maturing artist with that of the maturing narrator one immediately sees that while the latter is sketchy the former is quite developed. One should view the story of the narrator's life as essential in itself, as crucial to an understanding of the figure behind Black Spring. The intertwining of the narrator's life with the artist's causes the book to be the study of a man rather than the sketch of an artist. To establish that both artist and narrator must unite to form man, Miller needed a correct form, one which provided room for both to develop. Black Spring, with a formal thematic cohesiveness belied by Miller's erratic writing, dismantles the traditional structure of the kunstlerroman and rebuilds it using newer materials. It also offers a pre-natal view of the author of Tropic of Cancer, with occasional glimpses of Parisian days that have an entirely

different emotional feel to them than the pieces concerned with New York days. The childhood and manhood of the narrator in Black Spring is explored more thoroughly in Miller's next major work.

III

Tropic of Capricorn (1939) concentrates on the period when Miller met Mara ("Mona" of Tropic of Cancer), though there are many extended flashbacks to Miller's childhood and adolescence, as well as lengthy passages that focus on Miller long after he and Mona have gone their separate ways. No straight forward description of the plotline could reflect the chronological ordering and thematic structuring of the book. Dispensing once again with sequential presentation of the contents, Miller instead utilizes four chronological systems (or time-frames) and an extra-temporal state for his material. While the role time plays in Miller's work is not the subject of this thesis, it is important to examine how he treats time due to the light it casts on the identity of the narrator.

The various time-frames used in Tropic of Capricorn are: the past (childhood through adulthood); the historical present (the time span of the book, 1920-1924); the actual present (1938-1939); and the future (intimations of which happen throughout the other time-frames). Alongside those

chronological systems is an extra-temporal dimension, a kind of reverie which parallels external action. Composed of surrealistic visions and ruminations, that state is the lunar side of the narrator's daytime activities, forming with them the narrator's world. Black Spring, it will be recalled, has exactly those same shifts in time. While in both works the shifts are abrupt, in Tropic of Capricorn the thematic pattern (of which more later) adheres closely to the numerous time-frames.

Each temporal state (and the extra-temporal as well) serves one major purpose and contributes to an overall concern of the book. All meet at a focal point, the same episode which contains one of the prime reasons why the narrator is the way he is and why Miller must write. His initial meeting with Mara, a climactic event, occurs twice, once at the end of a long reverie which reveals pieces of the future (p.208) and once in the historical present (p.340). The first meeting is preceded by "The Land of Fuck" (pp. 181-208) which closes as follows:

> All this by way of saying that in going through the revolving door of the Amarillo Dance Hall one night, some twelve or fourteen years ago, the great event took place. The interlude which I think of as the Land of Fuck, a realm of time more than space, is for me that Purgatory which Dante has described in nice detail. 18

The dance hall is where Mara works: sequentially, she should appear next. She does not. What follows is a further

delving into the past prior to Mara and the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company. At the book's end the meeting is re-enacted, not without a fair share of preambulatory remarks. "For years now," writes the narrator, "I have been trying to tell this story" (p.334), every trial unsuccessful. After some digressions he returns to the central episode of the book and of the narrator's life, which is also a return to the narrative line, a line heralded with the dedication of Tropic of Capricorn ("To Her" - p.5), and continued by the epigraph (p.7) from another unlucky lover, Peter Abelard (whose Heloise is unlike Mara). It is already known, well before their meeting, that Miller and Mara have met (p.199), or will meet (pp. 13, 64) that they will live together (pp. 230-247) and that their relationship is long over (pp. 333-334, 339-340). She has appeared in the actual present (1938, due to the narrator's thoughts about her), the future (scenes of her and Miller together before they have actually met), and in reverie. All that remains is the historical present which is related from the vantage point of over a dozen years. With the final disclosure of the circumstances of their meeting (pp. 339-348), the actual present becomes the historical present; the tense changes from present to past to present. In the retelling there is considerable hesitancy: "For years now I have been trying to tell this story; each time I have started out I have chosen a different route... I wander aimlessly, trying to gain a

solid, unshakeable foothold whence I can command a view of my life..." (pp. 334-335). His telling of their meeting concludes the courtship phase of their romance, a romance resumed in The Rosy Crucifixion, marrying that trilogy and Tropic of Capricorn under the rubric "autobiographical romance".[19]

The temporal centre of Tropic of Capricorn is the meeting between the narrator and the woman he will be obsessed by forever. On technical grounds it succeeds in bringing together in one pivotal scene the numerous time-frames and provides the reason for their use. Without common ground, such a device would be pointless. However, the narrator's future and past radiate from this episode; there is an interdependency here that goes beyond technical strategies. A time span that encompasses 1900-1938 (roughly) needs a thematic centre. Neither Tropic of Cancer nor Black Spring has a key event around which the book revolves. Finding a key to link the five states in Tropic of Capricorn required an escalation in Miller's abilities. The event that would change his life completely acts as a hub for temporal and thematic concerns, both gaining strength from them and lending power to their use. This book, about the problem of writing this book, ranges over Miller's life, forcing him to diversify his thoughts more than he had done in the past. Sexual escapades, endless memories and odd or disturbed characters have greater significance than a first

reading will reveal; Tropic of Capricorn is a much more plotted book than his earlier ones.

The narrator's raison d'etre can be found in the same place as the thematic and temporal centres. Before meeting Mara, he was dissatisfied with his marriage, his work and his life. Dissatisfaction is an emotion which permeates the book; the self-confident narrator of Tropic of Cancer is noticeably absent from this book, which starts with these lines:

> Once you have given up the ghost everything follows with dead certainty, even in the midst of chaos... Even as a child, when I lacked for nothing, I wanted to die: I wanted to surrender because I saw no sense in struggling. I felt that nothing would be proved, substantiated, added or subtracted by continuing an existence which I had not asked for. (p.9)

His life is marked by passivity and submission to any force. Tracing his lack of self-motivation to his Nordic ancestors, he writes that they were "[r]estless spirits, but not adventurous ones. Agonizing spirits, incapable of living in the present. Disgraceful cowards, all of them, myself included. For there is only one great adventure and that is inward toward the self..." (pp. 11-12). Tropic of Capricorn is a journey inward and a retracing of a path already chosen. For the narrator, concerned with finding reasons for his behaviour, answers lie in events and recurring images and themes (for example, ovarian symbolism, Miller as Christ

figure); for the critic, meaning resides in the narrator's character.

For the most part, the narrator behaves in a manner totally unlike his incarnations in previous books. He is a bitter and frustrated man, an apathetic protagonist who hates the unwanted responsibilities of a family (both wife and daughter go unnamed) and his job as employment manager at the "Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company of North America" (p.16). That position, lasting from 1920-1924 (approximately), the historical present of the book, enables him to see what life is like close to the bottom of the economic ladder, a unique observation post that sharpens and confirms his worst feelings about America. The job provides him with intimate knowledge of the brutality of the business world and the civil warfare that goes on in that world. "I had dug myself into the first-line trench and I was getting it from all directions," (p.20) he writes. "The new messengers were going over the top and getting machine-gunned; the old ones were digging in deeper and deeper, like rats in a cheese" (p.24). The war imagery in peace time is ironic considering that the war-to-end-all wars had just been fought. Instead of post-war relief the narrator sees only decadence and materialism; America, he judges, is a country falling into ruin, a continent "on the slide" (p.41), an opinion that dominates this book and partially helps to explain his fondness for earlier times, which is one way of disengaging

himself from the present. The Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company (in reality Western Union) is a symbol of American decay for the narrator and serves as a microcosm for the Western world. The telegraph company, with its racist and discriminatory policies, supplies Miller with ammunition to fire salvoes of moral outrage at the company's (America's) brutal treatment of its employees (citizens). "The whole system was so rotten, so inhuman, so lousy, so hopelessly corrupt and complicated, that it would have taken a genius to put any sense or order into it, to say nothing of human kindness and consideration" (pp. 19-20). In the midst of the corruption and inhumanity, one of the managers asks Miller, in a roundabout way, to write about the messengers, Horatio Alger-style; incensed by the request, he envisions the book in the following way:

> I saw the Horatio Alger hero, the dream of a sick America, mounting higher and higher, first messenger, then operator, then manager, then chief, then superintendent, then vice-president, then president, then trust magnate, then beer baron, then Lord of all the Americas, the money god, the god of gods, the clay of clay, nullity on high, zero with ninety-seven thousand decimals fore and aft. You shits, I said to myself, I will give you the picture of twelve little men, zeros without decimals, ciphers, digits, the twelve uncrushable worms who are hollowing out the base of your rotten edifice. I will give you Horatio Alger as he looks the day after the Apocalypse when all the stink has cleared away. (p.31)

He writes that book, "a colossal tome" (p.34), about twelve

messengers who came to him with their life stories, all of which, by most standards, would be deemed miserable. Miller becomes a reservoir of their tales.

It should not be imagined that Miller escapes from pain and confusion himself. As noted earlier, he is dissatisfied with his life. His anxieties are of a different kind than the messengers around him, for he identifies with Christ in a disturbing way.

> Everything that happened to me happened too late to mean much to me. It was even so with the hour of my birth. Slated for Christmas I was born an hour too late. It always seemed to me that I was meant to be the sort of individual that one is destined to be by virtue of being born on the 25th day of December. Admiral Dewey was born on that day and so was Jesus Christ... perhaps Krishnamurti too, for all I know... It would have been better if my mother had tripped on the stairs the morning of the 25th of December and broken her neck: that would have given me a fair start!... One thing seems clear, however - and this is a hangover from the 25th - that I was born with a crucifixion complex. (pp. 61-62)

Religious imagery begins in earnest here, one might even say grim earnest. When one considers the early pages of pessimism, then the rages against society, fatalism and a crucifixion complex are not surprising extensions. Tropic of Capricorn, beneath its humor, is a very bleak and despairing book. With its black mirth, its attacks on society and its grotesque figures and incidents, it hews closer to the works of Celine (or Nathanael West) than any

other book Miller has written. The emotions predominant in the book are considered by the narrator in passages such as this one:

> If you continue this balancing at the edge of the abyss long enough you become very very adept: no matter which way you are pushed you always right yourself. Being in constant trim you develop a ferocious gaiety, an unnatural gaiety, I might say. (pp. 62-63)

His gaiety sets him apart from his friends and family, leaving him alone to wander in a glass and concrete Gethsemane, a "mad stone forest" (p. 69), where the only constant is chaos, in personal relations, work and the natural world. Amidst a profusion of internal and external pressures, the narrator encounters Mara. The time before meeting her is filled with "sudden deaths" (p.78) as his personal world takes on the worst aspects of the outside world. Mara rescues him from his indecisiveness, becoming his saviour, a goddess who will "liberate [him] from a living death" (p.64).

That "liberation" is false, based as it is on help from outside. The narrator, in his later life, sees that his reliance on Mara was a clinging dependence on "nothing" (p.13); he should not have expected her to free him. Continually in Tropic of Capricorn Miller reaches out to people who, in his mind, are whole and complete. Roy Hamilton, a young man from California who has travelled to New York looking for his father, is the first of those

figures. Awed by Hamilton's self-assurance and philosophical nature, the narrator's admiration for him is unbounded, though he questions Hamilton's search for a father. "In Roy Hamilton," Miller writes, "I saw the ironic struggle of a man who had already emancipated himself and yet was seeking to establish a solid biological link for which he had absolutely no need. This conflict over the real father had, paradoxically, made him a super father" (p.147). Actually, Hamilton is removing the father figure from his life. Not only is Hamilton a super father, a "philosopher" (p.147) and a "mystic" (p.147), he is also "a sort of Christ" (p.148) who, by his sudden presence in New York at the home of his possible father, has been "resurrected" (p.150) in one fashion. For the narrator, Hamilton represents the person he would like to be, and is the first of Miller's gods (in a book filled with childhood and literary idols), a god Miller prays to when stranded in the Arizona desert while travelling to California.

> It is dark now and I stand at the end of a street, where the desert begins, and I weep like a fool. Which me is this weeping? Why it is the new little me which had begun to germinate back in Brooklyn and which is now in the midst of a vast desert and doomed to perish. Now, Roy Hamilton, I need you! (p.152)

Clearly, Miller is comparing his travails with Christ's wandering in the desert and his prayers to God, a "super father".

Miller's encounter with Roy Hamilton is followed by his father's religious conversion and subsequent letdown. When Miller's father is taken ill, after abruptly stopping his drinking habits, he becomes "a sort of semi-invalid" (p.159), enjoying such pleasures as walking through the local graveyard. On one of these walks he meets and becomes friendly with a Congregationalist minister, eventually falling into a "sort of boyish idolatry" (p.160) of him. As a result of his involvement with the minister, the father's health improves, but when the minister announces that he is leaving the parish for "a more advantageous position..." that provides "a better income" (p.165), Miller's father turns "bitter and querulous" (p.165), his faith and hopes crushed by what he sees as an act of desertion and betrayal. He never recovers from the incident. "He was deader than dead because alive and empty, beyond all hope of resurrection in that he had travelled beyond the limits of light and space and securely nestled himself in the black hole of nothingness" (p.167). Father and son cast others in the role of saviour with devastating consequences: for the father the loss of faith was a final blow; for the son, he is unable to be the free person he wants to be.

Method of presentation is crucial in those two sections. For the narrator, Roy Hamilton is a perfect exemplar of spiritual health. As for the minister, he comes across as a selfish man who when offered a better position immediately

accepts, without taking into account the narrator's father and his feelings. The narrator, comparing Hamilton to the minister, finds his idol the 'real thing', pities his father's reliance on so unreal a faith, but will not deny whatever solace his father can get from his beliefs. The shift from respect to criticism occurs as the narrator moves from a consideration of his saviour to his father's saviour. When Grover Watrous (a born-again Christian) enters, there is a shift from criticism to broad humor and satire.

Grover bursts in on the Miller family, and his reception is not auspicious. The mother ridicules Grover's new-found religiosity (as she had made fun of her husband's), the father wakes, startled, from a deep sleep, the sister is unable to comprehend Grover's words, and the narrator, though caught off guard, records Grover's actions and the reactions of his family. The narrator regards Grover as a "pest who could do you no harm" (p.173), his "bright new language" (p.173) about God and the New Jerusalem unconvincing. The narrator concludes that it's "a pity that [Grover] had to use Christ for a crutch, but then what does it matter how one comes by the truth so long as one pounces upon it and lives by it?" (p.176)

While the narrator does not quite use Christ as a crutch, there is an enormous amount of religious imagery (pagan and Christian) present in the book, connected to a great many characters. References to goddesses (p.335), the

Ark and the Flood (pp. 185, 205, 331) and religiosity in general (p.289) are frequent. Resurrection, already discussed with regards to Roy Hamilton, comes up again in the book (pp. 230-231) with the baptism of Gottlieb Leberecht Miller (the narrator using a fancied name), and his continual death and rebirth (p.230).

Communion is important as well, for in communion the body and blood of Christ is present to all. Miller, while visiting his cousin Gene, takes part in a sinful act, during a rock fight with another group of children. In the ensuing battle, the two boys kill another boy with their stones (p.124). They escape, without any further action or trouble about the incident, to Gene's home where the narrator's Aunt Caroline gives them "two big slices of sour rye with fresh butter and a little sugar... and we sat there... listening to her with an angelic smile" (p.124). The stoning is vividly remembered by the narrator more than two decades later but not by Gene, whose memory has to be prodded (p.125). What is more vivid is "the thick slice of rye bread" (p.126) which, with the passage of years, has come to "possess more potency" (p.126) than the killing (likened to a "clean, healthy performance" - p.127; which is to say, glossed over).

Recalling the conversations he and his childhood friends had while eating this rye bread, the narrator reaches a conclusion about its significance, that the bread

as bread is a symbol; the conversation around its breaking and eating, the "sour rye discussions" (p.128), kept him in a "state of grace... of self-abnegation" (p.128). Truths learned at an early age stayed with him; the innocence, or "complete ignorance" (p.128), of childhood remain in him as well. Stoning a boy brings no punishment, horror or shame, for as an innocent he has no sins. Because the bread of his youth was freely given and shared among friends, it was a "communion loaf" (p.130); in adult life bread is "without grace" (p.131) since it is purchased through toil.

Along with Christian allusions are numerous ones having to do with pagan figures. In the mythological Land of Fuck, Priapus balances "a corkscrew on the end of his weeny... In the background Rembrandt is studying the anatomy of our Lord Jesus Christ" (p.192). Priapus, dreaming as he balances, suddenly sees the Choctaws and Navajos, while the "fellaheen [come] out of Egypt in their chains, followed by the warlike Igorots and the snail-eating men of Zanzibar" (p.194). By the time Zeus makes his entrance (p.291) the point has been well made. The Christ figure, a crucifixion complex, Christian symbolism and pagan imagery combine together in a curious way. During the more surrealistic (Dionysian) dithyrambic sections there is an emphasis on paganism; in day-to-day living this is replaced by Christian imagery. The former should not be taken less

seriously than the latter; in the narrator's case the night life (or dark side) is as important as the day life. Oddly, though strands of religion wind throughout the book they are not sufficient to give the narrator's character a wholeness; not a religious man, he seems to be playacting under a guise of suffering and spirituality. Even though the narrator uses Christ as a figure to justify or explain his feelings, the narrator is un-Christ-like in his actions. If the narrator was represented only by empty religious symbols, then he would be an incomplete and unbalanced character.

Fortunately, that narrow characterization is prevented by the alliance of art with spirituality, both supplying what the other needs, making a "faith greater than Christ's" and "a wisdom deeper than that of the greatest seer" (p.122). Dionysian impulses which run through Miller find their expression in his art and carry the pagan imagery onto a new level. Consequently, Miller's 'religion' is unspecific; it is, more accurately, an exalted spirituality, or rapture, with a God closer to man than the other way around. While killing time Miller is "more like God" (p.16) than anything else, and a friend of his says, "'You might become another Jesus Christ for all I know'" (p.88).

Parallel to the view of man-as-God is narrator as artist. The Horatio Alger-like book the narrator wrote,

based on Dreiser's Twelve Men[20], taught Miller how to write through the numerous mistakes he made. Far from being discouraged, however, the narrator feels the books he will write "germinating inside me" (p.211). His imagination is fertile, yet he is incapable of capturing "a word, a phrase" (p.283), resulting in a feverish agitation. There then occurs what may be calleo a moment of heightened perception, when the narrator witnesses the curtain rising at the beginning of a show.

> I could feel the curtain rising in man. And immediately I also realized that this was a symbol which was being presented to him endlessly in his sleep and that if he had been awake the players would never have taken the stage but he, Man, would have mounted the boards. I didn't think this thought - it was a realization, as I say, and so simple and overwhelmingly clear was it that the machine [referring to other men's thoughts] stopped dead instantly and I was standing in my own presence bathed in a luminous reality. (p.285)

He rushes home and writes down that realization, thereby beginning the arduous task of transcribing his own ideas. Speaking figuratively, the narrator clears his throat in order to let his distinctive voice out. "Nobody understood what I was writing about or why I wrote that way," (p.286) he says, because he "was perhaps the unique Dadaist in America", (p.286) though the recognition takes place a decade before Miller hears of either the dadaists or the surrealists. The narrator-artist figure, blocked out

slowly through the book, is quickly filled in as Miller raves for fourteen pages on the various notables of those two movements. His suffering has found an outlet that transcends religion and art, and that transcendence, known to primitive men and some artists, is magic, something beyond (or behind) religion and art, a wild, untethered force. Whoever embraces magic "is beyond religion" (p.289); Miller is rediscovering the magic (or mystery) of life, and returning to the "source of life" (p.290). He wants to be child-like and possessed of the delight and wonder a child feels, while being at the same time a complete man stripped of all non-essentials.

However, Tropic of Capricorn does not end on that high note of rediscovery; indeed it is evident that the initial stages of self-realization have been articulated long after the moment itself. The narrator must yet pass through the Inferno and Purgatorio of Dante. "The interlude which I think of as the Land of Fuck...is for me the equivalent of that Purgatory which Dante has described in nice detail," (p.208) he writes, just before meeting Mara.

> For the genuine Inferno which I had to postpone for twenty years [the genuine Inferno refers to the eve of the Second World War] I give you Myrtle Avenue... Dear reader, you must see Myrtle Avenue before you die, if only to realize how far into the future Dante saw... It is a street not of sorrow, for sorrow would be human and recognizable, but of sheer emptiness: it is emptier than the word of God in the mouth of an unbeliever. (p.298)

Part of Miller's 'false' Inferno is internal and has to do with normal activities (not monumental happenings) such as working at various trades throughout the United States with barely enough money to live on. His mental condition is made worse when he marries in order to avoid the war, earning the praise of his friends for finally settling down. The strain of marriage and uncertain employment (until he begins work with the telegraph company) follow on the heels of his harrowing life with his mother, father and sister.

When the narrator talks of his family, a series of devil images arises (pp. 324-325, 337-338). In a dream sequence, starting from a real life episode where his mother is trying to teach her daughter math, the narrator witnesses the beating of his mentally unbalanced sister when she can not add two and two. At that point a transference takes place and the narrator takes over his sister's lessons while his mother stands over him "garbed in black" with skin "ash grey like that of Tibetan devils" (p.328). Home life, then, is a type of Hell, inhabited by odd creatures. Commenting on his family the narrator pictures himself as a tree with windows and turrets (p.327). His sister is classified as a "primitive being" (p.327) who is constantly beaten; his father is a man whose snores sound like "the death rattle" (p.156); and his mother a woman who perpetually "sees things in a black light" (p.156). Together they form a strange configuration: "the leaning tower of Pisa [the

narrator], the whipping post, the snoring machine and the pterodactyl in human flesh" (p.327).

Those memories, less frequent as the book winds down, are increasingly painful and have an edge to them even as the narrator becomes euphoric over his new found self. He realizes that his 'crucifixions' were "rosy crucifixions, pseudo-tragedies to keep the fires of hell burning brightly for the real sinners who are in danger of being forgotten" (p.325); previously, he had admitted that his suffering (and suffering in general) was futile (p.325). The narrator has found a long-sought mental stability, though that does not mean that he has rid himself of the things that have caused him pain. In many ways, he still has a great deal left to go through; after reconciling himself to his true condition, he must undergo seven years of alternate happiness and misery with Mara, who is 'introduced' in the final section of Tropic of Capricorn.

"Coda" (pp. 333-348), the last section of Tropic of Capricorn, is markedly different in style from what has come before. Hesitant, full of false starts and deviations, it has a thoughtful, wistful air which indicates considerable thought and hard writing. There is a coolness to the emotions which indicates a desire to say things with extreme accuracy. In its first paragraphs it is written in the actual present (1938), eventually moving back into the historical present; there is a subsequent change in verb

tense from past to present, which releases the narrator from commenting on the action. Since the reader has been brought to this place before and knows the outcome, the only thing left is the recounting of Mara's first impression on the author:

> She's America on foot, winged and sexed... Opulence she has, and magnificence; it's America right or wrong, and the ocean on either side. For the first time in my life the whole continent hits me full force, hits me between the eyes... Whatever made America made her, bone, blood, muscle, eyeball, gait, rhythm, poise, confidence, brass and hollow gut. (p.342)

The language is forced and prosaic, not comparable to the level of writing prior to this and hardly fitting the picture of Mara in the reader's mind. Inevitably, Mara's entrance is less vibrant than the waiting for it. Highlighted through so many devices, her arrival would be a letdown in almost anyone's writing. Anticipation of her makes actuality mundane; she lives better in dream than in reality. While Miller generally gives a character a few solid pen strokes before making an abstract word painting, in Mara's case there is not enough there to allow identification. (She occupies only one-ninth of the book.) Slow-moving prose, in sharp contrast to the kinetic energy of the book, brakes Miller's impetus and does disservice to Mara, something Miller will try to correct in The Rosy Crucifixion. He finds it difficult to complete a book

about her (a "tomb", as he calls it - p.334) because it would end the ongoing relationship with her in his memories. The book finishes with Miller and Mara going off together.

Where does the conclusion of Tropic of Capricorn leave the narrator? He is quite a different man from the one in Tropic of Cancer; each book shows him progressing to that natural state which he will exhibit in his first book. At the end of this book Miller has a modified crucifixion complex, a writing voice that is still weak, and a chance at a better existence. He is at a transitional stage between the impassioned, bitter and fatalistic writer of Tropic of Capricorn and the relaxed, genial, optimistic narrator of Tropic of Cancer. In the later book he cast himself on a journey inward. He has summoned up, through emotions uncharacteristic of the later narrator, the moods, attitudes and concerns of his childhood and adulthood, giving a detailed picture of his antagonism towards the pursuits and expectations of his family, friends and country. Hell, insanity, pressures from family and from his job, and the fear of succumbing to the lures of American society are made palpable in Tropic of Capricorn, resisted only by the narrator's will, a will that has found a method to avoid those things. The journey inward continues in The Rosy Crucifixion.

IV

It might be wise at this stage to review particular points, insofar as they have relevance to The Rosy Crucifixion. With regards to the use of the 'I' in Miller's works: Tropic of Cancer, accepted as either fiction or biography, would be limited in worth if one decided between those two genres. Terming Tropic of Cancer 'quasi-autobiographical' or an 'autobiographical romance' does not do any better, since both terms are not definite enough. Due to the uniting of narrator and author, labelling the form of the book is difficult. While it is capable of being described as a bildungsroman or picaresque, those labels do not answer the central question of what the book really is. One of the purposes of merging the author and the narrator is to show how arbitrary divisions between biography and fiction are. Questioning such divisions was not a particularly new thing in 1934, yet it was a new thing in American literature; Tropic of Cancer belongs with a handful of books which address that subject in the early twentieth century. Henry Miller, with that book and subsequent works, took the artist/man figure and gave him an apocalyptic and universal nature. The 'I', for Miller, is a symbol for artist and man.

Black Spring emphasizes the philosophical and aesthetic importance of the 'I', revealing more fully than Tropic of Cancer the new individual who is artist and man.

It should be stressed that in Miller's view the artist, crucial as he is, must be secondary to man. Miller clearly states that belief when, in considering Joyce, Proust and Lawrence, he writes that the first two felt that art was more important than life. Joyce and Proust, he writes, chose art as "a substitute for life,"[21] that they were exponents of a "literature of flight, of escape, of a neurosis so brilliant that it almost makes one doubt the efficacy of health" (p.91). At the same time that Proust was "putting the finishing touches to that tomb of art in which he buried himself" (p.87), Lawrence dreamed of "a new order of things" (p.87), and proclaimed "life eternal" (p.88), a life he saw as "an imaginary, unhistorical epoch created by the artist in man," (p.87) a vision Miller shares. As for Joyce, Miller proclaims, "if Proust may be said to have provided the tomb of art, in Joyce we can witness the full process of decomposition" (p.92). Joyce and Proust contribute to the "Universe of Death" (p.85): "The one wears us out because he spreads himself over such an enormous artificial canvas; the other wears us out by magnifying his thumb-nail fossil beyond all sensory recognition. The one uses the city as a universe, the other as an atom." (p.93). Lawrence belongs to the "world of living men and women [who are] huddling in the wings clamoring for the stage" (p.93). It is to Lawrence that Miller feels closest, for his approach to actual life, and not the life of the secluded artist, is akin to Miller's own views.

The 'I' in Black Spring takes into itself narrator, author, artist and man. The central intelligence of this book is the author. Narrator-Miller is not shown in consecutive fashion; presentation is primary, philosophical and aesthetic attitudes second, and the narrator's life third. Use of the larger 'I' in Black Spring marks the increasing complexity and commitment of Miller's view of man, treated in this work as a whole being rather than the sum of his parts. Though revealed in sections, Miller as the artist is whole, the organizing agent, the instigator and centre of the work, much different from Tropic of Capricorn, in which as much time is given to one event as to the narrator. The 'I' is not as focused, or, perhaps, it is an 'i' in the process of growth. Problems with self-identification, unknown in Tropic of Cancer and not common in Black Spring, plague the narrator in Tropic of Capricorn. He is still young, and his slow maturation is part of the subject matter of the book.

Out of all his writings Miller has perhaps no more than two works which are not recounted in the first person (The Smile At The Foot Of The Ladder, 1948: Just Wild About Harry, 1963). To most critics his use of the 'I' appears egotistical to an odious degree. It has been stated that if Miller continued to use the 'I' then it would be of ever-increasing importance. The reason is that with every publication his image (narrator-Miller) has dominated over

his reality (author-Miller). The blurring of those two images has had varying effects. One is the fulfilment of Miller's aim not to allow distinctions between his works and his life, between fiction and biography.

> It is as hard to tell many of his books from each other as it is to tell Miller's "imaginary" life from his real one. There is just a stream of Milleriana, the same voice going on and on about himself... But he writes not to create books but to escape from life onto paper. So there is no continual story, just episodes. The plot is too familiar to turn into a separable story. 22

Those remarks reflect the general attitude of readers of Miller's works who find him too obsessed with himself. A different appraisal concludes that Miller's "escape from life onto paper" is a way to escape external pressures:

> Flow takes the place of plot. The persona commands a range of styles... but it does not possess any genuine plasticity. It is beyond change, beyond the ability to register experience as anything other than force, energy, impact. The effect is to make voyeurs of the readers, not participants. Self-absorption indulged on a scale of verbal magnificence is Miller's essential form of liberation. 23

There are a few critics who see the difference between the author and the narrator. "So far, then," writes George Stade, "we have two Henry Millers, one a wardrobe of costumes, the other their inhabitant. A third Henry Miller is the designer of costumes, the author holding onto the shirt tails of his protagonist..."[24]

Still, the majority do not distinguish between author

and narrator. Emphasis on the 'I' in his works has confused critics sufficiently that they make the two inseparable. This confusion is an inevitable result of Miller's technique, a technique used almost exclusively between Tropic of Cancer (1934) and Nexus (1960), resulting in the classification of his works as self-centred and unwholesomely egotistical. Miller has created an oeuvre which is solely concerned with him and his perceptions, advocating use of what would later be called the "personalized narrator"[25]; as he wrote in "Un Etre Etoilique," an essay on Anais Nin's diaries, "Our literature, unable any longer to express itself through dying forms, has become almost exclusively biographical."[26] To further understand Miller's purpose, one must now move to The Rosy Crucifixion, keeping in mind that the purpose of the 'I' will become more defined and systematic; that the narrator's character or identity becomes increasingly aligned with that of the author as the trilogy progresses; and that as the trilogy unfolds, confusion over the differences between the author and the narrator will increase, causing even more difficulties in the defining of Miller's books as one thing or another. While talking of writing in Nexus Miller says: "Yes, in my stumbling, bumbling way I was making all manner of discoveries. One of them was that one cannot hide his identity under cover of the third person, nor establish his identity solely through the use of the

first person singular."[27] He is telling a part truth; Miller reflects himself in other characters yet reveals most when talking directly about himself.

One last note: the character of the narrator, distinct from the 'I', has changed from book to book. In a much more leisurely manner, the trilogy charts his further growth. As a result the use of the 'I' shifts from the radical nature of the first three books to a closer relationship with the author figure. While the use of 'I' remains important, it is submerged into the body of the text for the purpose of subverting in a different way than before 'the novel' and its traditional forms and characteristics.

Chapter Two Endnotes

[1] Henry Miller, Tropic of Cancer (Paris, 1934; rpt, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p.99. All subsequent references indicated in the text.

[2] Steven G. Kellman, The Self-Begetting Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.3.

[3] Stephen Spender, "Confessions and Autobiography", in Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 117-118.

[4] George Orwell, "Review", in An Age Like This, Vol. 1 of The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), p.154. Hereafter referred to as Orwell, An Age Like This.

[5] Orwell, An Age Like This, p.230.

[6] A computer search for A Man Cut In Slices, conducted on February 4th, 1986, through the computer systems available at the Queen Elizabeth II Library, St. John's, Newfoundland, has failed to turn up any book by this name. Miller's only reference to the book is in Tropic of Cancer; the only other reference to the book is in Jay Martin, Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller (New York: Penguin

Books, 1980), p.293. (Hereafter referred to as Martin, Life). I am unable, therefore, to determine if the book is fictitious, or if it is a work of Miller's which existed only in his mind.

[7] Henry Miller, Black Spring (Paris, 1936; rpt, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963), p.25. All subsequent references indicated in the text.

[8] Ihab Hassan, The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p.67. Hereafter referred to as Hassan, Silence.

[9] Kingsley Widmer, Henry Miller (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), p.48.

[10] The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1973 ed. As well, Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, 1976 ed.

[11] For reference to Buxtehude, Cawnpore, Lahore and Mysore, see The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1978 ed.

[12] Lewis Carroll, The Annotated Alice, ed. Martin Gardner (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1972), p.191. Hereafter referred to as Gardner, The Annotated Alice.

[13] The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1978 ed.

[14] Mowgli is a character in Kipling's Jungle tales.

[15] With regards to this name, Praxus, there is a slight problem. At my request, Mr. Martin Howley, Humanities

Librarian at the Queen Elizabeth II Library, instigated a search for the meaning of the name. As he wrote in a letter to me, he could not find a "clear-cut origin for it" (Martin Howley, Letter to Jeffrey R.V. Bursey, 13 May 1986). The conclusion he reaches is that it must be related to either praxis, which means action or custom, or Praxiteles, the Greek sculptor. The use of body images in the piece, and the presence of the homunculus on the horizon, makes the latter interpretation more sensible.

[16] Hassan, Silence, p.70.

[17] Miller's 'name' comes from M. de Unamuno (p.vii), F. Dostoyevski (p.13), and F. Rabelais (pp. 42-43). Wolfgang may come from either Miller's German heritage or, possibly, be taken from Mozart. Valentine is Miller's middle name.

[18] Henry Miller, Tropic of Capricorn (Paris, 1939; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p.208. All subsequent references within the text.

[19] William A. Gordon, The Mind and Art of Henry Miller (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p.139.

[20] Martin, Life, p.70.

[21] Henry Miller, The World of Lawrence, ed. Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1980), p.91. All subsequent references within the text.

[22] Alfred Kazin, "Reconsideration: An Ordinary Bloke," The New Republic, 21 Oct. 1978, No. 17, Vol. 179, p. 45.

[23] Alan Trachtenberg, "'History on the Side': Henry Miller's American Dream," in American Dreams, American Nightmares, ed. David Madden (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1970), p.145.

[24] George Stade, "Mailer and Miller," Partisan Review, 66, No. 4 (1977), p.616.

[25] Leo Braudy, "Realists, Naturalists, and Novelists of Manners," in Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing, ed. Daniel Hoffman (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1979), p.109.

[26] Henry Miller, "Un Etre Etoilique," in The Cosmological Eye (Norfolk: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1939), p.270.

[27] Henry Miller, Nexus (Paris, 1960; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.243.

Chapter Three

I

Miller continues his life story with Mara/Mona in Sexus (1949), the first book of The Rosy Crucifixion; Plexus (1953) and Nexus (1960) follow. Bridging the years between Tropic of Capricorn and the first book of the trilogy, a score of lesser works, some autobiographical, were written and published, yet only one, Quiet Days in Clichy (written in 1940, published in 1956), looked back on his life in Paris rather than the world around him. From 1939 to 1949 his writing concerned itself with America in the war years and the role of the artist in the contemporary world; he gave up the United States as a hopeless country, and increasingly viewed artists as prophets. Unfortunately, a great deal of this material is extremely poor, Henry Miller playing at thinker without putting enough imaginative effort and rigour into his thoughts.

Sexus, then, apart from resuming where Tropic of Capricorn left off, marks the resumption of serious literary work on Miller's part; in this book one sees a great deal of the power he had shown in his first works. A brief outline of the trilogy: Miller leaves his wife Maude to marry Mara (later called Mona); they live in tight circumstances, she working at mysterious jobs and he trying

to write; Mara/Mona goes off to Europe with Anastasia, a woman who she has been having an affair with, returning alone; she and Miller reconcile (somewhat) and soon go off to Europe together. Here the trilogy ends, incomplete, with roughly two additional years left unrecounted. The three books cover a period of some five years in almost sixteen hundred pages, charting the progression of Miller as an artist and the decline of his most important relationship.

In Sexus the narrator, Henry Valentine Miller, is so taken with Mara/Mona, whom he has met at a dance-hall, that he begins to seriously entertain the idea of leaving his wife and young (unnamed) daughter. This eventually happens. Toward the end of the book Miller and Mona (as she is called now and forever) get married in a civil ceremony whose mechanical nature upsets their romantic notions. Straightforward chronology ends after the night of the wedding; the remaining pages are filled with nightmarish visions of dead men, terror and brutality.

The book incorporates many elements including potentially pornographic passages, aesthetics and mystic pronunciamentos. When first published[1] (in France, in 1949, by Obelisk Press) it was banned for undermining the morals of the French; it is not surprising that it was considered immoral by French authorities (and by Norwegian ones, who banned it in 1957[2]), for it contains - not

exclusively but in great quantities - an unprecedented amount of sexual activity. The Land of Fuck in Tropic of Capricorn is quite extensive; here it is continent and ocean. "A scholarly student" informed Kingsley Widmer that the narrator of Sexus "has a distinguished sexual record which includes five women in one day, nine orgasms in one night, and other sterling performances."[3]

For most critics who treat this book the sex is unpalatable. Lawrence Durrell, on reading it, was disappointed with the emphasis on vulgarity and obscenity, and wrote Henry Miller as follows:

> I must confess I'm bitterly disappointed in [Sexus], despite the fact that it contains some of your very best writing to date. But, my dear Henry, the moral vulgarity of so much of it is artistically painful. These silly meaningless scenes which have no raison d'etre, no humor, just childish explosions of obscenity - what a pity, what a terrible pity for a major artist not to have a critical sense enough to husband his force, to keep his talent aimed at the target. What on earth possessed you to keep so much twaddle in? 4

This is often quoted approvingly by those who dislike the incessant description of sexual activity. Gore Vidal uses it in his ill-considered essay "The Sexus of Miller"[5]. Vidal is puzzled by Miller being addressed as Val (oblivious to Miller's name in other books), by the meaning of the title of the trilogy and by the narrator's strategy, which Vidal interprets as an explanation of the author, concluding

that there is "no subject other than Henry Miller in all his sweet monotony" (p.198). One of Vidal's objections to Sexus is that the "art of self-confession" (p.199) depends on truth, and narrator-Miller lies. According to Vidal, Miller could not have gone to bed with all the women he said he did, could not have had an orgasm every time, and could not be universally liked. Furthermore, in Vidal's view, "Henry Miller, by his own account, is never less than superb, in life, in art, in bed" (p.199). Vidal misreads the text, for Miller has a wife who dislikes him and to whom he is cruel, his writing is not going well and he constantly questions his life's purpose. Finally, Vidal sees Miller primarily as an influence on "a number of writers better than himself - George Orwell, Anais Nin, Lawrence Durrell" (p.202) - and, somewhat contradictorily, as a liberating force in the discussion of sexual matters.

Another critic, David Littlejohn, voices an alternative theory on The Rosy Crucifixion:

> Another approach to the "content" of a book... is to begin by admitting that it is made out of words. Miller's trilogy often appears to be made out of nothing else. The man, like Moldorf in Cancer, is word-drunk, word-mad. It was this madness, put to the source of an insatiable ego, that made him a writer. 6

Littlejohn's approach would seem to deny that there is any actual meaning or governing principle in these books. What might have been an interesting linguistic-structural

analysis of Miller's work quickly becomes psychobiography, a rather shaky methodology. The sparse attention Littlejohn gives to the use of sexually explicit language lasts until the closing remarks:

> I had planned to conclude with a moral assessment of the man, based primarily on my interpretation of the thirty-five fucking-scenes of Sexus. But I am tired of this work, and find I have neither the Godlike presumption for final judgements, nor the stomach to wade through that ocean of semen again. I do think Miller sick (at least while writing Sexus), self-imprisoned, unable to love or know tenderness, unintentionally cruel, impotent in the most serious way. But the passionate responses of my reading grow dilute and mechanical, as more and more days pass since I closed the books; and I am far more inclined now to sympathy than to censure. (p.71)

What began as a fairly reasonable essay degenerates into a personal evaluation of the author, signalled at the beginning when Littlejohn writes that Miller's books are "only a means of access" (p.46) to Miller himself. The most important point here is that Miller is perceived as ill, morally and aesthetically, by Durrell, Vidal and Littlejohn. Predictably, Norman Mailer has his own distinctive opinion.

> An obvious critical impulse is to decide the work [The Rosy Crucifixion] is too long. But on examination it cannot be cut. Rather, as it stands, it is too fragmentary. Perhaps it should be a novel of four thousand pages. What Miller has bogged into (precisely because he is the first American to make the attempt) is the uncharted negotiations of

> the psyche when two narcissists [Miller and Mona] take the vow of love. Yet it is finally his own novelistic terrain. 7

Mailer is of the opinion that the trilogy, no matter how well written in some places, is "one of the monumental failures of world literature" (p.186.)

With the notable exception of Mailer, most critics rarely discuss the sexual aspect of Sexus unless they see it as reflective of Miller's 'self-infatuation'. Author and narrator are indivisible; there is little allowance for lying, fabricating, fictionalizing. Gore Vidal's remarks imply that one must stick close to the facts, something Miller has consistently rejected. In an essay entitled "My Life as an Echo", from his 1962 book Stand Still Like the Hummingbird, Miller writes that his "'autobiographical romances'... should be taken with a grain of salt... If I lie now and then it is mainly in the interest of truth."[8] His books contain embellishment, distortion, parody, self-consciousness. It would seem that Miller's methodical obliteration of distinctions between fiction and autobiography has confused commentators to the extent that they have fallen into the trap of believing everything they read. Miller's purpose has been to make separation (and identification) of author and protagonist as hard as possible in order to reach a larger truth than the number of orgasms per night per person.

For most critics sex is the main obstacle in an

understanding of Sexus. The narrator has a strong sexual drive and is attracted to (and attractive to) many women. Not only this makes him popular, for his "itch to write"[9] affords great amusement for his friends (mostly male, but there are a significant number of females as well) in much the same way as muscular strength impresses those who are not as strong. The twin forces in this book, its two poles, are sexual energy and verbal pyrotechnics, the first more obvious than the second. Both forms of expression and release, they operate at different levels and coincide only when Miller and Mona are together. Sexual activity is almost singularly realistic in depiction, occasionally operating as a launching device for fanciful visions. (For characters other than Miller sex remains earthbound.) Verbalizing is as important as sex, giving a glimpse of the emerging writer. There are backlashes to the two forces: sexual activity endlessly described, even with variations of positions and numbers involved, eventually clogs the narrative with a prose equivalent of I-did-she-did-then-we-did. As to the endless talking, to friends, strangers, the reader, there is a regrettable tendency to act as sage. Half-digested notions (concerning Eastern religions, theosophy, astrology) combine with leaden, flatulent prose. Sometimes fucking and verbalizing appear in tandem, and when repeated over and over, undercut the slight abilities exhibited and the even slighter

novelty of the situation. Here is Miller recalling the 'lovemaking' between himself and his wife Maude after he tells her he's leaving her for another woman (Mona):

> She was making some sort of wheeling motion in the dark. Her legs came down over my shoulders and her crotch was up against my lips. I slid her ass over my head, like you'd raise a pail of milk to slake a lazy thirst, and I drank and chewed and guzzled like a buzzard. She was so deep in heat that her teeth were clamped dangerously around the head of my cock. In that frantic, teary passion she had worked herself up to I had a fear that she might sink her teeth in deep, bite the end clean off. I had to tickle her to release her jaws. It was fast, clean work after that. Put me on the fucking block and fuck! that's what she was asking for. (p.125)

Soon Miller goes off, verbally and physically.

> One swan remained, an octaroon with ruby duck lips fastened to a pale blue head. Soon we'd be in clover, the blow-off, with plums and apricots falling from the sky. The last push, the drag of choked, white-hot ashes, and then two logs lying side by side waiting for the axe. Fine finish. Royal flush. I knew her and she knew me...
>
> The axe is falling. Last ruminations. Honeymoon Express and all aboard: Memphis, Chattanooga, Nashville, Chickamauga. Past snowy fields of cotton... alligators yawning in the mud... the last apricot is rotting on the lawn... the moon is full, the ditch is deep, the earth is black, black, black. (pp. 126-127)

The problem with the above passage is that Miller lets some interesting imagery (from "One swan remained" to

"... for the axe.") dissolve into mere listing of places and considerably less evocative impressionistic writing. Repeated too often the effect of these sorts of passages is weakened. In a like manner, the marriage of pyrotechnics and hazy thought, though separate from sex and aesthetic concerns, suffers at times from a lack of control. In the following, Miller is speaking of people who conceal their true selves from others:

> The most difficult ones are what I call the "Piscean malingerers". These are the fluid, solvent egos who lie still as a foetus in the uterine marshes of their stagnant self. When you puncture the sac, when you think Ah! I've got you at last! you find nothing but clots of mucus in your hand. These are the baffling ones, in my opinion. They are like the "soluble fish" of Surrealist metem-psychology. They grow without a backbone; they dissolve at will. All you can ever lay hold of are the indissoluble, indestructible nuclei - the disease germs, so to say. (p.422)

While the imagery is certainly unique, one might legitimately ask what is meant. Here is a case similar to the 'portrait' of Mona in Tropic of Capricorn, where Miller has drawn too abstract a word painting, the glossy texture of the words obscuring the form underneath.

Through all this the narrator is slowly moving from a passive state to an active one. Beginning from his initial encounter with Mona he is encouraged to write (p.23), something that Maude has fought against. Though he has already written his book on the twelve messengers

(p.34. See also Tropic of Capricorn, pp. 30-31, 34-35.) he has not had the incentive, time or encouragement to write seriously. As the narrator changes his living conditions and plunges into a search for his true self the ability to write gradually comes.

Sexus starts with an explicit identification with Christ. While "approaching [his] thirty-third year, the age of Christ crucified" (p.9), the narrator meets Mona and his life begins anew, baptism in this case following crucifixion. Despite this beginning and the title of the trilogy religious imagery is not as thematically important here as it was in Tropic of Capricorn; the crucifixion is centred in Miller's relationship with Mona. It begins very early with his continual inability to locate her at home or at work. Mona's occupation as a dance-hall girl has a dimension which is never known to the narrator. She doesn't like her job but needs the money: "'It doesn't matter what I do - I must earn a certain amount of money each week... You notice that my admirers are mostly old men...'" (pp. 71-72). The narrator feels that he is "in a web of lies" (pp. 71-72) but her mystery is part of the attraction. The complexity of her character and the narrator's attempts to discover more about her add texture to this book. This is a trilogy which seeks to define Mona, and the failure of this endeavor causes The Rosy Crucifixion to founder. At the expense of character

exploration and analysis there is an accretion of detail and discoveries which the narrator and the author never interpret, so that Mona rarely emerges as three-dimensional. There is a far greater concern for the narrator and how he appears.

As previously stated, the subject of this book, indeed the majority of Miller's works, is Miller. In this book the author shows the narrator in a manner that causes consternation (as the remarks of Durrell, Vidal and Littlejohn illustrate), for the book is 'pointless' and 'artless'; the author has not ordered his material in a pleasing fashion and exhibits immorality. It should be clear that form is not Miller's interest. "People have had enough of plot and character. Plot and character don't make life. Life isn't in the upper storey: life is here now, any time you say the word, any time you let rip" (p.48). Sexus is a work of life, not of art, its presentation mirroring the artlessness of reality. For Miller a large part of that reality was sexual and so it is reproduced here, but not as fact. Appetite is all, food, drink, sex, sleep: he has a voraciousness which is startling in its intensity. There is little difference from one sexual bout to another, though as he and Mona get closer, his sexual relations with Maude are freer, and more experimental. The significance of this is that a need is answered. After Miller and Mona marry (pp. 569-570) he is

monogamous; indeed, there are few sexual descriptions in the other two books. With his marriage to his second wife the narrator begins to satisfy another primal need, the urge to speak or communicate.

The narrator first encounters difficulties and is unable to master the complexities of writing. "In ten years of sporadic efforts I had managed to write a million words or so. You might as well say - a million blades of grass. To call attention to this ragged lawn was humiliating" (p.29). He talks incessantly. Some of the reasons he can't write are external; most of his friends, while entertained, do not have the same opinion of his future as he does, and are interested in art solely as amusement (with the exception of one, Ulric). Maude has actively discouraged him, and until he met Mona no one had proposed that he should just write. Even after meeting her he can't break away from Maude and his daughter, until Stanley, a friend of his, engineers a plan in which Miller and Mona are caught in "flagrant delectation" (p.191) at Miller's own home by Maude and their daughter, with the landlord and his daughter as two witnesses. A new life is forcibly begun and the narrator begins to loosen up creatively.

This book uses memory and authorial presence to interrupt the chronological flow, though there is no central event which they lead to or stem from. The second paragraph of the book tells the reader that Miller's relationship with

Mona will last seven years (p.9), a shift from past to future in the length of a phrase. Memories are tripped by a sentence, a look, an action, a feeling. These accumulated memories form the base of Miller's 'philosophizing' and are part of his aesthetic principles. Clearly, when these occur (for example, pp. 26-29) they are part of the present, that is, 1949, a definite 'intrusion' of the author into his work (see pp. 404-408). These aspects most resemble his earlier writings where he is the 'unartful' author, memory cobbling past and present, or foreshadowing certain events.

Distinct from passages randomly triggered by various stimuli are the set pieces which are among his best writings, and in Sexus these occur near the end of the book, in chapters 22 and 23. While watching a burlesque dancer (Cleo, familiar from Black Spring) Miller slips into a parallel world whose main figure, Osmanli,[10] is an activist, an orator "who has served all the Parties, red, white and blue... A man without country, without principles, without faith, without scruples" (p.607). He is an agitator who enjoys the "flavor and savour of words" (p.608) and his ability to influence people through speech. His career is coming to an end, however, as the thought of suicide enters his mind. Eventually he is shot in the back of the head, only to emerge from this death to hear his wife say that she has never loved him and is leaving him. Now

he is free to act as he wants. Her words, which "travelled with such speed to all parts of his body that it was as though a bullet had exploded in his brain" (p.613), have released him. In his death he has discovered his identity; Osmanli dies as Cleo finishes her dance.

This tale is half the story; it is followed in the next chapter by Miller's own nightmare, a scene from the future. He is caught in a menage a trois years after he has married Mona. The third person is a (nameless) female. She and Mona (never named as such but identifiable within the context) torture Miller with their relationship until he leaves for good, only to return and hear them making love. Quietly he leaves and takes a walk to calm himself, only to be pursued by a mysterious man who is about to shoot him when he dreams he is a dog with a bone, a bone that a man wants very badly, who kicks and whips him. Miller wakes up with the two women over him, roused by his cries of pain. He is covered in blood and is a mass of bruises - in particular, he thinks that his back is broken. Falling back to sleep he dreams that he is in a dog show and has won the prize. Mona slips a knuckle bone, "encircled by a gold wedding ring" (p.634), around his penis and takes him home. The book ends with the narrator - the dog - barking.

Miller's writing takes on emotions in these two

chapters not often found in his earlier works, predominantly genuine fear. Fatalistic as he was in Tropic of Capricorn there was not the fear of losing his identity or of being cuckolded. The tale of Osmanli brilliantly reflects his own life as a lover of words and a man of no ism or country. while the nightmarish street-walking is a model of restrained writing with an acute sense of pace and atmosphere. While not novel in itself, the dream of himself as a dog is handled with such assurance and ferocity that an old image is revitalized by the fresh and harrowing perspective brought to it. One also sees the merging of the mature narrator and the mature author which is the aim of the trilogy and which starts from the beginning of the book. These last chapters point more to Nexus (where Miller is in a similar emotional state) than to Plexus, which continues the linear development of the Miller-Mona relationship and brings in the character of Anastasia, the other female (though there are hints of lesbian activity and some dog symbolism in Plexus as well). It is deliberately ironic that in a book in which Miller's fucking numerous women in various ways is so prominent, in ways painful to some, he should reveal at the end a fear which underlies the trilogy and lessens his 'manliness'. This deflation of the narrator lends power to these last sections and modifies the narrator's self-portrait. What is shown is that the narrator is not on firm ground with

Mona, that he is not always successful (in the sexual sense), and that a deepening of the character will occur as the trilogy moves on.

The last three chapters of Sexus are crucial to an understanding of the trilogy for they contain what has happened in Sexus and what will happen in the remaining two books. The narrative sequence moves from wedding to burlesque to nightmare, which corresponds with the subject matter and tenor of the three separate books. These three chapters are the trilogy in miniature, telescoping and anticipating events. As Sexus is courtship/marriage, Plexus, as will be shown, is burlesque show; Nexus is the equivalent to the nightmare at the end of Sexus. These three books show the development of the narrator and artist, and with this in mind one can traverse the "novelistic terrain"[11] of this trilogy.

II

Promiscuous sexual activity and incessant speech come prior to monogamy and storytelling. The Miller-Mona relationship is the most obvious feature of Plexus - he is constantly trying to find out what she does when he is not with her. Though a major impetus in his life, it does not operate on a detective-story level. Their lives together and singly are of value. Miller, through Mona's

encouragement, starts to write. Writing is another level of this book, and in the telling of accounts, alternations in tone, style and content, there is a noticeable difference from Sexus. Plexus is the movement from hesitant utterance to articulation. Plot is once again a mere clothesline: Miller and Mona search for money and a place to live; Miller quits his job to write while Mona works, both of them trying various schemes to earn extra money. Along the way Mona meets Anastasia who becomes her friend and Miller's rival. There is more concern with how tales are told than with tales themselves. Plexus is a veritable Babel, a barrage of words, songs, speeches, talk, talk on a grand scale, combined with writing, storytelling, enthusiastic appreciations of books, music, painters and authors. This book replaces sex with artistic expression and monologues with a polyphonic treatment. The change works as Miller diversifies voices used and fleshes out several characters. Almost at the start there is a sidewalk performance, a performance which is in keeping with the rest of the book.

A friend of Miller's, Nahoum Yood, is enthusiastic about Knut Hamsun and begins a lecture on Hamsun's Mysteries. Dialogue between the two men and Mona attracts attention outside a bookstore for Yood is known to many. He is soon asked to recite, and tells the crowd a fable in Yiddish.[12] After that is done the three of them adjourn to a Roumanian speakeasy where they listen to music and talk. Olinski, a

former messenger under Miller who now sells life insurance, is teased into going through his spiel on various policies simply because Miller enjoys listening to him. Mannie Hirsch meanwhile has been drawing pictures on his policies while Yood contributes a poem in Yiddish, prompting Olonski's anger which explodes in shouts "in several languages at once" (p.25), for he is polylingual. It is not necessary to detail the entire scene for the point is already made: language(s), words, performance, music - communication is vitally important here. Plexus is intensely aware of its stress on Art and those who write, paint, sing and act are given prominence. The book is a showpiece of skills in various arts, a place where entertainment is paramount.

The narrator is the cohesive force in Plexus, the centre of it, for it is only his interest in various acts that brings others like him onto the scene. As he starts to write he reveals his likes and dislikes regarding artists, though understandably he is drawn more to authors than to others. The 'I' is a very self-conscious one: not only has the 'I' of Miller's earlier days (the historical present) drawn closer to the author (the actual present), but shaping of subject matter has begun in a decidedly artistic way. The 'I', formerly used to override distinctions between fiction and biography, now additionally exercises literary judgement and plays a part in organizing content. Distance

between author and 'I' has been reduced considerably. Another indication of the importance of the 'I' and its new function is the distance it keeps from a fair part of the action, a removal signified by the reduction in the number and length of monologues. At the same time, art discussions increase tremendously. Speech about art, and speech as art, comprise a good deal of the narrative. Miller's book intertwines countless stories, engaging anecdotes and reminiscences, and in those modes of story-telling is the sign of increasing artistic growth. Essential for the growth of the narrator and for communication is the distance the 'I' keeps from some of the material; in Plexus the narrator learns to listen. An overview of this book shows several types of communication: verbal arts, performing arts, visual arts and writing.

Use of voices, songs and art would be pointless if there was not present some kind of frame in the book. The clues to uncovering this frame are in the multiple art forms, the alternation of episodes and the corollary already noted between chapter twenty-two of Sexus and the formulation of this book. The framework of Plexus must allow for monologues, dialogue, storytelling, theatrics, music, humor (high/low, verbal/physical), etc. Such a frame must be very flexible; given the 'shapelessness' of the book one would have to look closely to discern exactly what type of structure is present. Not only voices but real life

incidents - the forward progression - have to be accommodated. As in Sexus, there are certain set pieces, like the various tales told to grouwnups (see, for example, pp. 407-418) and children (see pp. 427-436), and three particularly long and worked-at sections which bear examination.

The following three sequences are based on slapstick, verbal/physical comedy and double-talk. Miller and Mona, once again homeless, come across a friend of Miller's who invites them to stay with him and his wife in Far Rockaway (pp. 324-357). Miller will work for Karen Lundgren as a secretary; Mona will help his wife Lotta with household chores. Apart from secretarial work Miller must help with the installation of shingles on the roof. This last is a disastrous affair "straight out of Laurel and Hardy" (p.335) as Miller drops hammer and nails and sends shingles flying. Despite Lundgren's plans, maps and calculations, things do not go well, due perhaps to the human element.

The second piece (pp. 438-467) takes place on a farm when Miller is twenty-two or three. He is visiting his friend George Marshall who is staying at his uncle's and aunt's farm in New Jersey. George and his young cousin, Herbie, together with Miller, embark on a series of youthful adventures involving impersonations (of ticket sellers, paralytics, babies) and deceptions. In addition to a very

physical kind of humor there is the joy of fabricating stories in front of George's uncle. When it seems that Miller and George have gone too far and that the uncle will get mad, Herbie starts to sing "one of those sweet, sticky Christian hymns which make the tears flow" (p.464), causing the uncle to repent of his anger. The pastoral idyll ends when George, uncaring of the consequences, breaks the hymen of a willing and trusting country girl and tells Miller some unpleasant news about a girl the narrator likes. By keeping that information from him for so long, George has broken the bonds of mutual trust between them. "From then on, George Marshall was no longer my twin brother..." (p.467).

George, Herbie and Miller are in a classic comedy situation. Youthful, impetuous and smooth-talking, Miller and George use language in much the same way as comedians do. Herbie adds an extra element - he is a talkative Harpo to Groucho and Chico. Other characters (in particular the uncle) are foils, and there is the requisite young girl, though the comedy turns dark when she is deflowered by George, an action thought wrong by the narrator (who settles for inducing an orgasm for her with his hand). As comedy it utilizes physicality as well as language, quite different from the third sequence.

The last piece involves another standard comedy 'bit', the use of double-talk, <u>non sequiturs</u> and nonsense in the

conversation of some men Miller stumbles across in a bar.

> At the bar two men are in the midst of a violent dispute. I order a beer and make myself as inconspicuous as possible.
> "I tell you he's off his nut!"
> "You'd be too if you had your balls cut out."
> "He'll make you look like a horse's ass."
> "The Pope's ass he will!"
> "Look, who made the world? Who made the stars, the sun, the raindrops? Answer me that!"
> "You answer it, since you're so bloody learned. You tell me who made the world, the rainbows, the pisspots and all the other cocksucking devices."
> "You'd like to know, lad? Well, let me say this - it wasn't made in a cheese factory. And it wasn't evolution made it either." (pp.578-579)

This is the decipherable part of their 'discussion' which continues until a blind man enters playing a harp. When he tries to beg a drink off the two men they strip him of his money and go back to their argument. The bartender tells Miller that the three men are friends and own the building the bar is located in.

> "... They can talk sense, if they want to. They're as smart as steel traps... You'd never think it, would you, but the blind fellow was a great little fighter once... He's got the eyes of an eagle, that bird. Comes in here to count his money every day. It burns him up to get wooden money. You know what he does with the bad coins? Passes them off on real blind men. Ain't that nice?" (p.583)

The bartender concludes that the three men will say anything, whether it makes sense or not, because "It's gab they like"

(p.583). Another example of the need to communicate being satisfied, it is a minor reflection of Plexus itself.

Recurring through the set pieces is the configuration of three people common to many comic situations. It is vital to establish the rhythmic nature of these 'bits' and to reiterate how important song, music and narrative are. My attempts to find the appropriate form for these multiple concerns has not been made easier by critical response to the book. Of the few who have written on it, William A. Gordon thinks it is "on the whole one of the best things Miller has written, though less startling than Cancer or Capricorn."[13] His opinion is in the minority. Leslie Fiedler, one of the more perceptive and fair-minded critics who have written about Miller, considered the book "mere smugness and cliche ... the banal nostalgia of an old man proud that he has lived so long"[14]; Ihab Hassan finds it "quite dull in long stretches"[15] and, compared to Nexus, "a flat interlude" (p.101) between Sexus and the last book. A fourth critic regards it as a "tissue-thin piece of meat between huge chunks of dry bread... There is not a single page in [Plexus] that is singularly humorous [or] enlightening..."[16] Most critics ignore the entertaining nature of this book and the intricate assembling of components into a form not often found in fiction. The variety of media present, in addition to the relationship to chapter twenty-two of Sexus, indicate that this book has

a strong resemblance to burlesque and vaudeville.

Vaudeville means a variety show consisting of songs, dramatic sketches, puppet shows and other things (including acrobatics, juggling, pantomime).[17] From the same source, burlesque means a "form of comedy characterized by ridiculous exaggeration... The essential quality... is the discrepancy between subject matter and style..." (p.63); even further, the term "has been broadened to include stage entertainments consisting of songs, skits, and dances, usually of a low or raucous nature." (p.63) Plexus is an advance over Sexus for it stays away from the "outmoded realism"[18] used there, expanding the number of voices and devices used. A third meaning of burlesque, according to Holman's handbook, is that it is a "travesty of form" (p.63) and, in the case of Plexus, both novels and biographies are made fun of, while the theatrics of Miller the artist take centre stage, though he is more of an emcee than a comedian. Behind the looseness of the form is a shape that originated in the theatre; indeed, references to theatre abound throughout The Rosy Crucifixion.

Evident in The Rosy Crucifixion, more than in earlier works, is Miller's desire to include everything whether it 'fits' or not. Since his definition of what fits is neither a novelist's nor an autobiographer's, the 'I' must be used with different structures in order to tell the story of a life. "Plot and character don't make life" (Sexus, p.47);

"Though I could never formulate a plot I could balance and weigh opposing forces, characters, situations, events..." (Plexus, p.54). Plexus is proof of this last remark, for the plot is secondary to how things happen. Miller presents an order that adheres closely to reality without necessarily being realistic in depiction. There is a 'formlessness' in this book akin to the shape of a burlesque show; that is, the elasticity of both should be perceived more as a lack of tension than of great flexibility. "Who knows, perhaps that crude mixture of humor and obscenity which abounded in burlesque had much to do with the employment of these elements in my own work".[19] Dangers in this approach are obvious, and in some instances not entirely avoided. As a book it does not meet the requirements of a novel or of an autobiography; but then, it is not meant to do so. It is not a work of art nor a 'slice of life' (in the simplistic sense that phrase implies) but a reflection of life rendered in a unique way. Miller's life story - however approximate to his life - is primary, and in Plexus the artistic growth of the narrator is predominant. One could say that this growth, over-arching all else, forms a roof under which actors perform, Miller as host (or ringleader), Plexus as colosseum. After Sexus, Plexus exhibits renewed powers of concentration, thematic presentation and writing ability. In his book The New Literature, Claude Mauriac coins the term aliterature,

a "literature freed from the hackneyed conventions which have given the word a pejorative meaning".[20] Mauriac chooses Henry Miller (as well as Kafka, Beckett and Camus) as an author whose writings are examples of that literature which "tends to negate itself in the process [of being written]" (p.52). Summing up he declares that "form is distinct from content only in unsuccessful works" (p.251); with respect to Miller, that fact is noticeable in the excavation required to reveal the underlying structure of Plexus. It is a measure of Miller's ability that form and content blend so well together.

III

Though some think Nexus a better book than Plexus, recovering "intensity of pathos"[21] and showing "indelible internal reshaping that is the mark of sure creative art",[22] it is unfortunately a repudiation of the health, happiness and artistic experimentation found in the second book of the trilogy. It is the tale of Miller's life with a wife whose lesbian tendencies bring certain doubts to the narrator's mind, and her girlfriend to their home, turning a husband-wife relationship into a menage a trois. Inklings of this situation have come up in the nightmare at the end of Sexus and in two places in Plexus, the first a veiled reference in a dream Miller has

in which Mona and 'her friend' are identified as a "'couple of bull-dykers'" (p.275). Later in the book, this time while conscious, Miller has a vision of his wife in Greenwich Village encountering "a pale, timid creature... of dubious sex" (p.310) who attracts Mona. Near the end of the book Anastasia is introduced and her appeal to Mona is manifold: she is an artist, an "extraordinary being" (p.587), natural and sensitive. Mona's considerable enthusiasm causes Miller to wonder about her exact feelings: "There was a fervor to her words which suggested veneration, adoration and other undefinable things" (p.587); these 'undefinables' will make Miller react jealously to even the mention of her name. As for Mona, she tells the narrator that she felt very lonely and needed "'a friend, a woman friend. Someone I can confide in, someone who understands me'" (p.590). Resentment ebbs and flows as the narrator once again tries to discover more about Mona's past. The chronological ending of Plexus has Miller and Mona arguing about her family; he must never try to speak to them or see them without her knowledge, which he promises not to do. "I hadn't the slightest intention, of course, of keeping my word. In fact, I was more than ever determined to get to the bottom of the mystery" (p.617). At this point Miller stops to rhapsodize about Spengler's Decline of the West, ending the forward progression of Plexus.

Nexus begins with the howlings and barkings that ended Sexus, recalling the pain that was evident in the latter portions of that book. The nightmare in Sexus and the wound talked about in the last three paragraphs of Plexus (p.640) are fully revealed and the crucifixion evident. Were Nexus an examination of Miller's situation in a way similar to the last chapters of the first book of the trilogy it would be a better book than it is. There is too little probing into the wound to deepen the meaning of this concluding volume. Significantly absent is the time elapsed from the chronological end of the prior book and the start of this one. Miller has seldom refused to detail almost everything that happened to him yet here there is a brief and strange ellipsis or lacuna. By the time the last book opens the battle looming in Plexus is over, a revealing omission in a writer of such candor. Lack of a transitional passage indicates the touchiness and unease felt at that period in Miller's life even at the far remove of over three decades, and is emblematic of the book's weak and strong points. The tone of despair is only occasionally powerful and the book does not fulfill the meaning of the title, not only in the sense that it is incomplete but, more importantly, that it does not make the trilogy cohere on a thematic level. Miller and Mona have a relationship which becomes increasingly strained as the books go on. Nexus is about the dilemma of the narrator

as he confronts his wife's lesbianism and his 'failure' as a man (according to what his definition of what a man is). Emotional energy is evident in this book when Miller addresses the narrator's feelings about Mona and Anastasia, yet too often this energy is expended on pointless diatribes on America or mini-essays on Art and Philosophy. As a narrator Miller does not focus sharply or often enough on his problem; as an author, Miller robs the situation of its obvious potentialities for dramatic treatment. One would expect attention to be paid to the narrator's condition and the inter-action of the three main characters. Psychological exploration of the characters is rare, with minor matters handled with equal care, thus cancelling out any advances made and diffusing energy into worthless pursuits. Miller's insecurity, Mona's lying and their present state would have benefited from more honesty and directness on the author's part. There is too little consciousness of people and their motivations.

The preceding statements might lead one to conclude that there is not much worth reading in Nexus, which is hardly the case. Some have found the story of Miller-Mona-Anastasia capable of producing a "frisson,"[23] believe it contains a "living truth" (p.70), or find the dialogue the best thing.[24] A new tone in Miller's writing, partly the result of flagging energy, is the laconic voice which goes on for pages and has never been present to such an extent

before. While diminishment of writing skill robs the powers of imagination, it dovetails (ironically) with a winding down of Miller's life in the historical present. That is, the state in which he lived was so miserable and the effect so long-lasting that the lifeless prose which conveys most of his feelings serves as a mirror, however cracked and warped, of his situation. In other circumstances one might conclude that the author had written on a smaller scale to reflect the topic and characters. (Joseph Heller's Something Happened [1974] is a case in point. The high energy of Catch-22 [1961] would be out of place in the later work due to Bob Slocum's character. He is the only source of power and energy and he emits little of either.) The most tiresome writing in Nexus can be found in the verbal pyrotechnics and the aesthetic discourses, the most impassioned writing in certain interior monologues and in dialogue. The first two scenes - between Miller and Mona, then Miller and Anastasia - outline the anguish of the narrator in a compelling fashion. In the first he is not sure where Mona has been or how much time has passed; in the second he confronts Anastasia, who has just come out of an asylum (where she went of her own accord to see if she was "in her right mind or not."[25]) In conversations like the following Nexus becomes vital. Here is the narrator talking to Anastasia while Mona is not around:

> It's most unfortunate, to put it mildly, that my wife should feel

> so keenly drawn to you. Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Almost literary. It's a goddamned shame, is what I mean to say, that she couldn't have chosen a real man, if she had to betray me, even if he were someone I despised. But you... why shit! it leaves me absolutely defenceless. I wince at the thought of someone saying to me - "What's wrong with you?" Because there must be something wrong with a man - at least, so the world reasons - when his wife is violently attracted to another woman. I've tried my damnedest to discover what's wrong with me, if there is anything wrong, but I can't lay a finger on it. (p.17)

The irony in that passage is present throughout the book. Firstly, Miller is a cuckold, a figure he has never been before. Secondly, and of far more relevance, there is the revealing qualifier, "at least, so the world reasons". What the narrator is saying is that the world may think like that but he doesn't; what is shown is that the narrator definitely does think like the world does. Apart from worrying about his masculinity, he finally has incontrovertible proof of Mona's lies to him; he is convinced that she has told him stories of near encounters with other women in order to innoculate him against the truth:

> ... to prepare her husband, to condition him, as it were, she slyly and insidiously struggles to poison his mind, invents or concocts the most fantastic tales, all innocent, of course, about experiences with girl friends prior to marriage. (p.17)

These words are upsetting to Anastasia and Miller for several reasons. For him they are the first open admission of Mona's sexual tastes, and so a condemnation of him; they signal the degree to which their marriage has decayed, a decay, judging by this allegation, which must have been going on without his knowledge. (This decay might be viewed as a decline by the narrator, which may partially serve to illuminate the paean to Spengler which comprises the bulk of the last pages of Plexus.) Such an assessment of his wife may be the result of a mild paranoia, a justification of the narrator's obliviousness to what was going on around him, or a desperate attempt to rescue some self-respect from the situation through the plea of ignorance, and thus portray him as defenceless. His audience, too, should be noted: as Mona will not talk to him, the narrator may be trying to startle information out of Anastasia, or as she says, "'So this is your game! Now you want to poison my mind!'" (p.17) The revelation that Mona must have been planning for this eventuality - an affair with another woman - strikes Anastasia hard, for if Mona was prepared to lie to her husband then there is little assurance that she will not deceive her some time in the future. Anastasia rejects Miller's words tearfully.

"When a situation gets so bad that no solution seems possible there is left only murder or suicide. Or both. These failing, one becomes a buffoon" (p.36); that is the

attitude of the narrator as he maintains an existence in an unpleasant environment. His attempt at suicide unsuccessful (alluded to on p.38) he shrinks his world to the realm of the mind, pre-figured in a conversation with Stymer, a lawyer, who thinks that the "life-force" (p.33) has taken refuge in the mind (p.33). Stymer wants to escape his law practice, and life in general, and flee the country or, as Miller puts it, go "underground."(p.31) Miller is invited to join him, but refuses; the plan comes to nothing, for Stymer (ironically) has a brain hemorrhage. "With that I stopped worrying about the mind as a refuge. Mind is all. God is all. So what?" (p.36) Yet exigencies force Miller into adopting some of Stymer's notions to his own life after the failed attempt to kill himself. The life-force is indeed residing in Miller's mind, for he has no outlet for it, and decides "to reduce life to a vacuum" (p.38), accomplished when he forsakes his friends and the outside world. His retreat to a hermetic life is a downwards descent and indicates that he can do nothing positive or liberating. Nexus is a picture of the narrator as he travels down a long spiral, at first refusing to fall further from his previous height, but eventually succumbing to interior conflicts and weaknesses. Though he would not normally be withdrawn, in Nexus he is very much insulated from the external world. One of the strengths of this book is the all-pervading irony, at work here in the 'brave'

words of a man who will not retreat from life, yet tries to do away with himself. The decision to live within his own mind, first rebuffed, is then accepted.

Physical surroundings, and how they are described, reveal the narrator's frame of mind. The apartment the three share is seen as follows:

> It was usually dark, that is what I remember most. The chill dark of the grave. Taking possession during a snow-storm, I had the impression that the whole world outside our door would remain forever carpeted with a soft white felt... It was a Siberia of the mind I inhabited, no doubt about it. For companions I had wolves and jackals, their piteous howling interrupted only by the tinkling of sleigh bells or the rumble of a milk truck destined for the land of motherless babies. (p.43)

A little later, the narrator turns from the apartment to how he fits into his new environment:

> And so, moving about in the dark or standing for hours like a hat rack in a corner of the room, I fell deeper and deeper into the pit. Hysteria became the norm. The snow never melted. (p.46)

This Siberia/grave/pit is his domain for slightly less than half the book. Miller and Anastasia soon 'decorate' it. Miller borrows her brushes and paints a portrait of her on the wall. "She would answer in kind. One day I painted a skull and crossbones on her door. The next day I found a carving knife hanging over the skull and bones" (p.60). Later, Miller tacks paper on the wall

with the idea for a play on it. "Re-entering the gloom I automatically lit a single candle and, like a sleep-walker, planted myself in front of my idea of a play. It was to be in three acts and for three players only. Needless to say who they were, these strolling players" (p.73). What had been a cell and a grave is now a cave (lit by fire), complete with drawings and hieroglyphics (for the play is in note form), a movement from death to a primitive way of life. The trapped feeling persists, however, until Anastasia announces that she is leaving, a premature announcement since Mona talks her out of it. The three decide to go to Europe, the women first and Miller to follow.

It is predictable that this is not how things have been planned among Mona and Anastasia. Miller returns home from work one day to find the apartment unoccupied and a note left for him: "'We sailed this morning on the Rochambeau. Didn't have the heart to tell you. Write care of American Express, Paris. Love.'" (p.153) Miller, shattered, continues at his job (in the Park Department, first as a gravedigger, then in an office) and moves in with his parents, leading them to believe that this was how things were planned, though they know otherwise. Back in the house on "The Street of Early Sorrows" (p.158) the narrator reads the Book of Job, comparing miseries. After some two months Miller receives a letter from Mona (her

third) which says that Anastasia has gone to North Africa and that Mona is heading for Vienna. Coinciding with her travels is the overseas flight of Charles Lindbergh, both combining to underline Miller's stagnation, setting his "wretched frustration in relief" (p.165), releasing a cathartic pain which sparks the start of his writing career. What he writes is not a book but, more accurately, detailed notes; in the process of writing about his love for Mona he realizes that he does not love her anymore. "'I refused, however, to accept this conclusion. I told myself that my true purpose was merely to relate - 'merely!' - the story of my misfortunes" (p.166). Both things are true - his love for her would never be the same, and he would be obsessed by thoughts of her for the rest of his life. Even when he states in an unmailed letter to Mona (unmailed because she had given him no address in Vienna to write to) that he would wait for her forever, a dream reveals that he has already moved forward. In this dream his shriveled heart is restored to full size by the Angel of Mercy (p.177). He is reborn: "Rising to my feet, a new being entire, I put forth my arms to embrace the world... I had come through the valley of the shadow of death; I was no longer ashamed to be human, all too human" (p.177). A week after that dream, Mona arrives back in New York.

From her arrival till the conclusion of the book the focus is not on their marital state but on Miller's new

assignment. He, or rather, Mona, has been commissioned to write a novel that will please one of Mona's 'benefactors', a man called Pop. A "rich old geezer" (p.182), he will pay Mona enough money for her and Miller to go to Europe, simply because he wants, according to Mona, to see if she has the ability to finish the task. Miller is suspicious, not only of Mona's relationship with Pop, but whether she will stay with Miller once she gets paid. Perhaps in retaliation for Mona's affair with Anastasia Miller tells her that he could have earned his passage to Europe if he had gone to bed with a man who solicited him in a bar (pp. 201-203). Mona is startled at first, but if the purpose of the anecdote was to cast doubts on Mona's sexual attractiveness, then it fails due to inadequate development on the narrator's part.

Miller's emphasis on the Miller-Mona-Anastasia triangle, then the return to Miller-Mona, excludes a large part of the atmosphere of the earlier books provided by the enormous number of people present. In Nexus the narrator never seeks his friends out and sees, only through their instigation, Osiecki, Stanley and MacGregor. The last in particular is insistent in his attempts to meet his old friend yet he is avoided and finally renounced. "'I have no friends anymore,'" says Miller to a landlady, "'I've killed them all off.'" (p.280). The legions of people in Sexus and Plexus are much reduced in Nexus. This discriminatory narrowing of his circle of friends is a parallel to the narrowing of

Miller's world in the first half of the book. (The notable exclusion of Miller's only artistic friend, Ulric, seen regularly in the previous two books, may have some connection with the commissioned writing the narrator is doing. There might be some awareness that compared to his friend, Miller is simply doing unglorified hackwork, and so consequently he would feel a sense of embarrassment around Ulric.) Mona's return brings a few more individuals onto the scene as the Millers move into a populous and friendly neighborhood comprised mainly of Jews, with whom they have good relations. Distance from old friends and physical detachment from familiar haunts signify the indrawn nature of Miller, due to his emotional/matrimonial problems and the effort required to write the novel for Pop. The second half of the book describes Miller's new life, his writing and the preparations for leaving America. The book ends with Miller and Mona on the Ile de France steaming for Paris.

"The book ends" - this is a problematical statement. With Mona's return Nexus idles as the principals prepare to leave the set. The action in the second half is not central to the events; that is, the writing and the departure are left to move along quietly, or else submerged, while other incidents take precedence, causing Nexus to look more like an unfinished work than anything else. Miller's life with Mona, the core of this book, is abandoned in the second half except for a few fitful conversations, remarks by the

narrator, and a lingering haze of doubt over their future. Miller and Mona are settled into a pattern that falls far short of their once ardent love for each other while at the same time not returning them to the mood of the first half of this book. With the absence of Anastasia, there is loss of a diametric which helped generate some of the emotions found only in the first half. To a great degree, the laconic voice of the enervated narrator takes over in the second half of Nexus and undercuts the strengths, themes and feelings of the first half in a damaging way. Despite the slapstick (Miller trying to drive a car for the first time) and ethnic humor (with various Jews, though never at their expense) there is a failure of power, lack of interest in the subject, an impression that what happens after Miller and Mona sail will tie things up. Of course, there is no continuation,[25] which makes the decline of Nexus that much more disappointing.

A second factor adding to disappointment felt over this book is the loss of technical or creative complexity or innovation, rather disheartening after the mastery of Plexus and the experimentation Miller generally tries in most of his works. Nexus has few startling or evocative images. The only daring is in the first half where Miller presents some things baldly and clearly, yet these are select things, for, as has been noted before, there are events edited out which indicate that Miller's obsession

with Mona and those years with her are still too painful to explore. Desire to avoid the subject competes with desire to tell as much as he can. Certainly the interval between the chronological end of Plexus and the beginning of Nexus indicates hesitancy at describing the narrator's pain. Though some details are provided in the first chapter of his distress, there is a revealing sketchiness, for in this most candid of writers such a leap from one point t· another provokes speculation that much has been edited. Regarding the near silence concerning the suicide attempt the same point applies, that the narrator has glossed over the details due to their painful quality. Those are concrete examples of the narrator's sensitivity about these things; more pervasive is the aversion to directly discussing and examining the relationship between Mona and Anastasia. Characteristically, the narrator cannot penetrate to the heart of their affection for each other. What may be the major fault with this book, and The Rosy Crucifixion as a whole, is Miller's inability to make the character of Mona three dimensional. There is a barrier to his vision of her that ultimately obscures the text in a critical fashion. Though confusion in the narrator's mind works well in the first half of Nexus, in the second half, with Mona back and nothing resolved, the lack of analysis weakens the entire book, for the first half is left at a vital point in the growth of the narrator, the point at which he discovers that,

in the most important ways, he has left Mona behind. The sudden clarity the narrator had as he wrote notes for his "Domesday Book" (p.165) deserted him when Mona re-entered his life, and Nexus, and the entire trilogy, trails off unfinished. Still, there is a continuity and growth to the three books: in its despair and caution Nexus is thematically a logical conclusion to the sprawling, openly unrestrained, sexually unrepressed first book and to the more controlled yet still adventurous second. Sexus is based on exhibition, Plexus on creation, Nexus on emotion. Correspondingly, the narrator progresses, first possessing an inarticulate nature, then an articulate one, and finally a found voice. Narrator-Miller and author-Miller, never very far apart, move closer together with each book. The fruit of the merging is found in the 'next' book, Tropic of Cancer.

Tropic of Cancer, Black Spring, Tropic of Capricorn and The Rosy Crucifixion chart, in various ways, the evolution of the narrator and of the artist. Miller's oeuvre is a colossal 'I', a monument not to self-aggrandizement or supreme egocentricity but to the steadily increasing reliance on the individual self to understand the world around him. A pioneer in the use of surrealism, apocalyptic imagery and black comedy, Henry Miller deserves more serious critical attention than he has heretofore received.

Chapter Three Endnotes

[1] Jay Martin, Always Merry and Bright : The Life of Henry Miller (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p.431. Hereafter referred to as Martin, Life.

[2] Martin, Life, p.448.

[3] Kingsley Widmer, Henry Miller (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963), p.172.

[4] Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller : A Private Correspondence, ed. George Wickes (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1963), pp. 264-265. Hereafter referred to as Durrell, Miller, Correspondence.

[5] Gore Vidal, "The Sexus of Miller", in Homage to Daniel Shays : Collected Essays 1952 - 1972 (New York: Random House, 1972), p.197. All further references to this essay are within the text.

[6] David Littlejohn, "Sexus, Nexus and Plexus", in Interruptions (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970), p.49. Hereafter referred to as Littlejohn, Interruptions.

[7] Norman Mailer, Genius and Lust : A Journey Through the Major Writings of Henry Miller (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1976), p.186. I have taken the liberty of reversing Mailer's italicization of his own words, except in the cases of titles and emphasized words, in order that it conform

to usual standards. Hereafter referred to as Mailer, Genius.

[8] Henry Miller, "My Life as an Echo", in Stand Still Like the Hummingbird (New York: New Directions, 1962), p.83.

[9] Henry Miller, Sexus (Paris, 1949; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.29. Hereafter referred to within the text. I have taken the liberty of changing Miller's use of inverted double angles for inverted commas in order to make the text conform to usual standards.

[10] For an interesting opinion on the figure of Osmanli, see Paul R. Jackson, "Henry Miller, Emerson, and the Divided Self", American Literature 43, May 1971, No. 2, pp. 231-241. In considering the role of Osmanli in Plexus, one might also keep in mind the importance of Oswald Spengler at the conclusion of Plexus (indeed, throughout Miller's works). Miller's familiarity with Spengler's book Decline of the West may play a part in the choice of the name "Osmanli" for the narrator's alter-ego. In Volume Two of Spengler's work, there are two references to the Osmanli (the Turkish word for the people English call "Ottomans"). In writing about various races, Spengler says: "How many peoples may have originated in a chief's following or a band of fugitives? Such a group can change race, like the Osmanli, who appeared in Asia Minor as Mongols..." (The Decline Of The West : Perspectives of World-History, Vol.II, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928, p.160). A few sentences later, Spengler writes that

"[the name for a tribe] may be exchanged for that of an eponymous hero, as with the Osmanli ..." (p.160). Miller's 'orator' adapts to the surroundings and appears as all things to all men if paid enough. There is enough of a correspondence between Miller's Osmanli and Spengler's Osmanli to forestall any firm conclusions that Emerson is Miller's only source for the name.

[11] Mailer, Genius, p.186.

[12] Henry Miller, Plexus (Paris, 1953; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.22. Hereafter referred to within the text.

[13] William A. Gordon, The Mind and Art of Henry Miller (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p.138.

[14] Leslie A. Fiedler, Waiting For The End (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), p.45.

[15] Ihab Hassan, The Literature of Silence : Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967), p.100. Hereafter referred to as Hassan, Silence.

[16] Kenneth C. Dick, Henry Miller : Colossus of One (Nijmegen, The Netherlands: Alberts - Sittard, 1967). Hereafter referred to as Dick, Colossus.

[17] C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril Educational Publishing Corporation, 1963), p.459. This is a standard reference text widely used in Canadian universities at undergraduate level.

[18] Durrell, Miller, Correspondence, p.276.

[19] Henry Miller, Just Wild About Harry : A Melo-melo in Seven Scenes (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1963), p.10.

[20] Claude Mauriac, The New Literature, trans. Samuel I. Stone (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1959), p.11. Hereafter referred to within the text.

[21] Hassan, Silence, p.101.

[22] Littlejohn, Interruptions, p.68.

[23] Littlejohn, Interruptions, p.68.

[24] Dick, Colossus, p.91.

[25] Henry Miller, Nexus (Paris, 1960; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p.8. Hereafter referred to within the text.

[26] See Martin, Life, pp. 467, 475-476 for information on an uncompleted second volume of Nexus.

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