

HENRY MILLER:  
A DEFINITION OF THE ART AND THE ARTIST

by

RODNEY IRWIN  
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Department of ENGLISH

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver 8, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to explain some essential aspects of the literature of Henry Miller by concentrating on an explication of three terms as they apply to Miller's novels. The thesis does not take a stance involving a certain critical "distance", that is, it does not deal with an evaluation of the success or failure of his vision, nor with the validity or invalidity of his world. This, I maintain, has been done to excess by most critics of Henry Miller. The thesis indicates in the opening chapter the major outlines of the literary tradition to which Miller belongs, specifically the American romantic-transcendentalist tradition. Further, though not specific, reference is made to this tradition in subsequent chapters in describing the movement toward mysticism apparent in Miller's later novels. The main portion of the thesis details the significance of three major terms, apocalypse, creation, and process, as elements which encompass the overall development of Miller's literature. The thesis attempts to show that these terms indicate an unconscious development in the author of a mystical vision or insight where the works themselves serve as a working out of the author's growing understanding of his inner awakening. The final chapter accounts for Miller's later non-fiction as illustrative of his arrived position. Miller has reached a particular kind of

"cosmic consciousness" and he regards his life as a parable of the progress of everyman from unconscious unification with all things (childhood), through knowledge (manhood), to a new stage of conscious unification with the world (maturity). The period intervening between childhood and final spiritual insight is that detailed by his six major novels, which might generally be characterized as a trial by fire or a trip through the hell of the alienated modern world. This thesis, then, is an exposition of the development of the artist through his art.

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## CHAPTER ONE--INTRODUCTION

This introduction serves as more than a statement of purpose for the chapters that follow. It is an attempt to acknowledge briefly the relationship of Henry Miller to the larger traditions of literature which this thesis generally avoids concentrating upon as they fall outside the scope of this discussion. Some indirect justification for the approach taken in the main body of the thesis is given here through a few illustrations of Miller criticism. I am sure the efforts made here to avoid the pitfalls of some kinds of criticism has resulted in other, hopefully less serious, errors. The attempt, though, has been to present a reading of Miller that takes as little support as possible from his critics, in order to avoid losing the works themselves in supporting and countering critical arguments.

The basic theme in Henry Miller's major group of autobiographical novels is the development of the artist, and, in this case, of a particular sort of romantic sensibility. The artist here is representative of romanticism in its twentieth century version and in a particularly Millerian form. The form which romanticism takes is differentiated by an understanding of its own time, which is only to say that Miller's continuation in the romantic tradition reflects not only his own personality, mind and predecessors in

American and Romantic literature, but the contemporary world. For example, the obvious singularity of Miller's reaction to his own time might be his well-known use of what is commonly thought of as obscene language and description. In those terms, Miller can be viewed as the great anti-Puritan, anti-middle class rebel. The deeper, more important reasoning behind the use of a number of these features in Miller's writing, which take us somewhat farther past these general classifications, will be dealt with in greater depth later in this discussion. Nevertheless, Miller does represent at this general level a tradition of American romantic writers whose roots trace back to Walt Whitman. That is, Miller writes in a kind of autobiographical tradition of the poet who sings the "song of myself", who attempts to embrace the world in a great expansive first person account of himself accepting all life. Some of the philosophical roots of this romanticism derive from Emerson's formulation of the "Oversoul", where the poet is unified with nature by an inner sense of a mysterious encompassing force.<sup>1</sup> Emerson put forward, and Whitman exemplified in his poetry, the notion that the artist acts as a sort of transparent eyeball which sees, accepts, and relates all experience. In their literary works, Whitman and Miller create central figures, incorporating that notion of both the "eye" and "I", who experience sensually all things and try to accept all things. Other aspects of the romantic tradition which appear in Miller are the organic metaphor,

as opposed to that of the machine, and what Morse Peckham points out as a feature of the Romantic Movement in the early English Romantics: "the spiritual death and rebirth, or secular conversion."<sup>2</sup> Some other interesting relationships between Miller's romantic themes and the main body of English romanticism are drawn in greater detail in William Gordon's doctoral dissertation.<sup>3</sup> For example, connections are made between the general method of Miller's novels, as they detail the development of the author himself toward an understanding of his world, and the generally similar tale of the poet's life in Wordsworth's Prelude: Both writers return to an examination of major moments in their childhood as key touchstones in their lives.

These elements of a particular tradition which can be seen in the literature of Henry Miller are mentioned in order to indicate only briefly the connecting lines to the main tradition of English literature that are apparent in Miller's works. But the purpose of this discussion is not to deal with Henry Miller the Romantic. As has been so far shown, the general outline of that tradition does allow him a place, as perhaps it does for a large and varied number of twentieth century English and American writers. Also, that kind of categorization of Miller has been thoroughly and successfully studied in Gordon's dissertation. It is indeed useful to see the writer in the general perspective of the existing literary traditions. But my interest in this analysis is to move toward another kind of understanding of Miller's work,



which to a large extent tries to ignore a detailed placement of the works in any historical tradition or structure. Rather, I want to deal with the problems of understanding the artist-hero as Miller develops that and other related themes in the novels themselves. That is, this discussion will attempt to deal with the problems and themes of Miller's literary works in their own more limited context.

As the story of the development of the artist and the man, Miller's works deal with a number of related major themes, one of which is the notion of unified perception; that is, the way the artist's mind understands his world, and how he makes 'sense' of it in his art. This also involves an understanding of how the artist interprets the whole range of his experiences, and, in Miller's books, is important in terms of the selection of material and experiences and events that lead his character to becoming finally a successful artist. The experiences and attitudes Miller expresses also illustrate a great deal about the world view at which he eventually arrives. This is, in a sense, a philosophy of life and a theory of the role of the artist. And, in the form of his works, Miller implies a particular theory of art. In many of his later essays, he states quite explicitly some aspects of these theories that appear to be operating in his novels, though he does not make those statements in terms of any direct discussion about his earlier novels.<sup>4</sup> What Miller is presenting then, is a kind of modern chronicle of the man and the artist, or at least the man who reaches his heavenly

goal in becoming the artist. The nature of the transformation and perhaps the scope of the definition of the word are such that the man is an artist at the end of his journey. What he comes to mean is that every man should become an artist of this sort, in the sense that he must become a completely "unified man". The unification means attaining a secular version of spiritual salvation, and reaching an earthly paradise, or rather coming to realize that paradise is inner, is to be found here in this life, in this world. The Miller hero realizes that the journey itself, the process itself, can also be the end, at least at a certain point along the way:

Somehow the realization that nothing was to be hoped for had a salutary effect upon me. For weeks and months, for years, in fact, all my life I had been looking forward to something happening, some extrinsic event that would alter my life, and now suddenly inspired by the absolute hopelessness of everything, I felt relieved, as though a great burden had been lifted from my shoulders.<sup>5</sup>

There are no extrinsic miracles; the burden lifted is an internal salvation. The journey is one of finding one's soul; it is a spiritual trip involving the unification of life and art, where art comes to represent a process of both becoming, in its attempted production, and ultimately, a state of being, at its moment of full insight. The problems Miller raises are ones of the nature of art and artist, the relationship of the two, and the wider problems of the relationship of man to the world. His presentation of the solutions to these problems are, in a general sort of way, romantic, but more particularly, they are presented in a

unique fashion that connects with those aspects of organic sensibility of the world. They relate to D. H. Lawrence's understanding of the relationship of man to his world. Miller himself has said that he considered himself to be continuing in a Lawrentian tradition.<sup>6</sup> And some of the particularly American aspects of his writing and his thinking connect him with the stream of writing of people such as Whitman and W. C. Williams. The great torrent of words, the acceptance of all life, and the mystical sense of union with all things related him to Whitman. That organic view of the world and objectification of nature and man in it, as part of it, put him in tune with much of what Williams has to say. And certainly, there are a number of other particulars of Miller's speech and thought which relate him to the larger American romantic-transcendentalist tradition as well. Miller's connections to other writers and traditions serve to place him in the context of these literary groupings, presenting him in a general perspective. Those connections have only been briefly intimated here, and relatively few relationships have been drawn since our main interest in Miller is in the works themselves, the detailed themes he discusses and the way in which he develops them, rather than in the literary tradition that circumscribes his art.

Often the ideas expressed by Miller seem trite and oversimplified when read at the surface level for idea content alone. This appears to be so mainly because he is talking about a depth of feeling, understanding and consciousness

that we are not normally attuned to. His statements have the ring of Biblical injunctions, behind which there is a tremendous weight of deeper meaning involved. The problem, then, in approaching Miller and making sense of what he is saying beyond the surface injunctions to live right and the surface criticisms of the modern world, is to know something of the range of his art, of his insight, of his understanding, which will give these statements significance. There is more than literal interpretation of those surface-seeming statements required, though there is that as well in what he says. Generally, the underlying import of what Miller is driving at has to do with the spiritual well-being of man. He transforms some of the old, well-known, and unfortunately clichéd and hackneyed teachings of the standard religions. The important exception here is that he is presenting the "teachings" in contemporary terms, both in the language, and in the parables or metaphors and illustrations. And his spiritual "appeal" represents a wider, less exclusive humanism than one finds in most religious practice. Moreover, one can miss the meaning of the stories and the real relevance of what is being said through a too literal interpretation of the words, and through a long, ingrained, misbegotten habit of trying to penetrate the "meaning" of the words in terms of "ideas" alone. To a large degree, the old kinds of idea structures are not there. The cultural patterns, or rather, the institutionalized modes of thinking, just do not apply to what Miller is talking about. Miller's tradition is also that of the underground man, the

underground writers. Their form, their words have different meanings. When he talks about the religious, the sexual, about spirit, truth, and enlightenment, he means something rather different from what we normally understand by those concepts. Here, Lawrence fits that tradition of writing, and here perhaps is where Miller sees himself as continuing in the Lawrentian mold.<sup>7</sup> They are writing in another language. So, when Miller uses those words in some of his later essays especially, they may seem to make no real sense; they appear as trite, egotistic, self-inflated philosophical ramblings if we are not aware of the context of his attempt to develop the understanding of what he means, as in fact his novels attempt to do.

Miller's early novels struggle to circumvent the limitations of language and traditional modes of thinking in an attempt to set up the context of what he is "getting at". Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn, Black Spring, and the Rosy Crucifixion trilogy of Sexus, Nexus, and Plexus create the consciousness of a new world, which involves a new kind of understanding. The method by which this is accomplished is through the journey of the artist which the continuing story of all the novels is ostensibly "about". The story of the artist deals with the way in which he relates to all the traditional institutions of his world, such as work, marriage, social relationships with friends and other women, and the gradual process of his understanding of life. A second major feature of the method of his narrative as it takes shape as this

journey to consciousness is the form in which it is related. It is presented in the first person, present tense; it is plotless, unstructured and externally repetitive in terms of incidents and experiences. The novels, then, are autobiographical and move in a circular pattern. The third method through which this new vocabulary of thinking is introduced is in the language and incidents of the narrative and how they are recounted. Form and language themselves parallel the surface story of the birth, or prebirth of the artist in their departure from conventions and traditions of literature; they form a tripartite attack on that set of standards which represent the contemporary way of life in the industrialized, western, twentieth century world. All three methods represent an attempt to re-structure the context of our understanding of that world and of literature; that is, they are part of an integral attempt to reshape the background or roots of what literature means, what art means. These novels re-define a whole set of terms, in ways that have existed before, though, and in ways that other writers, such as Lawrence, Whitman, and W. C. Williams, among many others, have dealt with. To understand Miller, one must know what he is saying in terms of that tradition, partly romantic, transcendentalist, American in feeling, thought, and language, as well as something of the religious mystic that exceeds this context. These terms applied to Miller's novels can be expanded in relation to what some other thinkers whom Miller was familiar with, such as

the psychoanalyst, Otto Rank,<sup>8</sup> and the mystic, Nicholas Berdyaev,<sup>9</sup> might be able to add as theoretical structures of consciousness and experience which Miller is dealing with as he combines novel and biography, illusion and reality, in an attempt both to recreate his past (by imaginatively reliving it), and to find in that recreation the meaning of life. Part of the purpose of this thesis is to explain the "meaning" or kind of consciousness at which Miller finally does arrive.

Most literary criticism of Henry Miller, what little there is, either scratches the surface of Miller's real meanings, or completely misses the significance of what he is saying, usually as the result of a partial interpretation of the meaning of his novels. These misreadings derive partly from a selective rather than a complete reading of Miller's works. That is, they are not considered as a related whole. And these critics are then in an even poorer position when attempting to deal with his other prose essays, since those works, I maintain, require an understanding of the position from which Miller is speaking, one that can be gained only from the group of his earlier novels. Without that kind of background, which is the minimal prerequisite, the critic simply cannot know the significance of the culminating utterance when he has no real sense of its context. Kingsley Widmer's interpretation of Miller demonstrates just such a lack of insight into the whole of Miller's work.

While Miller once in a while turns a phrase, perception or whimsical response in a curious way, most of his vast writing is mere verbiage-paraphrase, not particularly apt quotation, cranky fashion, personal blurb, disorganized autobiography, or just drifting rumination in which Miller demonstrates his contempt for discrimination, standards, analysis complexities, and even awareness of reality.<sup>10</sup>

Though I think his most serious critical fault is his attempt to impose his own rigorous structural analysis on Miller, Widmer fastens on one feature of Miller's writing, the figure of the rebel-buffoon, and then applies that interpretation to all his novels, judging their success or failure as they conform to that arbitrary measure. This is a false method of interpretation where the critic searches for categories with which to blanket the works of a writer. The critic's reading becomes an analysis by comparison to his own chosen, favourite literary yardstick. And where no useful measure exists in the works, he creates one, or he fastens on one aspect in the work which most nearly conforms to what literary analysis expects as a measuring rod, and inflates that. In other words, many critics do not appear to be reading all of what is there being said by the author, or they reject a large portion of it because they cannot make sense of it within the terms of the critical standards they are imposing on the artist. In this regard, an even better example of good misinterpretation is the journal review of Miller by John Williams, which in many ways is quite sympathetic and certainly well-intentioned.<sup>11</sup> Williams attempts to explain Miller in terms of American Puritan



theology and its conflicts, a comparison which is probably valid in part, at least as a minor aspect of Miller's attitude, though it is only occasionally visibly manifested in the novels. Williams draws parallels in a great deal of this theology to elements of Miller's works. In the excitement of proving his theory, what he says tends to become a rather forced matching of the sort that can be made to any number of things, once one decides to find the equivalents that fit his theory. One could, I am sure, perform the same kind of analysis of Miller in terms of any number of theories in that fashion, extracting from the author's work the necessary support for one's argument. The fallacy in this kind of analysis lies in its fragmented, partial and arbitrary approach to the author. Widmer's category of the rebel-buffoon follows a similar analytical line, in terms of his arbitrary selection of one theme and his rejection of all else, though he applies his reading of Miller to the whole range of his works. But what sets Williams apart in his criticism is an innocuous, but incredible statement which exemplifies rather well the critic's blindness to what is taking place in the writer's works when the critic becomes completely enmeshed in the application of his own theories to the work he is handling: In discussing the Colossus of Maroussi, Williams says, "we soon become painfully aware that Miller is really concerned only with himself."<sup>12</sup> Surely he could not have overlooked the fact that this is the central pervading theme of the autobiographical story in the six major novels

of Henry Miller as well as that of practically everything else Miller has ever written! Like many Miller critics, his tunnel-vision of Miller has obviously allowed him to see one aspect of the works, and a relatively irrelevant one at that. He has focused, unfortunately, on an attempt to force the works to fit his idea of Puritan elements of success and failure in the American unconscious.

Even the most competent, sympathetic reviewers of Miller indicate, by the generality of what they say, that they do not really come to terms with Miller's work. They do not demonstrate the significance of what he says, what he does, or what the use of certain techniques he uses are intended to accomplish.<sup>13</sup> Philip Rahv can blithely say, on the basis of their treatment of sex, that Miller and Lawrence are completely unconnected, though he speaks illuminatingly and intelligently about Miller's attitude as artist to his art.<sup>14</sup> The point is that unless he is implying that the central feature of the Lawrentian world view is Lawrence's attitude toward sex and that attitude is revealed only in his sexual descriptions, then linking the two artists in any major way is a legitimate and valuable comparison. It is difficult to believe that Rahv could be seriously thinking of the works of Lawrence or Miller as principally focused upon sexual attitudes or just because they differ in methods of treating the subject they are thus unrelated.

What is required, then, is a somewhat more comprehensive definition of Miller the artist and Miller's art, in order really to appreciate what he is saying. That is, one cannot

legitimately begin to criticize a work without first coming to know its terminology. And terminology here means more than vocabulary. It is nothing short of an understanding of the world of which the artist is speaking and the world in which he is situated. Briefly, it is as large a sense of the artist's context as one can arrive at from a discussion of the works themselves. The purpose of this thesis, then, is to examine the world of Henry Miller in his novels in order to establish his context, his vocabulary, his "eye" and his "I". This, it seems to me, is a necessary preliminary to literary criticism, if not the main function of criticism itself. My purpose here is also an attempt to reach through to some sense of the spiritual wisdom of the artist, which itself is perhaps the central feature of the successful work of art.

The task of critical appreciation in literature must try to be something more than the rather academic analysis of forms, styles, and ideas mechanically applied from outside the work of art, and all measured in the object more or less for tables of whether it conforms to or deviates from the cultural yardsticks of "tradition". Criticism must attempt to be something more if it is ever to perform a useful function in illuminating what it is that literature, particularly the new and perhaps radically different, is "about".

I suspect that lucidity may no longer be wholly adequate to the ambitions of criticism. We increasingly feel that criticism should do more than clarify; it should also possess the wisdom of the senses and of the spirit. We want it to endanger itself, as literature does, and to testify to our condition. We even hope that it can sustain the burden of revelation. This hope has led me to suggest that criticism may have to become apocalyptic before it can compel our sense of relevance.<sup>15</sup>

This thesis is hardly apocalyptic or revelatory in the sense that Hassan calls for, but, as an exercise in explanatory analysis, it does attempt to convey that "wisdom of the senses and of the spirit" that is the essential Henry Miller.

## CHAPTER TWO--APOCALYPSE

One way of accounting for Miller's main autobiographical novels would be to trace patterns of development which might link them together. Rather than work through some sort of a blueprint outline of Miller's novels which might only result in fitting together a haphazard and arbitrary structure to which they do not obviously belong, it would perhaps be most useful to approach the works in terms of some key words. Hopefully, these terms will form the basis of a general unifying framework illustrating the overall cohesiveness of Miller's novels. These words are: apocalypse, creation, and universal process. From a discussion of these terms I think the structure of the works will make itself apparent. The main boundaries of this discussion are the six novels of Miller which run chronologically from Tropic of Cancer through Black Spring, Tropic of Capricorn, Sexus, Plexus, and Nexus. These novels form a unified whole in many ways, in that they comprise a series or plan which Miller set out about the time he began the first of them in 1931.<sup>1</sup> It will be useful to deal briefly with some of Miller's other writings where they serve to illustrate the position at which the author has arrived in his later work, as that position relates to the movement of the artist depicted in the six major novels.

To begin with the notion of apocalypse is to grapple with an essential problem in all of what Miller says: the seemingly paradoxical and contradictory meaning of the terminology in his writings. The difficulty is twofold. It is first that of making the distinction between the two worlds Miller wants to speak about, one of which must be discussed in terms which apply to the other. That is, he must talk of an inner, spiritual world or condition of feeling which is essentially unparaphrasable because felt directly rather than thought about. He must speak, like the poet, in ways which will somehow approximate, and thus, recreate, the sense of that inner feeling and that inner movement or development which the hero of his novels moves through. At the same time, he wants to locate the external world, the essential background against which the inner man develops relative to that inner movement; paradoxically, that placement is also the metaphor in terms of which the inner man must be described as moving. The metaphor is necessary if only because there is no other way and no other words with which to paint the picture. Getting behind the idea content of words, in a sense, is what raises the central and recurring difficulty which the artist, who has more than that to say, faces. And Miller is that sort of a writer. He is, in as many ways as possible, attempting to break through the restrictions which words, as expressions of ideas about things, as limiting, particular meanings, place on speech. "Behind the word is chaos. Each

word a stripe, a bar, but there are not and never will be enough bars to make the mesh."<sup>2</sup> This first of many forms of reaction to the inhibitions and proscriptions of tradition is an attack on idea itself, as it is also an attempt to render some of the teeming life that lies behind the organized, selected, arranged sense of what is commonly literary fiction. There are two things to be done in this regard: first, the world must be perceived as it is before any progress among men is to be made; this world is a reality Miller sees with rather violent and incisive insight:

the monstrous thing is not that men have created roses out of this dung heap, but that, for some reason or other man looks for a miracle, and to accomplish it he will wade through blood. He will debauch himself with ideas, he will reduce himself to a shadow if only for one second of his life he can close his eyes to the hideousness of reality. Everything is endured . . . in the belief that overnight something will occur, a miracle, which will render life tolerable. And all the while a meter is running inside and there is no hand that can reach in there and shut it off. . . . And out of the endless torment and misery no miracle comes forth, no microscopic vestige even of relief. Only ideas, pale, attenuated ideas which have to be fattened by slaughter; ideas come forth like bile, like the guts of a pig when the carcass is ripped open.<sup>3</sup>

The second insight about art itself involves an understanding of the purpose of artistic creation as transforming and rendering the significance of life itself:

Standing on the threshold of that world which Matisse has created I re-experienced the power of that revelation which had permitted Proust to so deform the picture of life that only those who, like himself, are sensible to the alchemy of sound and sense, are capable of transforming the negative reality of life into the substantial and significant outlines of art. Only those who can admit the light into their gizzards can translate what is there in the heart. . . . He is a bright sage, a dancing seer

who, with a sweep of the brush, removes the ugly scaffold to which the body of man is chained by the incontrovertible facts of life. He it is, if any man today possesses the gift, who knows where to dissolve the human figure, who has the courage to sacrifice an harmonious line in order to detect the rhythm and murmur of the blood. . . . 4

The attack on the word, then, is really a movement against a form of abstraction, away from the aspects of literary tradition which impel the writer to build literary "structures" that contain his "ideas" about life. Miller, of course, has his ideas and his philosophy about which he often speaks. But the problem he faces initially is one of finding a context for presenting them clearly and distinctly apart from what he feels is repressive in the literary tradition. He is an artist; therefore he is creating and he is attempting to communicate in doing so. He is a writer; therefore, his communication is through speech. But what he has to communicate is of the nature of the spirit, the inner man, not just the man in the head, that world of thought, but the whole inner man, where the words must contain body and thought worlds. He wants to present the living man, not a picture of man, a literary creation equivalent to, standing for, idea; but man totally involved in the act of living, generating ideas only as a part of his complete range of human generating activity.

Still I can't get it out of my mind what a discrepancy there is between ideas and living. A permanent dislocation, though we try to cover the two with a bright awning. And it won't go. Ideas have to be wedded to action; if there is no sex, no vitality in them, there is no action. Ideas cannot exist alone in the vacuum of the mind. Ideas are related to living. . . . The aesthetics of the idea breeds flowerpots and flowerpots you put on the window sill. But if there be no rain or sun of what use putting flowerpots outside the window? 5



His vision is explosive and violent, as are his feelings about the condition of the world around him. As he reacts to that world, so he reacts to the tradition in which he works. He has to break from the structural forms of expression, the literature of the novel, in every way possible and as radically as possible. If literary tradition impedes the presentation of the development of the whole man, then the presentation as novel must destroy the literary tradition of the novel as well:

Up to the present, my idea in collaborating with myself has been to get off the gold standard of literature. My idea briefly has been to present a resurrection of the emotions, to depict the conduct of the human being in the stratosphere of ideas, that is, in the grip of delirium. To paint a pre-Socratic being, a creature part goat, part Titan. In short, to erect a world on the basis of the omphalos, not on an abstract idea nailed to a cross. 6

This negative attitude toward the accepted concept of literature is part of the means that are to be used to bridge the gap that separates the inner man from the external world of reality as Miller sees it. Miller takes the stance of the writer in revolt, against the world, against literature itself, and he tells the story of his revolution in order to present the progress and development of his own spiritual struggle; that is, to tell the inner truth.

The second major difficulty in understanding the nature of Miller's terminology is the problem of what is true and what Miller means by truth. Again, of course, the meaning of truth is connected with the necessity to pass through the factual and the logical structures of surface events,

the structure of the novel is the structure of the inner world.

to arrive at some higher level of meaning. The facts actually get in the way of the truth in Miller's story of himself, because the truth is related to the story of his inner state and that progress, not the outer cycle of events which he seems to be recounting in such a confused, circular manner. The reconstruction of the events and experiences in the life of the autobiographical hero Henry Miller is repetitive and contradictory, and obviously exaggerated in many places. Those "facts" are not important in that sense because the truth or the essential nature of the stories lies not in their factual veracity, but in the state of being of the characters involved which they reveal. For Miller, history, the journey of the artist, is always at bottom an inner one, and the circumstances of the traditional narrative, such as time, place, plot, chronology, and characters, have different usage, different development here. Those traditions of the story are not used in the familiar patterns to which we are perhaps accustomed.

For there is only one great adventure and that is inward toward the self, and for that, time nor space nor even deeds matter. . . . If the self were not imperishable, the "I" I write about would have been destroyed long ago. To some this may seem like an invention, but whatever I imagine to have happened did actually happen . . . . even if everything I say is wrong, is prejudiced, spiteful, malevolent, even if I am a liar and a poisoner, it is nevertheless the truth . . . . 7

The journey of the Miller hero, then, is in a direction and of a magnitude that encompasses more than our understanding of the ordinary narrative appears to allow. It is contradictory

in so many ways because Miller wants to tell a story, the development of the artist, present a philosophy and view of aesthetics, a perspective of the world and of art, all of which form part of what we understand, in its autobiographical outline as literary creation. The view put is one which negates art as the merely necessary appendage to culture. Art becomes for him a presentation of the way of life; it is the expression of a secular religion. If there is a literary tradition which he follows, it is that of the development of the individual artist, the outcast not the spokesman, the man rebelling against the requirements of the human social world, the artist rejecting accepted forms, creating new forms, leading from his literary predecessors rather than following their lead. His story is the struggle of the alienated man to come to terms with his own life in his own way.

One doesn't become an artist overnight. First you have to be crushed, to have your conflicting points of view annihilated. You have to be wiped out as a human being in order to be born again an individual. . . . You have to get beyond pity in order to feel from the very roots of your being. One can't make a new heaven and earth with "facts". There are no "facts"--there is only the fact that man . . . is on his way to ordination.<sup>8</sup>

The struggle and the alienation are the initiation fee of the artist, part of a special kind of death undertaken in order to be reborn into a new, unified world.

Miller wants to unify art and life, to create an art object which essentially destroys art by somehow transcending, through the artistic vision itself, both art and life. He wants to encompass everything in his vision of life, through

his art. And one aspect of that great, all-enfolding magnanimity of view is Miller's tragic and violent, yet joyful vision of the apocalypse. That vision is somehow quite consistent, though it does encompass disparate imagery, though it is joyful in its happy call for the cataclysmic end of the world:

Nobody thinks any more how marvellous it is that the whole world is diseased. No point of reference, no frame of health. God might just as well be typhoid fever. No absolutes. Only light years of deferred progress. When I think of those centuries in which all Europe grappled with the Black Death I realize how radiant life can be if only we are bitten in the right place! The dance and fever in the midst of that corruption! Europe may never again dance so ecstatically. And syphilis! The advent of syphilis! There it was, like a morning star hanging over the rim of the world. . . . Aye, the great sun of syphilis is setting. Low visibility: forecast for the Bronx, for America, for the whole modern world. Low visibility accompanied by great gales of laughter. No new stars on the horizon. Catastrophes . . . only catastrophes! . . . I see America spreading disaster. I see America as a black curse upon the world. I see a long night settling in and that mushroom which has poisoned the world withering at the roots. . . . I am dazzled by the glorious collapse of the world! 9

The unification of the apocalyptic vision is not obvious within the context of the description of the vision itself, although one kind of unifying force is quite apparent there. That force is the sense of time in which there is brought together the view of the end. The notion of catastrophe and a black curse unalleviated by the ecstasy of "the dance and the fever" that accompanied the Black Death of the Middle Ages, is combined with the vision of the moment, the present world as diseased and catastrophic. The vision of the end and the present are unified in what is really a suspension of time, that is, a vision of eternity in the moment.

The sense of time which Miller works with throughout his novels is closely related to this notion of the present moment. The religious mystic, Berdyaev, whose writing Miller was familiar with,<sup>10</sup> describes the idea of eternity as approachable in two ways: "through the depth of the moment and through the end of time and of the world."<sup>11</sup> One of the central features of Miller's descriptions of the apocalypse is the attempt to unify these two concepts of eternity in one vision. And he constantly destroys the time perspective by breaking the barriers of past and future, incorporating the past into the present by telling and retelling the story of his life in the present and by ignoring the more mundane sense of the future completely. He refuses to look beyond the events and experience of his situation at the present moment. The future is present at the moment only in terms of the imaginative vision. And in terms of the past, he circles about the events of his earlier life, describing them always in the present tense, jumping occasionally to even earlier periods of childhood and coming back again, as the connections which make these instances relevant occur.

Any primitive man would have understood me, any man of archaic epochs would have understood me: only those about me, that is to say, a continent of a hundred million people, failed to understand my language. To write intelligibly for them I would have been obliged first of all to kill something, secondly, to arrest time. I had just made the realization that life is indestructible and that there is no such thing as time, only the present.<sup>12</sup>

To render the world in the present, to encompass all directions in one sweep, and to negate the kind of order that

chronological exposition imposes on the external world is what Miller wants to accomplish. That kind of achievement will then be an approximation of the mystical insight which he feels. He works to give the sense of continuous immediacy without feeling that this is a story of what was, so much as what is. Miller thus presents a greater sense of the character alive in the moment rather than in the past. Indeed, the whole series of his novels is a chronicle of the process of artist evolving toward that state of understanding. And the movement which he undergoes is a motionless movement of the mind; motionless in the sense that he is going nowhere, yet moving, as in growing, as in expanding, as in being alive, because the mind re-living the past recreates the present:

it is an exploration of the past, but a different past from that of the memorial street. This past is an active one, cluttered with souvenirs, but souvenirs only skin deep. The other past, so profound, so fluid, so sparkling, made no separation between itself, present and future. It was timeless, and if I speak of it as a past it is only to suggest a return which is not really a return but a restoration. The fish swimming back to the source of its own being.<sup>13</sup>

The story is essentially about the arrival at that state and the process of how that arrival was accomplished. It is the great expression of the growth of the self, which in Miller's terms, is not contained in time at all.

Everything that happens, when it has significance, is in the nature of a contradiction. . . . I found that what I had desired all my life was not to live--if what others are doing is called living--but to express myself. I realized that I had never the least interest in living, but only this which I am doing now, something which is parallel to life, of it at the same time, and beyond it. What is true interests me scarcely at all, nor even what is real; only that interests me which I imagine to be, that which I had stifled every day in order to live.<sup>14</sup>

In these terms, what is true and what is real are in fact of interest to Miller, as he often makes clear, but truth and reality become something different from the perjorative sense of those words which he means here. The plumb-line of truth is drawn parallel to an inner reality, the exact reversal of the familiar Platonic version of artistic conception. The reversal has other important implications too, as it points the direction of where the "real" man really lives, where paradise is to be found, and, in terms of the artist, what the nature of creation is. For the moment, though, we must come back to the notion of apocalypse, which is Miller's starting point, in order to fill out the background of the vision that leads out toward these related concepts.

Again, Berdyaev provides the theoretical discussion of the circular path into the eternal present, the implications of which Miller seems to develop as part of the journey of the artist hero:

But paradise is not in the future, is not in time, but in eternity. Eternity is attained in the actual moment, it comes in the present--not in the present which is part of the broken up time, but in the present which is an escape from time. Eternity is not a cessation of movement and creative life; it is creative life of a different order, it is movement which is not spatial and temporal but inward, symbolized not only by a straight line but by a circle, i.e. it is an inner mystery play, a mystery play of the spirit which embraces the whole tragedy of the cosmic life.<sup>15</sup>

Miller's attempt to reach this kind of a still point is a contradiction in terms of what that notion of eternity means, but the limitation in explaining or defining the

concept appears as contradictory as all of Miller's deeper meanings. This is so because of the boundaries of the words he is forced to use, and because the attempt to define and to describe is at least one remove from the actual sense of the process he is trying to describe. Miller is a step closer when we understand the whole of what his characters say and what they represent as metaphors of the process, the understanding and the feeling he is reaching for. That is, he is closer to expressing the sense of the spiritual growth or consciousness as the apocalyptic vision becomes part of his larger perceptual sense of the world. Miller's visions are part of his attempt to reach past the conceptual meanings which limit speech. In fact, it is these limits, of word as concept, that form so much of the apparent contradiction in what Miller has to say. It is important to note that the words eventually become something of a current upon which Miller swims, and their significance is revealed in the larger perspective of the general direction in which he moves with them, as well as through the continual washing over, the reiteration of, the sense that their meaning conveys.

Talk is only a pretext for other, subtler forms of communication. When the latter are inoperative speech becomes dead. If two people are intent upon communicating with one another it doesn't matter in the least how bewildering the talk becomes. People who insist upon clarity and logic often fail in making themselves understood. They are always searching for a more perfect transmitter, deluded by the supposition that the mind is the only instrument for the exchange of thought. When one really begins to talk one delivers himself. Words are thrown about recklessly, not counted like pennies. One doesn't care about grammatical or factual errors, contradictions, lies and so on.<sup>16</sup>



Paradoxically, the subtler forms of communication of which Miller speaks here are the most difficult to present in literature. This can perhaps be attested to, at least in Miller's case, by the critical neglect and misreading under which his work seems to have suffered for so long. Certainly, these forms are the most difficult to talk about or to attempt to paraphrase, because, as Miller points out, the meaning of the words themselves is at once unimportant and significant to a degree far beyond their ordinary semantic and syntactic content. They require a spiritual tuning between speaker and listener, involving other than a merely sympathetic reading. The requirement is for an inner ear and eye which listens and sees with the body and the mind at all levels; that is, the listener must capture far more of the total sense of what the writer is saying; he must, in fact, be involved at a level of communication far deeper than the normal sense of the word. It is that sense of communication which Tate distinguishes as communion,<sup>17</sup> which is only to say, spiritual communication.

The apocalyptic image, then, is an attempt to communicate far more than a vision of the final end of the world. It is the device by which Miller signals the start of his revolt against the present order of the state of affairs, the tradition of literature, the social structure. It is itself the method of entering a new world of time, life, struggle, and regeneration. It is the means through which the accepted

hierarchies of time and reason will be negated, where life and birth will be sung, chaotically, ecstatically, in the midst of destruction and death. The philosophy is one of life in death. In a sense, it is both the beginning and the end for Miller. He begins in violent, chaotic revolt against the world in his apocalyptic vision and he returns to make of it a paradise or vision of eternity in the present. The negation of the ordered world implicit in that vision becomes also an affirmation, a total acceptance of a seemingly chaotic disorder. But essentially the milieu is a natural chaos of the creative world of life itself, the life of the vibrant, mysterious, living organism. Miller ultimately rises far above the passive sense of the apocalypse to an active, creative apocalyptic vision, though the central doctrine he continually proclaims is one of acceptance. And that doctrine of acceptance is in no real way a passive one; rather, it advocates a joyous, vibrant acceptance of life:

Do anything, but let it produce joy. Do anything but let it yield ecstasy. So much crowds into my head when I say this to myself: images, gay ones, terrible ones, maddening ones, the wolf and the goat, the spider, the crab, syphilis with her wings outstretched and the door of the womb always on the latch, always open, ready like the tomb. Lust, crime, holiness: the lives of my adored ones, the failures of my adored ones, the words they left behind them, the words they left unfinished; the good they dragged after them and the evil, the sorrow, the discord, the rancor, the strife they created. But above all, the ecstasy! 18

The revolt is first against the external trappings of intellect, the man of thought, and against the social order, the institutions:

there has been a constant and steady decline of man in art, in thought, in action. The world is pooped out: there isn't a dry fart left. Who that has a desperate, hungry eye can have the slightest regard for these existent governments, laws, codes, principles, ideals, ideas, totems, and taboos? . . . if anyone had the least feeling of mystery about the phenomena which are labeled "obscene", this world would crack asunder. It is the obscene horror, the dry fucked-out aspect of things which makes this crazy civilization look like a crater. . . . It is no use putting on rubber gloves; all that can be coolly and intellectually handled belongs to the carapace and a man who is intent on creation always dives beneath, to the open wound, to the festering obscene horror. 19

This kind of denunciation of the accepted order of things is paralleled by the activity and way of life of the autobiographical hero in Miller's novels. The novels detail the progress of the Henry Miller character as he fails in his social role and as he rejects all the trappings of the man of society. He never succeeds in finding permanent work, or settling into some sort of a career that involves accepting the responsibilities of working at an ordinary job. The exception to this almost continuous life of job-seeker in his early manhood is Miller's career at the Cosmopolitan Telegraph Company, which is detailed in the period of his life covered by the Tropic of Capricorn novel. But that position as personnel manager serves mainly to illustrate more comprehensively the demonic inferno of the mad, everyday world in which he lived, suffered through, and finally rejected. Other aspects of that life, which also made up that inferno, were his relationships with his first wife, Maude, and his friends, such as MacGregor, Kronski and Stanley, all of whom

he was subsequently to shed as he shed that life. The rejection of the ordinary existence and the responsibilities and expectations it imposes on the individual to conform to the social structure is one of the main tasks the Miller hero must undertake in order to "free" himself for birth into the other world, the inner world of his own creation. He undergoes what Miller calls a death and rebirth process, which parallels the intellectual development of the complete series of these novels. The death is the obliteration of the mechanical man living as a cog in the system of the social structure, held in place by the responsibilities of work, family and friends.

The mechanical existence becomes a kind of labour of ants, a deadly activity because it is only activity of the mind, or activity of the body, but never a consciously unified working of the two.

Just as the city itself had become a huge tomb in which men struggled to earn a decent death so my own life came to resemble a tomb which I was constructing out of my own death. I was walking around in a stone forest the center of which was chaos. . . . 20

The sense of this deadly existence, of life in motion which is yet a sterile lifelessness, is symbolized by the tomb-image of the city and the mechanical activity of its inhabitants. But Miller also picks up the death atmosphere in almost every aspect of the experience that surrounds him. His own totally abandoned sexual activities are affairs of complete, active acceptance of carnal, bodily appetite, as well as being desperate attempts to abandon the thinking aspect

of the mind to purely sensual, passionate, thoughtless activity. These activities Miller contrasts with those of some of his friends, whose outward actions appear essentially the same as Miller's own; the significant difference is their totally mechanical, inhuman perspective and motivation:

As I watch Van Norden tackle her, it seems to me that I'm looking at a machine whose cogs have slipped. Left to themselves, they could go on this way forever, grinding and slipping, without ever anything happening. Until a hand shuts the motor off. The sight of them coupled like a pair of goats without the least spark of passion . . . washes away every bit of feeling . . . . As long as that spark of passion is missing there is no human significance in the performance. The machine is better to watch. 21

The distinctions Miller makes about the activity of life which is purely frantic jiggling of the organism, fillibration, rather than rhythm, always stand in opposition to the real life of the body. The ant-like activity of men is the wrong rhythm, one out of tune with the music which is life; one which is dancing for death instead. The life-dance is a unified movement of body and mind in tune with soul. Perhaps the central point of the figure of Miller's first wife, Maude, is to illustrate an aspect of that separation in one of the areas of basic human activity:

She did so want to be independent . . . . She didn't want the in-between realm, the surrender, the fusion, the exchange. She wanted to keep that little tight core of self which was hidden away in her breast and only allow herself the legitimate pleasure of surrendering the body. That body and soul could not be separated, especially in the sex act, was a source of the most profound irritation. 22

The problem of the tunes to which men should dance is one of the central themes of Tropic of Capricorn. This novel in a sense sets some of the themes and symbols of the group of Miller's novels, for it is here also that the two meanings of "life" are approached and made most explicit:

The ovarian world is the product of a life rhythm. The moment a child is born it becomes part of a world in which there is not only the life rhythm but the death rhythm. There is not only no need to keep alive at any price, but, if life is undesirable, it is absolutely wrong. . . . Activity in itself means nothing: it is often a sign of death. By simple external pressure, by force of surroundings and example, by the very climate which activity engenders, one can become part of a monstrous death machine . . . . What does a dynamo know of life, of peace, of reality? 23

The apocalyptic vision of this world of death contains both movement and fire. But the movement, the life it contains, precipitates in Miller the blackest despair and bitterness. The life there is really a parody of the word, the dance a bitter painful movement, the music as bleak as wind over sand. The terrible jig of lifelessness is that symbolized by the commercial dance halls:

Again the dance hall, the money rhythm, the love that comes over the radio, the impersonal, wingless touch of the crowd. A despair that reaches down to the very soles of the boots, an ennui, a desperation. In the midst of the highest mechanical perfection to dance without joy, to be so desperately alone, to be almost inhuman because you are human. 24.

Finally, the fire contained in that vision of the world details its most hollow core. The fire is the vision of hell, the burning, diseased inner world of this kind of existence. Cancer, the title of Miller's first book, stands

as the symbol of the empty, dry fire that has consumed the living man. In a sense, his inner core, his soul, has been burned out by the disease of a civilization which generates and enslaves the disintegrated, partial man.

Wherever there are walls, there are posters with bright venomous crabs heralding the approach of cancer. No matter where you go, no matter what you touch, there is cancer and syphilis. It is written in the sky; it flames and dances, like an evil portent. It has eaten into our souls and we are nothing but a dead thing like the moon. 25

The rebirth in death that Miller calls for is in fact a rejection of that life, a shedding of those restraints in order to become a new man, free and creative; free in the sense of apart from that hollow fire-eaten world, and creative in now being able to write, conscious of and part of another continuous, expanding world of life.

The man who is reborn is always the same man, more and more himself with each rebirth. He is only shedding his skin each time, and with his skin his sins. . . . And as the darkness falls away the wound comes out of its hiding place: the wound which is man, man's love, is bathed in light. The identity which was lost is recovered. Man walks forth from his open wound, from the grave which he had carried about with him so long. 26

Miller speaks here of many rebirths; he is putting forward the idea of the reawakening of the individual to new awareness of himself and the world as a slow process of developing stages of consciousness. That lost identity man recovers is partly the childhood awareness of the world and of self as part of an unseparated process. As Miller points out, the child, though aware of himself, is not in any real sense self-conscious. He does not readily separate the real world from

his dream world, nor does he distinguish either of these from his thought world. The demarcations are blurred, and for Miller that kind of unity is extremely important in terms of allowing a total awareness of all life. It is an awareness where none of the modes of the mind or the body are separated out and rejected or sublimated by guilt forced by social pressures for conformity. The world of childhood to which Miller keeps returning in his discussions has that significance, as a unified experiential imaginative existence:

[As children] left to ourselves there were no limits to what we might imagine. Facts had little importance for us; what we demanded of a subject was that it allow us opportunity to expand. . . . The learning we received only tended to obscure our vision. From the day we went to school we learned nothing; on the contrary, we were made obtuse, we were wrapped in a fog of words and abstractions. 27

The rebirth of the individual is partly a connection with that sense of childhood imagination. It is a re-connecting with the awareness of life which was lost when the childhood perspective of the world was interrupted by the social pressures of parents and schools as they act to change the child view.

The apocalyptic vision, then, as well as pointing to a new world, a re-awakening, an eternal moment of regenerative life, heralds the death of man as machine. The vision contains the organic rebirth, the destruction of the mechanical, and the terrible suffering which must take place in the spirit in the movement from the one mode of existence to the other. In that sense, it contains the complete cyclical progress of



Miller's six major novels. The vision serves also as a means of reconciling and encompassing the journey Miller's hero must make between the two worlds. It adumbrates the whole motion of the novels, as the development which the hero's life is to take, and symbolizes the bridge that Miller is building to link body with soul again:

The gulf between the dawn man, who participated mystically, and contemporary man, who is unable to communicate except through sterile intellect, can only be bridged by a new type of man, the man with cosmic consciousness. The sage, the prophet, the visionary, they all spoke in apocalyptic terms. From earliest times the "few" have been attempting to break through. 28

Miller, the hero who is also, or at least becomes, the creative artist, is of course, just that sort of figure. He is that visionary-artist who speaks the language of the apocalypticist. The interpretation of what that apocalypse represents is all-important. Berdyaev's mystical definition of it coincides remarkably well with Miller's:

Apocalypse is not merely the revelation of the end of the world and of history. It is also the revelation of the end within the world and the historical process, within human life and every moment of life. . . . It is possible to interpret it actively as a call to creative activity, to heroic effort and achievement. 29

That call is the story which Miller tells almost continuously all his writing life. At the same time, his own life story, at least in the autobiographical novels, is the effort to answer finally that call.

### CHAPTER THREE--CREATION

The concept of creation becomes, for Miller's hero, the link which connects him back with life, that life in which body and soul are unified. In terms of his journey through the world, his spiritual death and re-birth are culminated by an ability to create. And that ability is, in a sense, the achievement of life. When he has found himself, he finds also the freedom from what Miller calls the "illusory world of reality" which gives him the freedom to write as well as to live superconsciously. Again, in terms of major thematic elements of his novels, Tropic of Capricorn expresses a number of times that bridge symbolizing the continuing process of development of the inner man:

every time I walked over Brooklyn Bridge and looked down toward the Navy Yard I felt as though my guts were dropping out. Way up there, suspended between the two shores, I felt always as though I were hanging over a void; . . . . Instead of joining me to life, to men, to the activity of men, the bridge seemed to break all connections. If I walked toward the one shore or the other it made no difference: either way was hell. . . . There could be no end, and there was none, until inside me a bridge began to form which united me again with the current of life from which as a child I had been separated. 1

He has to live in the hell of the disintegrated world where mind and body remain isolate. The bridge which does unite Miller is the world of the body. And the connection that saves him is his great, initially passive acceptance of fate, of life, of whatever happens to him. Through the sensual

world, through complete abandonment to that world, he ultimately moves to a rebirth of the spirit and his own regeneration as an artist. In following through this portion of the great journey of the heroic Miller, the six novels take on their major circular form: The story of the events of his life from earlier childhood in Brooklyn to mature, impoverished writer in Paris, parallels the story of his spiritual rebirth as the newly created and creative artist. Here, artist eventually comes to mean every man who achieves union of body and soul.

The sub-title of Capricorn, On the Ovarian Trolley, deals also with the theme of creative rebirth. In this novel, though, the artist has not yet been reborn, nor does he actually achieve that complete deliverance from the symbolic womb of death, the normal, societal life, from which his journey here begins. In terms of the rebirth metaphor, Capricorn is Miller's starting point. Tropic of Cancer, written first, deals more with the achieved birth of the artist who has arrived in Paris, and who has arrived at the end point in terms of the struggle, and the cyclical journey he has undergone. Beginning his first published book, he can happily talk of himself in the usual apparent contradictions:

I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive. A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I am. Everything that was literature has fallen from me. There are no more books to be written, thank God. 2

Miller is able to stop trying to become an artist, secure in his sense of what he now is. The books that are not to be written are the specifically "literary" creations which he struggled for so long to write.<sup>3</sup> It is that sense of writing as craft which Miller has abandoned, now that he has found himself as an artist. The books he now writes are, for him, not books; rather, they are creations out of himself, his own story. The distinction he is making is that between craft or maker and creation or artist. The distinction involves the nature of creation which is closely related to the rather perjorative sense of such words as "abstract", "tradition", "idea", and "literature" that Miller frequently uses. There are two problems involved here that are not easily separable: one has to do with the nature of the art object itself. The question to be answered here is this: At what level of remove is the artist expressing himself in his art? The other difficulty has to do with the source of the artistic experience. Perhaps the most satisfactory way of dealing with them both is through the standard one of drawing some of the distinctions, unfairly perhaps, and a little arbitrarily too, between Classical and Romantic literature. Miller can obviously be classed with the Romantic position, and for purposes of clarification, we can say that what he is reacting to in his anti-literary position is represented by Classicism. What that tradition in its worse sense has represented, and it is this which Miller is criticizing, is a mentalizing of the processes of the

imagination. The limits there are set in the realm of reasoned ideas of a particularly shaped order, where the reaction of feeling to them has been a reaction to an "idea" of things, of persons, of the human situation. That is, we react, and are trained to react to an art structure which is a construct of mind where feeling has been translated into reasoned idea about feeling. For Miller, art is not an expression of a detached idea about something. At least, it is not detached in the sense that it is only idea. Rather it is a complex, both as a complex structure, the art expression itself, and a complicated relation touching at many points the human sensibility. The concept of literature which Miller is speaking against is one that accepts a separation of parts. It works at a level of perception that conceptualizes within a different intellectual framework. Its process is a self-conscious, specifically reasoned working out of ideas about forms, a compartmentalization of feelings and imagination into abstract thought, with the emphasis on mentalizing, rather than felt structures. For him, this is the separation of reality from art; the art becomes formalized structure or tradition with a "life" of its own, related to the human sensibility only as intellectual thought rather than as a complex of thought and feeling. The traditional literature in a sense emasculates experience by reducing its dimensions, both in terms of what it represents as imitation, and in terms of what the art experience itself can be. In other

words, the Classical artist is presenting a view of the world at one remove from the sense of the world which the Romantic tries to achieve. Both the Romantic and the Classical artist want to present a unified perception of the world, but they do so from quite different directions, at separate levels of understanding, and with different background motivations. The Romantic attempts to do the impossible: to move toward the unification of innocence or unconscious understanding, when, in fact, he is no longer innocent, because he does know and is conscious. The Classicist approaches the problem having accepted that consciousness. He sees the order of the world as an acceptance of the separation of man from the natural order. He, too, would accomplish a unification, but it is one specifically related to some higher ordering principle, achieved through the reasoning functions of the mind. That is, he might see man acting through reason as arbiter of nature, orderer of the world for god; his vision is of man the instrument of divine will. The ordering principle is an imposed human one and the unification is the working out of a reasoned, logical structure of relationships. The Romantic, while using the same intellectual processes of the mind, attempts to arrive primarily at a spiritual understanding of experience, in part, through arousing and concentrating on the sensual aspects of the mind. As Miller often exemplifies, he wants to unite dreams, thoughts, and impulses in a kind of unconscious feeling of oneness, rather than a reasoned

understanding of spiritual connection to some single force, which could then perhaps be a level of understanding at one remove from the unified sense of consciousness itself. The motivations of the two kinds of artists are an aspect of the differences between the two which the psychoanalyst, Otto Rank, develops in some detail. Essentially, the distinction lies in the fact that the Classical artist is the representative of the collective culture of the community. He is in a sense expressing the culture of the society itself, and its collective aspirations. The Romantic though, is really expressing himself; his own individual experience is being transformed as art. He is working out his own destiny in his art.<sup>4</sup> The Classical, Rank calls the "partial" type who works with and molds experience to form his art; in a sense he takes the outer experiences of life, that is, the things he sees about him, and uses them creatively, but very much as a craft. The Romantic is transforming his own experience itself into his art; he is the "total" type.

The two artist-types differ essentially in the source from which they take this life that is so essential to production. The Classical type, who is possibly poorer within, but nearer to life, and himself more vital, takes it from without: that is, he creates immortal work from mortal life without necessarily having first transformed it into personal experience as is the case with the Romantic.<sup>5</sup>

The distinctions between the two kinds of artists illustrate something of the kind of artist Miller is depicting in his novels and clarify the relationship between art and artist which he is

attempting to develop. Miller was aware of Rank's theories here, and he is to some extent developing them as they relate to himself. And part of the difficulty of regarding the source of the art experience and the level of remove of the artist in Miller are clarified by Rank's distinctions. Miller is attempting to transform his inner experiences and to unite his art with life.

The journey toward the creative rebirth of the artist as Miller sees him, begins in Capricorn, though the vision of where he was going was not completely clear to him at the time; he feels he must centre on his own experience though for what purpose he has not yet formulated; his writing direction was still in the generative process:

Nobody understood what I was writing about or why I wrote that way. I was so lucid that they said I was daffy. I was describing the New World. . . . It was an Ovarian world, still hidden away in the Fallopian tubes. Naturally nothing was clearly formulated . . . . it was the world of Chronos and his ovicular progeny. . . . I saw beneath the superficial physiognomy of skin and bone the indestructible world which man has always carried with him; it was neither old nor new, really, but the eternally true world which changes from moment to moment. 6

That cycle of the birth process is what is involved in the womb imagery and the Ovarian Trolley journey. Otto Rank's psychoanalytical study of the development of the artist and his relationship to the world, states quite clearly the theory of the artist which Miller uses as one of his themes.

In the ceaseless struggle for liberation of the self from the moral, social, and aesthetic ideologies and the people who represent them, the individual goes through



a disjunctive process of which I have regarded birth as the prototype. But the process, though similar in principle to, is not a repetition of, the trauma of birth; it is, broadly, the attempt of the individual to gain a freedom from dependence of any sort upon a state from which it has grown. 7

One effect which that process of birth was increasingly having on Miller was to isolate him more and more from the world he was in the process of escaping. And that effect was to be an increasingly painful part of the struggle to be reborn. The isolation and alienation from anyone who could understand or appreciate the process in which he was caught up also becomes a part of the development of the artist, involving the submersion of his ego. Here the artist is less and less able to feed his ego in the mirror of his acquaintance's esteem. In the process of the rebirth of the artist, he must eventually submerge that part of him which consists of false individuality, though paradoxically turning in on himself to find a new awareness of who and what he is. But that new understanding requires particular distinction from the concept of what it means to be an individual. What Miller is escaping from is the individualism that really masks a selfish, ego-centred world, where one asserts his own individuality at the expense of everything and everyone else. Essentially, this is that great material ethic which attaches so much to that notion of "inalienable rights" of the individual; it is really the freedom to set oneself apart from the world, from humanity, by inflating the materially-oriented

sense of self, the ego, equated with the greed for property. It is a freedom which destroys the individual's sense of an integrated world without the mine/thine distinctions, and ultimately it is enslavement to that concept of life measured in terms of property and control. This egotism leads to each man becoming his own god, manipulating the little portion of the world about him as material. It becomes an unconscious self-enslavement to those false individual principles of life. He thus reduces both himself and others to the servitude of the ego-ideals which are self-aggrandizement, property, and the related life-style that expands one's sense of power. Man becomes subservient to the power principle, and in that sense, he becomes reduced to some aspect of the force required to feed the power struggle. "Now we think like machines, because we have become as machines. Craving power, we are the helpless victims of power . . . ."8

This egocentric view of the self, related so closely to a view of the world as matter to be molded, manipulated, and used for private selfish ends, is connected with all the institutions, laws, and codes which Miller sees as constituting the whole process of disintegration of the real individual man. The "colossal ego" overrides the other, spiritual development of the self. It keeps the individual from seeing himself in an undistorted perspective. Norman O. Brown states a view similar to the one Miller struggles to make clear:

the resurrection of the body is a social project facing mankind as a whole, and it will become a practical political problem when the statesmen of the world are called upon to deliver happiness instead of power, when political economy becomes a science of use-values instead of exchange-values--a science of enjoyment instead of a science of accumulation. In the face of this tremendous human problem, contemporary social theory, both capitalist and socialist, has nothing to say. Contemporary social theory has been completely taken in by the inhuman abstractions of the path of sublimation, and has no contact with concrete human beings, with their concrete bodies, their concrete though repressed desires, and their concrete neuroses. 9

Brown worries about the larger, social relevance of the problem, which Miller ignores, mainly because he seems to be convinced that approaches to greater understanding of the self can never usefully exist in or be fitted into a larger social-political context. I think Miller is aware that the wider political and economic implications of such a view as political policy, are essentially too destructive of the present systems to ever be entertained seriously as a system, since his philosophy in fact calls for a negation of systems themselves in favour of people. Man, separating himself, centring on the construction of the ego-individual, has a conceptual view of the world rather than a perceptual one:

For so long now the conceptual world has been man's whole world. To name, to define, to explain. . . . Result: unceasing anguish. Expand or contract the universe ad infinitum--a parlour game. Play the god instead of trying to be as God. Godding, Godding--and at the same time believing in nothing. Bragging of the miracles of science, yet looking upon the world as so much shit. Frightening ambivalence! Electing for systems, never for man. 10

So Miller rejects that notion of man, that view of the world; he presents his rejection in typically contradictory sounding words, because not only must he reject that attitude, that "frightening ambivalence", but those terms that apply to that "system", that ordering also:

Today I am proud to say that I am inhuman, that I belong not to men and governments, that I have nothing to do with creeds and principles. I have nothing to do with the creaking machinery of humanity--I belong to the earth! . . . And I join my slime, my excrement, my madness, my ecstasy to the great circuit which flows through the subterranean vaults of the flesh. 11

This isolation and alienation of the man, then, is both symbolic rebirth, to be travelled alone, and a necessary separation from a world blind to the spiritual values of the real individual. That individual must set himself apart from the falsely human world, the control-centred socio-political structure. The isolation is a return to a different kind of self, still an individuality which recognizes a separate identity, yet somehow an identity that links the self to the earth, to the world as object, and as process.

I wanted something of the earth that was not of man's doing, something absolutely divorced from the human of which I was surfeited. I wanted something purely terrestrial and absolutely divested of idea. I wanted to feel the blood running back into my veins, even at the cost of annihilation. . . . To be of night so frighteningly silent, so utterly incomprehensible and eloquent at the same time. . . . To be human only terrestrially, like a plant or a worm or a brook. 12

Miller wants to encompass two seemingly diverse realms: he wants to be both subjective and objective at the same time. That is, he sees himself as a living, speaking individual

separate from men, completely aware of himself, and as a minute, inconsequential thing in the universe of the objective world. The desire is to be a self-contained unit in the universe of interconnected processal beings. A brief, early friendship provides him with an insight into what might be the true inner nature of the self: "He was appealing . . . to the germ of the self, to the being who would eventually outgrow the naked personality, the synthetic individuality, and leave me truly alone and solitary in order to work out my own proper destiny."<sup>13</sup> Miller's destiny is to recreate a new identity while destroying first that all too prevalent individuality which now exists and which nourishes the inflated ego. The new Miller is to be a man who has found himself, and, in so doing, has found his place in a new kind of world. That world is really the primal world, and his place there is really an understanding of himself as part of the primal order. To arrive there, Miller's artist-man

has to make himself a part of the mystery, live in it as well as with it. Acceptance is the solution: it is an art, not an egotistical performance on the part of the intellect. Through art then, one finally establishes contact with reality: that is the great discovery. . . . The world has not to be put in order: the world is order incarnate. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order, to know what is the world order in contra-distinction to the wishful-thinking orders which we seek to impose on one another. <sup>14</sup>

Here, in part, Miller defines his notion of art. The distinction he makes is that one penetrates the mystery of life, becoming part of it, through acceptance of life. And this acceptance is itself an art, the art of living in the deepest sense of

of the word. These are important statements about the nature of art and the kind of acceptance necessary to understand and be part of the world order. This sense of art is the avenue that connects Miller's idea of the artist to everyman. That is, to understand oneself properly, one must become an artist in the sense that one has to learn to live creatively and in the sense that the discovery of the self is a creative struggle. Living involves a creative sense of awareness; it is being part of a creative process itself; it is not a craft, a manipulative learning of how to arrange things, a shaping towards ends. In Miller's terms, when the individual breaks through to that concept of himself, he is an artist, for he has lived through his own artistic, transcendental experience. He has achieved a secular, spiritual transformation similar to the traditional, deep, religious experience. For Miller, putting the story in writing is merely retelling the experience at one remove from the experience itself, unless, as he is doing here, one relives the whole painful experience of self-discovery again. In many ways, that is the meaning of the Rosy Crucifixion trilogy; certainly, it is the implied significance of that title.

Something dies, something blossoms. To suffer in ignorance is horrible. To suffer deliberately, in order to understand the nature of suffering and to abolish it forever, is quite another matter . . . . At the last desperate moment--when one can suffer no more!-- something happens which is in the nature of a miracle. The great open wound which was draining the blood of life closes up, the organism blossoms like a rose. One is "free" at last . . . . 15

There is involved as well though, the sense of the suffering, isolated artist mentioned earlier. Much of the complexity of the themes of the artist as sufferer are due to the fact that the symbolism of the womb both as death and birth place, the Christ-like passivity involving both acceptance and suffering as part of the resurrection of the spirit, all apply to the story of the hero in these novels. And that figure of the artist is very specifically connected to the suffering Christ image; Miller draws the parallel in discussing Van Gogh at one point:

What excited me was Vincent's flaming desire to live the life of an artist, to be nothing but the artist, come what may. With men of his stripe art becomes a religion. Christ long dead to the church is born again. . . . The despised and forsaken dreamer reenacts the drama of crucifixion. He rises from his grave to triumph over the unbelievers. 16

Miller obviously thinks of his own story in those terms also, and he draws on the crucifixion imagery and its aftermath to convey the sense of the struggle and release, or resurrection of the new man. The sense of art as religion is implied throughout his own discussions, where art is the experience of the artist transformed by his living through it and expressing it. The distinction, as pointed out earlier, is that between art as craft and art as creative expression of the inner man. The analogy to Christ is drawn in the spiritual struggle of the artist, where the resurrection comes as part of the artist's new vision of the world as well as the sense of being reborn with a new understanding of his own experience.

If one isn't crucified, like Christ, if one manages to survive, to go on living above and beyond the sense of desperation and futility, then another curious thing happens. It's as though one had actually died and actually been resurrected again; one lives a supernormal life, like the Chinese. That is to say, one is unnaturally gay, unnaturally healthy, unnaturally indifferent. The tragic sense is gone: one lives like a flower, a rock, a tree, one with Nature and against Nature at the same time. 17

Though the Henry Miller hero is obviously a created, larger than life character in terms of the exaggerated and extreme range of experiences he undergoes, he is, at the same time, representative of the author himself, who seems to indicate that in retelling his own life, he is experiencing a further transformation parallel to the one he is speaking about.

That is, the stories themselves are a kind of therapy for the author, illuminating new worlds for him in reliving the painful past, as he illuminates new worlds for the reader. This process involves the reader in at least two levels at once in a way that approximates the whole experience being described by Miller. That is, the reader relives the journey to the rebirth of the artist, in following the narrative, and is also aware of the continuing development of the artist telling the story, commenting on the nature of experience, the condition of the world as he now sees it and as he saw it previously, and the development of his spiritual state then and now.

Two large narrative modes are united in Miller's story of the artist-hero in search of himself; one is the condition of the artist as solitary traveller to the inner world of man, to the soul, and the other is the story of the great hero



adventurer, the experiencer of outer life, enacting the great events with which every little ordinary man identifies and dreams of. And both modes traditionally depict the hero's descent to hell and his sufferings or battle through whose fire he is tempered. He returns to the past or descends, where he experiences the worst in order to see with new insight and vision the world to which he must return, in which he must live. He reascends or comes back to the world with understanding modified by his experiences. Of course, this too is all part of Miller's terrible, yet fortunate, journey. The themes of creation are part of the story of the artist, and the story of the journey to create is the tale of the heroic man accomplishing his mission. That heroic universality is connected in both Miller's relationships to the rest of humanity, and in that sense, his novels are the story of the great romantic representative of all men, as well as being linked here with the exalted role of the poet-sage relating the heroic tale.

My connections were . . . with man and not with men...! . . . Individuality expressed itself for me as life with roots. Efflorescence meant culture--in short, the world of cyclical development. In my eyes the great figures were always identified with the trunk of the tree, not with the boughs and leaves. And the great figures were capable of losing their identity easily: they were all variations of the one man, Adam Cadmus, or whatever he be called. My lineage streamed from him, not from my ancestors. 18

And he is the hero himself, acting out the drama, making the symbolic crossing of the river Styx, and returning to the old but also, for him, new world:

the flight which the poet makes over the face of the earth and then, as if he had been ordained to re-enact a lost drama, the heroic descent into the very bowels of the earth, the dark and fearsome sojourn in the belly of the whale, the bloody struggle to liberate himself, to emerge clean of the past, a bright, gory sun god cast upon an alien shore. 19

The poet is changed forever, is returned to a new world by the vision granted him, by the experience through which he struggles, in short, by his initiation into the mysteries of creation, and the attempt to express the inexpressible. The vision achieved, the mystery penetrated, the triumph reached at the end of the heroic journey, Miller tells over and over. Like the medieval scholar, he writes the exempla as the major train of what he is saying, then includes, almost marginally, the sentence or statement of received "truth": He tells his story and comments upon its significance along the way by speaking of the role of the artist and the nature of his art:

since disasters are disastrous only for those engulfed in them, whereas they can be illuminating for those who survive and study them, so it is in the creative world. . . . In the artist . . . contrasting reactions seem to combine or merge, producing that ultimate one, the great catalyzer called realization. . . . The artist's game is to move over into reality. It is to see beyond the mere "disaster" which the picture of a lost battlefield renders to the naked eye. . . . the picture which the world has presented to the naked human eye can hardly seem anything but a hideous battleground of lost causes. . . . and [it] will be so until man ceases to regard himself as the mere seat of conflict. Until he takes up the task of becoming the "I" of his "I". 20

In these statements about the nature of the insight at which one must arrive and the purpose of the artist and his art, Miller is not merely inserting trite homilies or "philosophizing"

breaks in the narrative of his character's sexual escapades. These are not extraneous, unconnected fillers. What he is saying is well-knit and carefully cohesive at one or more levels of his novels. Moreover, one cannot simply explain away these statements he makes by saying that this section "means" this and that segment "means" that. The sense of what he means is not so easily arrived at, or at least, not the full sense of what he is trying to say. Miller is continually reiterating events, experiences, periods of his life, the aims of his narrative, his feelings about himself as well as what is or was happening to him. He is circling round and round in an effort to arrive at some centre point; he is experiencing a process of successively sharper and sharper intelligences of his inner self, arriving at a clearer and clearer understanding of the purpose of his own life, as well as clarifying for himself the purpose of the story he is telling. For the sense of his works is very much that of the artist who is finding himself as he writes about finding himself. That is, his awareness of himself is a process that is still in operation as the novels are being written. The narrative train seems to move from the violent anger and black despair of an isolated individual venting his frustration and bitterness at a deteriorating, heedless world, telling that aspect of his tale. From there, though, the story moves in each of his novels, but with increasing confidence in the later ones, to a slow growth in the knowledge of the teller that what he is saying is itself a process of creative and spiritual growth;

it is also the means of rejecting, escaping and transcending that world of which he feels no part. In that sense, his novels take on an extrinsic, therapeutic value for the author, as well as an implied intrinsic value as work of art for its own sake. Hence, the meaning of particular events in Miller's novels change their character as the books progress. One becomes aware that the significance of particular events slowly grows as Miller circles on the main course that his life took. The recollection of various events, and the repeated return to certain aspects of his past, mark their particularity, their growing significance, as they accumulate in the novels. They are his magic touchstones, to which he returns sometimes with almost childlike and perhaps naive awe. The episodes themselves and the remembrance of them seem to rejuvenate Miller as he spins out the lines of his spiritual connections to the past, as he moves on through, what is for him, the everlasting present. As he returns again and again to mention some event or aspect of that period, it becomes quite clear that Miller is drawing ever stronger emphasis to the particular relevance of that period to his present life. It comes to represent a particular aspect of the paradise in life which Miller hopes to rediscover. The innocence of that world can never be regained, but the unity of vision, the complete lack of consciousness of self, naturalness of action, the utter openness of mind, and of expression, are a few of the characteristics of childhood

life which Miller regards as extremely valuable. So, throughout his novels, he touches back on some event of that period, usually to highlight or compare it to the present condition of his adult life.

The whole sense of what Miller means by creation then, is linked to his development of the birth of the artist through the senses. The Ovarian Trolley aspect of the journey is actually a feature of nearly the whole corpus of his writings. That is, Miller's descent into "the bowels of the earth" in order to pass through to the creative sphere is an immersion in and a return to basic sensual/sensory experience. The activities of his hero character center on food and sex. And the portions of each which he engorges are extreme, extravagant, exaggerated, comic, and sometimes violent. The picture drawn is one of frenzied activity that embraces extremes, the lowest extremes usually, of sensual activities. This is first a calculated feature of the attitude of total acceptance of all aspects of life, in order to exceed what we ordinarily regard as living, to become the cosmic "I" and "eye" of the human story; it is a method of transcending life by embracing it all, moving on through life, thus becoming larger than it all. And it is also a vibrant, open, unquestioning affirmation of the life of the body, which attempts to negate the notion of the will. The philosophy is one of active passivity, calculated irrationality, a system negating systems and codes of morality and law. The contradictions implied in these

statements resolve themselves in an understanding of a rather simple but important distinction that underlies what Miller means by the pejorative notions of codes, systems and laws. These cultural and social structures Miller sees as props which support partial living. His negations are merely a way of calling for a complete consciousness of life. He is reacting against social patterns that are either irrelevant as guides that might help people to enjoy a more abundant existence, or they are a hindrance to the freedom of the individual to expand his inner horizons through his outer vision and action. Miller propounds a philosophy of being rather than becoming, which involves, paradoxically, becoming something else in any event. The individual must become one with the activity of life itself, living in it, in the activity, rather than attempting to live at it, doing the activity. The process, for Miller, is part of being fully awake. As he eventually comes to swim in words, and as he indeed does in all his writing, Miller details how he swam in the current of life:

I too love everthing that flows: rivers, sewers,  
lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences. . . .  
I love the words of hysterics and the sentences that  
flow on like dysentery and mirror all the sick images  
of the soul . . . I love everything that flows,  
everything that has time in it and becoming, 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. A fatuous, suicidal wish that is constipated  
by words and paralyzed by thought. 21

Much of the sensual activity of his hero is related to the sense of that childhood era, where the activity of living was open, direct in response to impulses and desires, and generally unencumbered by inhibitions later inculcated by society. Miller's fascination with Freud's statement that "into the night life seems to be exiled what once ruled the day"<sup>22</sup> is connected to this view of childhood and the activities of his hero. That is, Miller's character seems to be living out his repressed dream or "night" world, expressing his impulses and desires in those exaggerated sexual escapades. The attempt is to bring the exiled night life of the subconscious back into the day, into consciousness, through literature. Those aspects of the doctrine of acceptance are the essential preliminaries to creation, as part of the creative rebirth of the artist in the womb of the sensual world, as part of the exercise in negation of will or egocentric self, and lastly, a union of the mind and body with the elemental forms of creation and the organic, processal world. All of the sensual activities, as rebellion against the idea-controlled, rule-governed, social man, are part of a movement toward other centres of action in man, toward other aspects of mind, in an attempt to balance the preponderance of weight society and its literature places on traditional structures of thought as the way man realizes his highest potential as a thinking animal. Miller suggests that the journey down the Fallopian

tubes, the reawakening of the senses, the way of the body, is the method of reaching and reawakening the essential soul of man. The vocabulary of spiritual awakening and union is couched in terms of physical birth and sexual intercourse. And the physical experiences are presented as the means through which the spiritual experience is finally arrived at. Thus, the importance of the whole sexual aspect of Miller's novels is not merely as metaphor for all sensory reawakening. Metaphor it is, but more significantly, it describes the body as the path to the soul. That route to the soul places Miller in the company of what he refers to as the "underground" men: "We were, without knowing it, members of that traditional underground which vomits forth at suitable intervals those writers who will later be called Romantics, mystics, visionaries or diabolists."<sup>23</sup>

A major portion of the Miller hero's journey, at least in terms of his outward life experiences, centres on the great female figure in his life: his second wife, Mona/Mara.<sup>24</sup> Capricorn deals with a period leading up to Miller's acquaintance with her; the Rosy Crucifixion trilogy deals primarily with the seven year span of his marriage to her, and the Cancer novel covers the end period, where he has moved past his need for her, has escaped her. For Miller, Mona seems to represent all the feminine principles that exist. She stands for everything that men dream woman should be, as



well as what they in fact are: She is loving, beautiful, charming, able to satisfy his every sexual desire; she is also fickle and treacherous in her attentions to him, disappearing for periods of time, telling half-concealed stories of other lovers, other affairs, all the while protesting her innocence and faithfulness. She stands as a mother figure in providing money and food for Miller in mysterious ways. Her stories are confusing mixtures of truth and fabrication which he can never penetrate through to find out what she does when not with him. In that sense, she presents something of a child's view of the mother figure who is always available when required, always able to supply the child's needs, but never wholly revealed to the child's mind when he is not able to view and to touch her. She is the mysterious source of life. There is often the sense, too, that though curious about her ways, he avoids delving too far into the facts of what her life might be for fear of betrayal. Miller is both fascinated and jealous and so desperately in need of security and reassurance that he dare not strip away the veil of mystery that surrounds Mona's activities. Then, too, her stories are such confusing mixtures of truth and fabrication that there is some question about whether he can ever penetrate their confusions anyway. So, as woman, as lover, Mona is mysterious and elusive. She seems to become whatever Miller wishes her to be. And the continuing mystery for him is just that elusive nature she represents. In a sense, she becomes the central figure of Miller's creative rebirth as representative of the mystery

of creation itself. His great journey revolves around his fascination with not being able to know her, and with his attempt to arrive at some knowledge of her. He feels that if he can tell the story of Mona he will not only tell the process of his own major, inner breakthrough, but he may also be able to reach and explain the heart of the mystery of creation itself in detailing who Mona really was. For it was she who ultimately provided Miller with the means of escaping the terrible mechanical life of the ordinary spiritually disembodied man, by allowing him the means to escape a mundane working life and to spend his time writing. And it was through the tribulations of his life with Mona that he experienced ecstatic high periods of love and joy, together with horrible, low moments of black despair, isolation and bitterness. She fueled and tended the fires through which Miller had to pass before he finally achieved his spiritual freedom to become a writer. He eventually went past her and his need for her. He escaped the world in which he was mired, which was New York city, representing the terrestrial disintegrated world of the mechanical body. Moving to Paris, mainly as the result of another of Mona's secretive money-collecting efforts, he was able to leave his past, freed both from it and from Mona. Miller was then able to return again to that past in his writing, to work out his own true nature in the present. And in that escape, Miller must leave Mona behind, because, in a sense, she is the great, earthly principle, partly

representative of that restrictive world, the world of the mechanical body. Also, she stands for the creative principle itself, mysterious, earthly, sensual, demanding and tortuous for her victim yet life-giving; she represents that stage of his development which he needed, used and moved past. Mona set him free to create, to write; thus, he moved away from Mona, that representative of a particular form of experience. At least, this is the general sense of the Mona/Mara figure in Miller's life. But in writing about her, in his return to Mona as the key figure and central symbol in his writing about the past and the direction of his life as a method itself of penetrating the nature of the creative experience, Miller pays his greatest tribute to that strange and lovely woman:

Creation: To create the legend in which I could fit the key which would open her soul. . . . It is about twenty years now since I began the study of the photogenic soul; in that time I have conducted hundreds of experiments. The result is that I know a little more++ about myself. . . . One discovers nothing about the secrets of the universe: at the best one learns something about the nature of destiny. 25

Miller finally can never find her in the way he wants, to lay open all the "facts" about Mona, and to know who and what she was:

The woman who had been Mara and was now Mona, who had been and would be other names, other persons, other assemblages of appendages, was no more accessible, penetrable than a cool statue in a forgotten garden of a lost continent. 26

She is too closely associated with that which is unfathomable in all people, their spiritual core; this is an admission Miller makes when he says that all he has come to know is a

little more of himself, his own soul-centre. And she is too closely identified with the whole principle of creation itself; she is both beautiful and terrible, mysterious and unreachable, though her outward, surface character appears clear and plastic:

The irresistible creature of the other sex is a monster in process of becoming a flower. Feminine beauty is a ceaseless creation, a ceaseless revolution about a defect (often imaginary) which causes the whole being to gyrate heavenward. 27

And that creative principle, as is obvious here, is for Miller a mystical one, both in terms of its process as feminine beauty, as part of and symbol for all natural process, and in its effect on the observer, when he finally realizes it fully, which is of the nature of a visionary experience. It is mystic in that it can never be fully described or detailed; he can talk "about" it, but never actually "say" it. What is important here is Miller's equating of the feminine with the creative process, in the figure of Mona, who, as the name suggests, is supremely beautiful, enigmatic, and entirely representative of woman. The creative process is presented as loss of the egocentric self, as heroic journey, mystical experience, and all-encompassing love affair. All of these modes together orchestrate a movement toward a slow growth of consciousness leading to the super-awakened soul. These themes beat the rhythm of the mind's movement as it slowly becomes aware of the dance of life, the harmony of mind, body and spirit aware of itself as one fully human being.

## CHAPTER FOUR--UNIVERSAL PROCESS

The final arrival at the goal for which Miller set out has been mentioned briefly in several places in this discussion as it related to other aspects of Miller's writing. It would be perhaps useful now to focus on that end-place in somewhat greater detail. William Gordon calls Miller's final achievement of insight "cosmic consciousness".<sup>1</sup> The term which Norman O. Brown uses to describe the sort of consciousness that he finds common to certain writers and thinkers in psychoanalysis, poetry, mysticism, and philosophy, is "dialectical imagination": "By dialectical I mean an activity of consciousness struggling to circumvent the limitations imposed by the formal-logical law of contradiction".<sup>2</sup> This kind of definition helps to illustrate something of the nature of Miller's contradictory and apparently confusing statements. As with his surreal dream visions, what he says in direct statement is part of an attempt to encompass the irrational, the illogical, to accept that aspect of the world, and to circumvent the world of logic and rational thought processes. The world Miller is presenting is a total state of being which includes all aspects of the mind. Hence, what he says contains the range of mental, as well as of physical activity. This returns us to the question of what is true, for in Miller's terms, truth, in addition to being an inner and outer

condition of harmony, is in relating the whole story of the man functioning in and aware of his universe. That story is contradictory, paradoxical, and essentially inexplicable in that words only approximate the telling of it; yet the words are a true depiction of the continual state of flux of life when they do present that range of apparent unintelligibility. Generally, what is unintelligible in Miller's narrative are those things which defy reason, analysis, and logic. They appear to make no sense because reason and order are the kinds of understanding, the procedures we attempt to apply to what he is saying. The irrational and the surreal are clear when one picks up the imagery of the description or senses the feeling in the statements. Then, there is no contradiction, no real disjunction. The unifying principles which apply, then, are outside the normal plane of "understanding"; they are poetical and mystical insights of a kind which take license with our common conventions of order; his major points of reference are not to "things" as such, but to something akin to the state of "thingness", which is the spiritual, yet objective context of the world. The position from which he narrates is both in and out of the world, at once reliving the painful experience of his life cycle, and re-experiencing all the suffering and unhappiness of it, while still standing outside of it, seeing through it with detachment:

I could see it all clearly--my earthly evolution, from the larval stage to the present, and even beyond the present. What was the struggle for or toward? Toward union. Perhaps. What else could it mean, this desire to communicate? To reach everyone, high and low, and get an answer back--a devastating thought! To vibrate eternally, like the world lyre. 3

This desire to tell a story to someone, to anyone, to the world, and to move toward union are certainly part of the goal that Miller sums up here toward the end of Nexus, the final book in the Rosy Crucifixion trilogy. The kind of union he means though, is stated more explicitly in earlier novels, as he circles around, restating what he is trying to do, constantly attempting to clarify what he at first felt only vaguely to be his mission in writing. As he becomes more aware, so he encounters greater difficulty in stating his intention clearly. The problem is again one of expressing the inexpressible. One sense of where he wants to arrive is given in a description of the picture of an elderly Chinese sage: "He has neither rejected the world nor renounced it: he is part of it,, just as stone, tree, beast, flower and star are part of it. In his being he is the world, all there can ever be of it . . . ."4 The Chinese man is a concept that Miller uses to exemplify a state of understanding of self that Miller himself hopes ultimately to reach. The image of China, and being in China, as a condition of total freedom from the known world, and as being in an alien, distant place, is earlier developed by

Miller in a heavily surrealistic essay called "Walking Up and Down in China."<sup>5</sup> Miller there describes himself as the completely detached, free man, alive and alone in a diseased, destructive world. Anais Nin relates that concept of the world, as Miller described it to her, in terms similar to those which he applied in Plexus to the picture of that Chinese sage:

China seems to stand for a certain condition of existence . . . the universe of mere being. Where one lives like a plant, instinctively, no will. The great indifference, like that of the Hindu who lets himself be passive in order to let the seeds in him flower. Something between the will of the European and the Karma of the Oriental. 6

The important difference in what Miller means when he describes such a state of existence is not clear in the statement itself. For in his description to Anais Nin here, Miller seems to imply a kind of existence which is completely unconscious, a condition of material being that is aware of nothing. Rather what he does mean is that one have a completely uninflated view of self, as part of the cosmos, as relatively insignificant object, and that one be aware of oneself as an object, not a prime mover in the universe. That is, the individual must operate from and live first in the knowledge of himself as part of, rather apart from the world. The sense of detachment from the world is partly the sense of separation from the universe of human destroyers, the idea of man the controller, rather than man the monitor or the transmitter of the world pulse. The metaphor of rock



or plant applies to an awareness of self, as belonging to a natural order, and an awareness of self in an unegotistical sense. It does not apply to his understanding of how one should live, in terms of what one should do. The acceptance of life which Miller calls for is an active one, as the title makes clear, and as the larger portion of "Walking Up and Down in China" implies by its description of movement, activity, and life. But the mythical China and Chinese man do contain that apparently contradictory unification of the active man most in and of this world, partaking of it joyfully, with abandon, and without discrimination. And it contains also the passive man, not merely in the sense of accepting all experience, but in the sense of Yeats' Oriental wise men in Lapis Lazuli. That is, for Miller, the state of mind to be united with the unselfconscious body involves the awareness and detachment of the wise man who sees through the surface involvement of the human condition. It is that clarity of vision which allows the sage to smile in the face of tragedy, and it is something of that same intellectual position which Miller assumes in his apocalyptic visions when he calls joyfully for the destruction of the material world. It is also that position which seems to govern his very disinterested, or detached attitude about events that do not affect his own life, for he is both above the movement of the external world and in it, divorced from man's normal

sense of reality. And, of course, the call for destruction is also a wild desperate desire to inject new life into men:

Let us have more oceans, more upheavals, more wars, more holocausts. Let us have a world of men and women with dynamos between their legs, a world of natural fury, of passion, action, drama; dreams, madness, a world that produces ecstasy and not dry farts. . . . Anything that is capable of resuscitating body and soul. 7

The call for this kind of action, that is, of any action which is a spontaneous, impulsive, completely human expression of desires, senses, appetites, is Miller's expression of a return to the earthly life of the body in concert with the spirit. He wants so much to return to vital human roots, to a purely terrestrial life at one end of the spectrum in the senses, and in the mind, to transcend life, to be of the spirit, to be extraterrestrial. The contradictions in desiring to be tied to earth yet free of it are again resolved in the notion of physicality, of sensory relationships that really free the spirit. Overcoming psychological or cultural inhibitions to physical freedom will free the spirit from repression and will allow man to reach some sort of transcendent consciousness. The theory is to root the body in the sensual, the earthly, and in so doing, free the spirit:

Behind the gray walls there are human sparks, and yet never a conflagration! Are these men and women . . . or are these shadows, shadows of puppets dangled by invisible strings? They move in freedom apparently, but they have nowhere to go. In one realm only are they free and there they may roam at will--but they have not yet learned how to take wing. . . . No man has been born light enough, gay enough, to leave the earth! 8

Miller is saying that people are really free in spirit, were they only aware. People wander around in apparent physical freedom, unaware of both that attachment to earth, to the senses, and the means available to be physically alive, which for Miller is freedom. Again, his meaning here returns us to the notion of awareness of self, for the centre of the self is where Miller ultimately wants to arrive: the goal is to find God, where God is an interior sense of awareness: "My whole aim in life is to get nearer to God, that is, to get nearer to myself."<sup>9</sup> This, I take it, is not a simple egotistical equating of himself with God, rather it is the feeling that God is a state of consciousness, which is inner and of this world.

Repeatedly in Miller's writing, both in what he says and in what he actually does in his novels, there is traced a circular movement in a direction that leads toward the inner man. It is a movement inward toward the centre, as well as a return to beginnings, a finding of the end point in the beginning. It is also a working out of an encompassing theory of unification in a universal sense of one great, life process that is in eternal movement and change, yet which is unchanging in the sense of unending. And the movement is finally toward the expression of the inexpressible, which is telling a story that approximates the real story. What he wants to say cannot be expressed clearly, except in the most contradictory sounding terms.

No man ever puts down what he intended to say: the original creation, which is taking place all the time, whether one writes or doesn't write, belongs to the primal flux: it has no dimensions, no form, no time element. In this preliminary state, which is creation and not birth, what disappears suffers no destruction; something which was already there, something imperishable, like memory, or matter, or God, is summoned and in it one flings himself like a twig in a torrent. Words, sentences, ideas, no matter how subtle or ingenious, the maddest flights of poetry, the most profound dreams, the most hallucinating visions, are but crude hieroglyphs chiselled in pain and sorrow to commemorate an event which is untransmissible. 10

It is necessary finally to "see" what he is talking about by the feel of the sometimes frantic, almost desperate torrent of words on which Miller swims.

Miller works in complex levels of circles, as part of the central unification themes he is developing and as part of that direction inward to the soul. The largest, general, outward structure which provides the basic theoretical frame for these themes is the fairly common view of the natural cycle of life. His world view of the universe as process and as organic, is contained in those many statements that all is flux, that there is no death or birth in the cosmic sense, only metamorphosis or renewal. All that remains constant is continuity, the activity of life itself. Within this universe of flux are those things which partake of life, death, and rebirth in their various and constantly changing forms. Onto this rather familiar view of the life process, Miller appends his notions of paradise, eternity, and the mystery of creation. His interpretation of paradise comes

to be that special kind of acceptance of life which he practices, or at least which his hero does: That heaven and hell are physically, at any rate, in one place, in this world. And the way to heaven is, in one sense, through an acceptance of all that is here in life, arrived at through embracing evil and negating it. One transforms the life of the body into the life of the spirit. One attains a kind of mystical vision, which is paradise, by complete acceptance and by living through the experience of the physical. In that sense, paradise is the joy and ecstasy of the experience of the event itself. To penetrate the mystery of life is to accept all physical life. It is also necessary to embrace all contradictions in order to proceed beyond those contradictions, where one can arrive at a mystical or "feeling" state of understanding of the processal universe, and completely feel an objective part of it. The requirement Miller is positing is that one must first experience all life in order to penetrate the mystery. Berdyaev says the movement is toward completion:

The final completeness and wholeness include all the experience that has been lived through--the experience of good and evil, of division and valuation, of pain and suffering. Morality inevitably involves pain. There can be no bliss in "the good"--there can only be bliss "beyond good and evil." 11

And he describes the nature of paradise, as well as intimating the cyclical nature of the process of arriving there, both of which Miller develops in considerable detail in his novels:

The paradise at the end of the cosmic process is quite different from the paradise at its beginning. It comes after all the trials and with the knowledge of freedom. It may be said indeed to be the paradise after hell, after the experience of evil and a free rejection of hell. The temptation of returning to the primeval precosmic non-being is freely overcome . . . . Paradise, in which there is as yet no awareness of man's creative vocation and the highest idea of man is not yet realized, is replaced by a paradise in which his vocation and idea are revealed to the full. In other words, the natural paradise is replaced by the spiritual. 12

The differentiation of the two paradises Miller never fully deals with in his six main novels. He often returns to the vision of childhood innocence, describing the unity of that pre-conscious world of innocence with considerable longing. But his final position does involve a realization that the new paradise is arrived at through the world of experience, not by avoiding it, or, as in childhood, not yet experiencing it at all. And, as Berdyaev intimates, hell is, like paradise, a part of this world. In Miller's terms, it is in fact the world of experience which must be undergone without awareness of one's destination, that one will break through to the superconscious realm of understanding, at which he finally arrives. The point here, though, is that Berdyaev's mystical religious view of the world is remarkably similar to the concepts which Miller expresses; that is, Miller's background framework contains many elements of these religious mystic attitudes.

In the two writers, not only are their preconscious and superconscious understanding of paradise similar, but, as one would perhaps expect, their views of the concept of eternity

and creation are related. These connections would exist in part perhaps because theories of an earthly heaven would somehow have to deal in a quite similar fashion with the notion of eternity. As has been pointed out earlier, Miller's sense of the eternal is the notion of the eternal present. It is largely a view of the moment as infinitely expandable in the presence of the ecstatic experience:

Life stretches out from moment to moment in stupendous infinitude. Nothing can be more real than what you suppose it to be. . . . You live in the fruits of your action and your action is the harvest of your thought. Thought and action are one, because swimming you are in it and of it, and it is everything you desire it to be, no more, no less. Every stroke counts for eternity. 13

This view of eternity is also the one that life is to be lived in the present moment, without too much regard for the future, or, at least, without that concern for the future where the body lives now, separated from a mind that exists for some future moment. Miller criticizes that kind of separation as he saw it in his parents' life:

After dinner the dishes were promptly washed and put in the closet; after the paper was read it was neatly folded and laid away on a shelf; after the clothes were washed they were ironed and folded and then tucked away in the drawers. Everything was for tomorrow, but tomorrow never came. The present was only a bridge and on this bridge they are still groaning, as the world groans, and not one idiot ever thinks of blowing up the bridge. 14

Miller's approach to the present is an attempt to blow up the bridge; he wants to make the moment at hand the central feature of life-time, to negate the chronological, time-bound sense of the life process. He wants to live the life of the continuous

present, where past is only relevant as it is relived, re-experienced in the present. The past exists only in memory as the present, not as historical record, but as the means of extending the moment forward and back, in a sense, extending consciousness. Hence, his understanding of the past, and his use of the material of past experience, is quite unsequential in detail; he does not return to it as linear record so much as he relives particularly relevant moments as they recur rather timelessly in moments of memory. Miller is attempting, in this way, to present a sense of the infinite, of time bending back connecting all events and experiences without chronological relevance, without sequential, linear progression. Berdyaev presents the dilemma of time which Miller tries to solve:

Time is the nightmare and torment of our life in this world. We are drawn towards the past in memory and towards the future in imagination. Through memory the past abides in the present as the victory over the death-bringing flow of time, and in order to do so we constantly leave the present for the past and the future, as though the eternal present could be captured that way. Hence, living in time we are doomed never to live in the present. 15

And Miller attempts to solve the paradox by remaining in the present alone, seeking to encompass past experience, as it is relevant to his conscious moment, reliving it in the present, and bringing the future toward the present in his apocalyptic visions of the world. The triumph over time comes with consciousness of the value of the present as the moment of sole importance in life, never in the ordinary sense of



"looking ahead" toward tomorrow, toward the next moment. He tells his story as one continuous narrative of the present. The experience of writing at the moment, the telling of the story, the experiences being recounted, and the memories of relevant incidents of childhood, together with imaginative flights of fancy, all blend into one descriptive chain of an endlessly expandable story of the author's life as he feels and remembers from moment to moment.

The second central feature of Miller's cyclical-mystical world view is his notion of creation. Here again, the theoretical implications provided by Berdyaev provide valuable insights in helping to explicate Miller's formulations. Berdyaev distinguishes two kinds of creative expression: the first is one which is inner, and "primary creative intuition;" this is a personal awareness or consciousness not involving any external realization, as in the production of an art object. It is purely inner knowledge, which I interpret as an experience akin to that of mystical revelation. This primary intuition is what Miller refers to as the inexpressible knowledge, which his writing painfully attempts to approximate. And Berdyaev posits a second level or kind of creative expression, in terms similar to the first, as the outer or "secondary creative act." This is the realization of the creative intuition.

The primary creative fire is not art at all. Art is secondary and in it the creative fire cools down. . . . There is always a tragic discrepancy between the burning heat of the creative fire in which the artistic image is conceived, and the cold of its formal realization. 16

In a sense, this helps to explain the basis of Miller's view of life where art and life become one, where the outward manifestations of the life one lives are a creative expression of that "primary intuition." Miller can tell his life story as art, where art here begins as a recreation of the life he lived and then becomes the life he is reliving in telling the story, as well as the experience of being a writer and the writing itself. And the story is also creative, is art object, because it details and attempts to approximate metaphorically the inner vision of life which he has achieved. The story is, in the largest sense, a kind of self-transcendence involving an "overstepping of the confines of one's individual being . . . where one becomes concerned with values that are above man."<sup>17</sup>

The Miller hero does in fact present himself as a larger-than-life figure, with exaggerated and extreme appetites and capacities, moving always toward something much greater than a mere living out of experience. He slowly becomes aware that he must transcend these aspects of life, must move beyond a strictly physical freedom, as he moves to find that even greater inner freedom leading up to the creative intuition. "I no longer scrutinize the world--the world is inside me."<sup>18</sup>

For Miller paradise is not simply in the description of it in literature or in the traditional religious sense of it, though the vision of paradise is found in literature, and the experience he is talking of is really a religious, mystical

moment of spiritual insight. And the insight perhaps results in the creative vision, the moment of intuition, which produces the art object. Miller has tried to recreate that sense of paradise, the vision of eternity and the sublime moment of insight, in the understanding his character comes to feel. He unites this special sense of life and creative vision in his artistic production, the purpose being to make the art object, his life story, and himself as story-teller, inseparable in the literature.

The continuing levels of cyclical themes are apparent at the level of the individual's life story. Miller's life story is described in terms of a movement from a childhood paradise to an adult, disintegrated world where he spends most of his life attempting to recapture that childhood clarity of vision. The search of the man for a return to paradise is, in part, an attempt to return to the starting point in life.

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 . . . clutching the stars and the fever of the day. 19

Part of the nostalgia he feels for that paradisaal world is illustrated here to be more than a sense of the world as golden in that period; it is the idea of that period in life when one's vision of the world was completely unified, perhaps that it is golden because of the clarity and undifferentiated

wholeness of one's vision. That is, the inner processes of thought and dream are united with, because indistinguishable from the external characteristics of living and playing in that world. The main feature of this kind of existence is the fact that the child is not so conscious of self as separable from other aspects of his experience; nor is he inhibited in his feeling and his understanding by prescriptions concerning what he sees and what he does. He is not objectifying, categorizing the world with the kind of values that he is later trained to do, in what Miller calls "the great fragmentation of maturity," where

henceforward everything moves on shifting levels--our thoughts, our dreams, our actions our whole life. . . . we walk split into myriad fragments, like an insect with a hundred feet, a centipede with soft-stirring feet that drinks in the atmosphere; we walk with sensitive filaments that drink avidly of past and future, and all things melt into music and sorrow; we walk against a united world, asserting our dividedness. 20

In terms of the cyclical nature of man's life story, the struggle Miller presents is the movement to return to a paradise of a kind which contains features of that pre-conscious world. And the story of his life does move slowly toward that same sense of a completely unified perception of the world. But the unification is made consciously, as the result of complete awareness of self as part of the process of life, death, and rebirth, and as a result of a spiritual, or secular religious conversion at which he arrives through concrete, sensory, felt experience itself, and finally through consciousness

of the meaning of experience. The adult converts his experience into a unified, transcendent vision of the meaning of existence. He transforms his understanding of himself and his relationship to the world into a deep sense of spiritual unity with the cycle of the life process, with the circular, continuous movement of the universe. This felt perception of the world is one in which his whole life process is unified with his understanding of all other life processes. Rather than merely seeing the world in terms of a theory of nature, of organic cycles of continuous creation, dissolution, and recreation, he feels deeply and mystically an identity with that whole process; he not only rationalizes or justifies his own existence in those terms, but he satisfies to some extent his own desires and feeling for immortality. In the cyclical notion, he escapes death, or at least, the fear of it.

The circular journey of life then becomes more than an objectified organic theory of material recirculation or a principle of conservation of matter. It takes on the spiritual nature of the man as part of the journey as well. For the transcendent insight itself and the rationale that it posits, where one reaches a paradise through superconsciousness, is really an accomplishment of the mind in its widest sense as receptor of feeling, thought, memory, and imagination. The journey of the soul to full understanding as outlined in Miller's work is a spiritual trip which accepts the existent conditions of the world fully, and moves to paradise

that way through acceptance, rather than through negation of the material world or rejection of it in order to proceed along the route of self-denial or asceticism. This acceptance theory is one of reaching the goal by encompassing all experience, all of the outer life of the body, as part of one means of making the trip. In fact, that is the journey. To live in this world more fully as part of it, is what Miller says more and more frequently through the series of his novels. By this, he does not require nor mean that one join or operate in the social and political institutions of the day. He, himself, is a notorious abdicator in that sense.<sup>21</sup> He does mean that one is to live one's life style in the world of experience, not necessarily in the world of social responsibility as part of the institutionalized life, but as part of the world community of men, responsible first to self, not egocentric self, but the fully human, natural self, and then to other individuals, never to groups. The spiritual transcendence which transforms concrete experience in the world ~~also~~ brings the individual back to the concrete in the sense that it unites him once again with the earth, with reality, with a new perception of his place as part of the cycle of life, rather than with the mechanical cycles of the socio-cultural niches. The moment of new or renewed insight Miller puts as a form of resurrection. Having first died to a deathly world of social responsibility and institutionalized, disintegrated

man, he is reborn as a result of the insight gained in the unified mode of perception.

One thing is certain, that when you die [like this] and are resurrected you belong to the earth and whatever is of the earth is yours inalienably. You become an anomaly of nature, a being without shadow; you will never die again but only pass away like the phenomena about you. Nothing of this . . . was known to me at the time I was going through the change. Everything I endured was in the nature of preparation . . . . 22

The religious analogy inherent in the language of this description points out the spiritual nature of experience Miller is describing while maintaining still that connection with the world, that notion of living in the world which he wants to unite with his sense of the conversion in understanding. The idea of this life process as outside of the world, apart from its religious nature, is that rejection of the accepted institutionalized world of western industrial cultures:

If I am inhuman it is because my world has slopped over its human bounds, because to be human seems like a poor, sorry, miserable affair, limited by the senses, restricted by moralities and codes, defined by platitudes and isms. 23

It is that aspect of the external world which Miller refuses to join. And it is from that life in America he escapes by going to Paris. The Paris milieu is one in which he is free from ties, from the "human bounds", able now to find himself.

Miller's novels, as the story of the move away from America to rescue himself from the smothering conformity of all that New York means to him as social sickness, in order

to find in Paris the freedom and individuality to discover himself, and thus, finally, to achieve creative insight, are part of the larger circular journey of the hero. And that story has all the dimensions of the exaggerated hero figure of literary tradition. Here, though, the hero is out to save himself, rather than king or country or fair damsel. The heroic journey is ultimately an introspective one. It has the characteristics of a trip through two worlds at once, reaching its conclusion in a unification of them both in the mind of the hero. And the triumphant unification becomes a moment of self-awareness which is the transformation of the hero-traveller into the creative artist; in a sense, he becomes the man who finally finds his voice. That story parallels the circular motion of life, of time, of nature, and of the spirit, which Miller interweaves through those six major novels.

At the most obvious level, Miller's autobiographical tale deals with the events and experiences of the body, of the great man who explores all the sensory avenues of the earthly world. The descriptions of that full range of sensory experience are concentrated on the two primal appetites of food and sex. And in feasting on both, Miller describes his hero's activities as enormous, extravagantly exaggerated revels which range over extremes of language and description comparable to the enormity of his apocalyptic visions of the



world. Tropic of Capricorn, which contains a long disquisition called "An Interlude",<sup>24</sup> ranges over the great variety of the hero's sexual exploits with various women, in a partially surrealistic fantasy of pure sexual activity. It combines detailed, direct description of sexual encounters and purely imaginative fantasy. The sexual experiences described are presented as a total immersion in the senses: "It was like taking a flat in the land of Fuck."<sup>25</sup> But the simple description of the physical activity of "fucking" itself usually moves on to become beautiful, sensual fantasy:

It was an enormous cunt, too, when I think back on it. A dark, subterranean labyrinth fitted up with divans and cosy corners and rubber teeth and syringes and soft nestles and eiderdown and mulberry leaves. I used to nose in like the solitary worm and bury myself in a little cranny where it was absolutely silent, and so soft and restful that I lay like a dolphin on the oyster banks. . . . Sometimes it was like riding the shoot-the-shoots, a steep plunge and then a spray of tingling sea crabs, the bulrushes swaying feverishly and the gills of tiny fishes lapping against me like harmonica stops. 26

The sexual exploits of the hero detailed so prominently in Capricorn and in Sexus are clearly part of the heroic sensory and physical activities of the Henry Miller character, as is his constant, overriding concern with food and drink. And here again, some huge meals are detailed with careful emphasis in the descriptive language on the sensory and sensual satisfaction the surfeit provides. Here, too, Miller's flowing, uninhibited speech and direct description provide much of the sense of the richness of the experience. The

location of these sense experiences which the hero undergoes, the preponderance of their occurrence in the two novels mentioned, (though by no means are they exclusive to those novels), is significant in terms of the hero's journey.

These two novels both deal, almost in proportion to the weight given to sensual experiences, with the earlier adulthood of the character. In fact, Capricorn overlaps a considerable period of the life span depicted in Sexus. And the coincidence of the particular nature of these novels with the story of the hero has to do with the sort of journey he is embarked upon and the stage which this period depicts. As has been said in earlier portions of the discussion, he is moving through a great experiential realm, toward a creative, inner rebirth. This portion of early adulthood is that detailing of his travels where he begins to attempt to be a writer and where he enters what seems to be largely the world of ideas. This early period also encompasses that portion of his great journey through all the extremes of life, high and low, mind and body, thought and feeling. He is, in a sense, the great explorer ranging over the widest realms of experience, and, it goes almost without saying, over the widest range of speech. This heroic tale is Miller's accounting for the outward movement toward success. He is travelling through these experiences to achieve an outward success, which is really a version of complete freedom from restrictions and inhibitions, a transforming acceptance of experience. The attainment of that goal is signified

by his becoming what he always wanted to be, a writer.

Becoming a writer signifies also his achievement of control over the shaping of his own destiny. His early life, then, is marked by his efforts to participate totally in experience, following impulse and desire, abandoning himself to those activities in which he can negate the mind-thought control aspects of himself that function only to restrict and thus diminish the sense perceptions.

In terms of the journey of the hero, Plexus covers the period in Miller's life when he began his first real attempt to be a writer. Here, circumstances, such as his marriage to the mysterious Mona/Mara figure, allow him to quit his job, to give up all his attempts to find jobs, and actually begin to write on a full-time basis. The novel is remarkably tranquil in tone and in the pace and description of events. The calm, relatively pleasant air of this period of his life comes from the absence of the violent, almost continual immersion in active experience, so pervasive in the earlier novels. The somnolence of this book is also a result of the absence of the surrealistic, violent imagery which parallels the vitality and activity of life characteristic of that earlier period. This short period of calm seems a moment when the Miller-hero found an atmosphere in which could attempt to begin the life of a writer, if one can think of a writer as requiring a calm, undistracted kind of life. For Miller, it

was a false start, as is indicated by the story at this point. He either daydreamed his time away or walked about town all day looking for material to write about; and what he did produce was so pedestrian as to be utterly unprintable. Even the material he printed himself as broadsheets to be peddled in the street was unsaleable. The recounting of that time as an introspective, philosophical period when he entered the world of thought contributes to that sense of the character experiencing that other, rather detached realm of the mind. That is, moving from the activity of the body, he here enters the world of ideas, naively believing that this was the nature of what his career as a writer was to be. As in his attempts to fulfill the expectations of the more mundane social conventions of a husband and a wage-earner, the Miller character here is also a complete failure.

In terms of the hero's story, Nexus picks up and develops the beginning disorder that reappears toward the end of Plexus. The progress of the aspiring writer's life changes drastically from that momentary, idyllic period of Plexus, with its false, detached, mind-trip. The Miller-hero now enters the third and final phase of his outward trip, as it now turns to a bitter inner trial of spirit and body. He is physically reduced by the activities of Mona who begins more and more to neglect him. She enters into a long lesbian love affair which physically and spiritually emasculates Miller. Coinciding with these events, Miller descends into

a long, dark night of the soul. He enters a period of black despair and has no hope of ever escaping the world to which he is bound, of ever becoming the writer he wants to be, or of ever finding his true self. All his attempts to write are miserable failures. Most of his acquaintances have long ago given up hope that he will ever succeed, even in the most minor way, and a large portion of them have rejected him after years of being cajoled and coerced into supporting him with money and food. Nexus depicts the tortuous birth of the writer, alienated and isolated from the world and from anyone who could understand him. It covers the period when he has fallen to his deepest and worst moment of spiritual and physical impoverishment. He is here struggling to express himself without yet possessing the tools, the form or the words to do so, lacking even the knowledge of what he wants to say, not yet knowing who he is himself. Here, Miller depicts his artificial efforts to write, the culling of material from other sources, the search for the esoteric bit of information, all without any realization of what his aim or subject as a writer really is. He first attempts to write almost completely without purpose in the larger sense of knowing what his relationship to the world and to his art is. He concentrates on technique and matter unrelated to himself. Miller undergoes his last painful trial prior to being free to write. Here, he learns his most important lesson--the nature of his whole struggle is

really rooted in self-awareness. He can become nothing without first being himself and without first realizing that "being" is more than living unconsciously in an external state of active passivity ranging through an acceptance of all experience. He must both be a part of the external world and apart from the man-made systems that reduce the individual to little more than an object in a great human mechanism. Here, one is an object used for ends more demeaning than the sense of objectivity in nature, because a charade and an hypocrisy is perpetrated in the name of individuality, while the true individual nature of man, the soul, the spirit, is destroyed. Objectivity in nature means only to be, to exist in itself, the purpose fulfilled in the process. Miller's painful realization is that of becoming conscious of this new position he is moving to assume. He must become conscious of himself in the world process, and apart from the world of mechanical cogs. The consciousness is an understanding, a feeling, which will unite his inner world of being, his whole, specifically human, being, with the nature of his outer experiences in the world. The great escape from the restrictions of his earlier life is provided by the opportunity to live in Paris, which Mona arranges. It is there that he begins anew and it is there that he does begin to arrive at the necessary insight which will allow him to reshape his life: "Once we reached Europe I would grow a new body and a new soul."<sup>27</sup>

In terms of the cycle, the hero is reborn in Paris. Here, he begins to write, having, for the first time, a sense of what the great saga will be: the story of himself. He will turn back on his own past, re-explore his life, and in writing about it, satisfy his creative urge, becoming in the process a writer making of art his life. The triumph of the hero lies in the realization that the creative intuition is in fact an insight into the nature of himself. And the insight is a circling one, in that his triumphant end is to tell about his journey toward that triumphant end. He comes to find that his purpose is to go back to the beginning to tell the story of how "just a Brooklyn boy" becomes an artist, and the significance of the journey is its relevance to everyman as a way to the unified soul. Its significance as literature is that it details so poignantly the modern condition of the world and of the individual in our western society and offers in singularly contemporary symbols, language, and form, a solution which at the present time a portion of society seems to be pursuing as a kind of underground sub-culture rejecting for similar reasons the ways and institutions of traditional society. This is not to say that the hippies are doing anything new, or that Miller is saying anything new; he is telling a familiar story of man in search of himself,<sup>28</sup> of his own true nature, of man attempting to identify his world and attempting to identify with it.

What he is saying though, has its significance in the superbly worked complexity of the problems he presents which is contained in the intellectual complexity, and the manner of writing his language and imagery depicts, and which is also in the emotional and sensory levels of his literature.

The circle of the "Brooklyn boy" returns to Miller's first novel, Tropic of Cancer, the story of the artist born, setting out on the story of life. We return to a statement quoted sixty pages earlier,<sup>29</sup> which is significant of the circle one follows in working through an understanding of Miller:

A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it. I am. Everything that was literature has fallen from me. There are no more books to be written, thank God. 30

He has unified his creative desires with his own life style, his own life experience. The desperate attempts to become a writer, to write "literature" are no longer necessary because, as he now realizes, just to be himself, to explore himself, which for Miller, is not to write "a book", is to be the artist he always searched after. He was looking outside for what was finally found inside. The quest of the hero which stretches over six volumes returns to the expressions of himself in those opening lines of the first book. The beginning is both rebirth as artist and the tale of the heroic journey there, the intimation of what is to come:



At the extreme limits of his spiritual being man finds himself naked as a savage. When he finds God, as it were, he has been picked clean: he is a skeleton. One must burrow into life again in order to put on flesh. The word must become flesh; the soul thirsts. 31

What takes place in Miller's work is a unification of the story of its hero with the form or structure of the works themselves, in a great circular pattern that coincides with the layers of other circular themes throughout the novels. The first novel begins, in a sense, with the end, with the artist discovering and expressing his creative vision. The subsequent novels, from Black Spring and Capricorn on, circle back to the beginning of the process of the artist's development, and continue through to the time when he is about to set off to become what, in Tropic of Cancer, he starts out as. The hero, then, is an artist-hero who assures his immortality by virtue of the expression of his creative vision. And that vision is also the transcendent feature of his spirit which lifts him out of the ordinary world into the realm of super-reality. That world is really the inner state of the awakened perception--the awareness of the unity of all things, as well as the identification of the self with that state of being.

The artist belongs to the X root race of man; he is the spiritual microbe, as it were, which carries over from one root race to another. He is not crushed by misfortune, because he is not a part of the physical, racial scheme of things. . . . He is the cyclical being which lives in the epicycle. . . . everything is just and there is no need to come out of the trance. . . . I was able to partake of an active life which would permit the real self to hibernate until I was ripe to be born. 32

## CHAPTER FIVE--CONCLUSION

Three non-fiction works help clarify the sense of the artist living his art, and give some feeling of the "cosmic consciousness" at which Miller eventually arrives. These are The World of Sex, The Colossus of Maroussi, and Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch. In their chronological arrangement, they are not completely a presentation of that supreme self-consciousness which would follow upon the journey of the hero of the six novels.<sup>1</sup> But they do present aspects of that final vision that is attempted in the novels, and they do give a view of the sort of life the artist, who is successful in Miller's terms, eventually comes to live.

The World of Sex discusses the themes of youth and the return to childhood innocence prevalent in his fiction works. It presents a loosely defined philosophy of life which is comprised mainly of his ideas about what is necessary in one's attitude toward life. The book is partly an attempt to explain some of those aspects of his works which have resulted in his reputation for obscenity and pornography. Here, Miller paraphrases Lawrence's belief that the two great modes of life are the religious and the sexual, though the bulk of his discussion centres on his interest in sex as one avenue leading to the soul. The sexual and religious elements,

for Miller, are "susceptible to conversion" to other kinds of understanding; they involve also a notion of understanding and acceptance. "The effort to eliminate the 'repulsive' aspects of existence, which is the obsession of moralists, is not only absurd but futile."<sup>2</sup> As far as Miller is concerned, these aspects of life cannot be ignored or repressed without losing contact with the essential reality of life. Miller's understanding of the sexual is that the body as sensual device is connector to the spirit. And the body has lost its spiritual centre when it lost its capability to act freely as sense perceptor; it has been deadened in that aspect of its existence by repression of desires, impulses, urges, feelings. So too, Miller defends the necessity to use the full range of language and description, to follow impulse, urge, fantasy, and dreams in exercising the full range of human possibilities. His exit point, the place where life is to be regained, the senses re-awakened, and the spirit re-entered, is through the body, through the world of sex. The "sexual drama" is part of the soul of man and, in integrated individuals, sex falls into its proper perspective, being neither over-inflated in its importance nor repressed and ignored. "The genitals are impressed, so to speak, into the service of the whole being. . . . What is new, original, and fecund issues only from a complete entity."<sup>3</sup> The central theme of this discussion again relates to Miller's interest in the

idea of the completely unified man. And it is in this direction that his concern with sex points, both here in his abstract discussion of the topic and in his novels. He never fully explains what he means by unified perception; rather he presents illustrations that approximate that condition. The World of Sex drifts back into the form of his novels; it describes a particular childhood experience. In order to explain the sense of unified perception that Miller means, he goes back to recounting the world as he saw it in childhood. That eye best approximates the inexpressible vision which he now sees.

That peculiar travel narrative of Miller's experiences in Greece, The Colossus of Maroussi, details more clearly the "arrived" position of the artist. It conveys his state of mystical peace aroused by his sense of the place. The tremendous spiritual experience of the place Miller senses from his incomplete understanding of the Greek past, in the atmosphere of its present condition:

I do not pretend to know, but I felt, as I have seldom felt before the ruins of the past, that here throughout the long centuries there reigned an era of peace. There is something down to earth about Knossus, the sort of atmosphere which is evoked when one says Chinese or French. The religious note seems to be graciously diminished; . . . a spirit of play is markedly noticeable. In short, the prevailing note is one of joy. . . . Knossus was worldly in the best sense of the word. 4

As a travel book, Miller's Colossus is mainly a narrative of the effect of the Greek landscape, local people, and the Greek ancient past on his sensibility. And that effect seems to have been a genuinely spiritual experience of peace and calm; it is a sense of a unification of man and place in harmonious existence.

Greece is what everybody knows . . . . It is what you expect the earth to look like given a fair chance. It is the subliminal threshold of innocence. It stands, as it stood from birth, naked and fully revealed. It is not mysterious or impenetrable, not awesome, not defiant, not pretentious. It is made of earth, air, fire and water. It changes seasonally with harmonious undulating rythms. It breathes, it beckons, it answers.<sup>5</sup>

The book is really a presentation of the state of the artist expressing, ostensibly in his sense of place, his feelings of harmony, peace and fulfillment in the world. The book is, of course, no travelogue at all. Miller is rendering the state of the artist who has achieved the condition of spiritual insight which his autobiographical hero reaches at the end of his great circle journey.

Another perspective of the state of the artist is presented in Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch. This time the living out of that state or condition is expressed in the relationship of the individual to the communal setting. Here, the artist's communal life style is recounted in an almost diary narrative of bits of everyday events at Big Sur, California. This book presents the attitude and details of daily living that compose the kind of harmonious, integrated life Miller felt he saw in Greece. Again, in recounting the ordinary, Miller communicates the sense of a life that is extraordinary in its range of free, open, full enjoyment. The mundane is translated into the wonderful by self-realization, and by self-consciousness of what it means

to live as one does, by savouring the process of being alive. Miller develops here the insights of the individual, which he discusses in The World of Sex, together with the feeling of harmony he experienced in The Colossus of Maroussi into a sense of a significant community life. The return is to a renewed understanding of social relationships. His theme is an interpretation of the world, of the Big Sur area where he lives, in terms of the vision that the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch present. "Seeing the world through his eyes it appears to us once again as a world of indestructible order, beauty, harmony, which it is our privilege to accept as a paradise or convert into a purgatory."<sup>6</sup> Big Sur is a marvellous book in presenting the fascination of each day as a new and exciting experience for itself alone, with much of the delight one imagines is felt by a condemned man who has just been pardoned. It has no literary value in itself, yet it very successfully completes the literary works of Miller. This it does because it details the arrived position of the artist living an ordinary, yet super-ordinary life. His life is ordinary in the sense that he must struggle to earn money, to live, and to work, as perhaps does everyone else. But it is super-ordinary in describing Miller's consciousness of what his life is about, what living, in general, is about, and what the purpose is of the particular kind of existence he lives. The details of ordinary life

are interspersed with a considerable amount of discussion of its significance. However, the main direction of the book is pointed out in the first section which discusses the nature of communal living. Here, Miller's major insight is that "it is through the eyes of the soul that paradise is visioned."<sup>7</sup> The reason for describing life at Big Sur is to illustrate the nature of paradise, which is where Miller now feels he has arrived. Paradise is for him a matter of creative vision, which is ultimately an attitude of mind and body. Miller is trying to say that place and direction are not to be considered in the way that we commonly think of them: "One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things."<sup>8</sup> And the way of looking which he wants to make clear is one that involves seeing the world in terms of a unified perspective with an attitude of active acceptance: "To see things whole is to be whole. The fellow who is out to burn things up is the counterpart of the fool who thinks he can save the world. The world needs neither to be burned nor to be saved. The world is, we are."<sup>9</sup> Always, the themes Miller discusses relate to those of major concern in his earlier novels. He never moves far from the basic conception of re-awakened awareness of self as part of a cosmic order, nor from the notion of paradise found in conscious participation in that continuing flux of life and in the acceptance of all aspects of that process. Miller's non-fiction writing re-

emphasizes and reinforces those themes exemplified in his novels, with the important exception that his later prose writings indicate the culminating self-consciousness at which he has arrived. That is, they represent what were throughout his novels the goals of the artist-everyman: "A man writes in order to know himself, and thus get rid of self eventually. That is the divine purpose of art. . . . To make living itself an art, that is the goal."<sup>10</sup> Finally, the writer, for Miller, is writing "to communicate with his fellow-man, and thereby establish communion with him. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

There are at least two major features of Miller's writing which could also be discussed as part of an analysis of the literary qualities of his language and writing style. These are the humour or comic descriptions of his experiences, and the range of sensual imagery in the descriptive language. Both of these have been purposely overlooked in this thesis since they require a study of greater size than can be afforded here. The general direction of this paper has been toward an exposition of the story of the development of the artist, that is, toward outlining what kind of man he is describing in the novels, and what kind of world he means that man to live in. This sort of discussion is complicated by a fiction style which purports also to be autobiographical, and which, by implication at least, has been accepted as generally more closely based on the author's life experiences than the general truism



that all of what a writer says comes from his own experiences. Miller's work is more openly detailed as personal experience which has been elaborated upon. The distinction between creative fiction and autobiographical fact is less than clear in many places. This blurring of lines I have also implied is a deliberate process in the pattern of attempting to unify life and art. It was perhaps not deliberately planned at first, in some of Miller's earliest works, such as Tropic of Cancer and Black Spring, though I would argue that the idea became clearer from then onward. And the formulation of that approach with greater consciousness of exactly what he was doing quite possibly came as the result of the indirect influence of Otto Rank's psychoanalytical theories of the creative artist.<sup>12</sup> The point here, though, is that we can separate less and less Miller's own outlook from that of his auto-hero in the novels. And what Miller himself says in some of his more distinctly non-fiction works discussed here seems to me to have greater credence in explaining the position of the artist and of his novel hero in his "arrived" or reborn position. That is, Miller's views in some of his other works present very well the unification of the artist and life which his novel character sought after, and, in a sense, the prose works form part of a connected, continuing story which both illumine the novels and present the widest illustration of the process of development implied by the novels. The art of the six novels becomes truly the way

of seeing life that Miller the author achieves. Art merges with lived experience in the widest sense, where the art object becomes less and less an artifice and life becomes more and more a creative experience itself. The conjunction of the two demonstrates man's supreme consciousness of self, which is his spiritual awareness. Like the cowardly lion, the straw man and the tin soldier, he discovers he always had the necessary qualities; the discovery, the self-awareness is the great awakening or rebirth.

## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," "The American Scholar" and "The Oversoul" in The American Tradition in Literature, (shorter edition), eds. Bradley, Beatty, and Long, (New York: Norton & Co., 1967).

<sup>2</sup>Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," PMLA, LXVI (March 1951), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>William Gordon, "Henry Miller and the Romantic Tradition," (diss. Tulane, April, 1963).

<sup>4</sup>I am thinking here of Miller's general attitude toward life and his concern with the problems of defining the nature of art and artist. In this regard, he speaks about the unified life in terms of an attitude of acceptance and an understanding of life as process in "Reflections on Writing" in The Wisdom of the Heart, New York, New Directions, 1941, pp. 242-251, an essay first appearing in Creative Writing, Chicago. And he presents his view of the position at which the artist arrives in the essay on D. H. Lawrence, "Universe of Death." Other aspects of this continuing interest in defining these terms appear in "Of Art and the Future" and a number of other essays collected and published by New Directions in The Wisdom of the Heart, The Cosmological Eye, Remember To Remember, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird, and The Henry Miller Reader.

<sup>5</sup>Henry Miller, Tropic of Cancer, New York, Grove Press, 1961, (Paris, 1934), p. 89. All subsequent references to this text are taken from this edition.

<sup>6</sup>"My affinity is more with Lawrence, obviously. My antecedents are the romantic, demonic, confessional, subjective types of writer." Henry Miller, The Books in My Life, New York and London, New Directions and Icon Books, 1951 and 1952, pp. 219-220.

<sup>7</sup>Miller spent at least two years in the thirties writing a book on Lawrence. He eventually abandoned it, although some of his essays, "Creative Death" and "The Universe of Death" among them, are excerpts from that manuscript. Both of these works are very interesting illustrations of Miller's approval of Lawrence and his insight into Lawrence's attitude. They also draw some of the similarities in Miller and Lawrence in terms

of definitions of art and the role of the artist. Cf. pp. 218-19 of The Books in My Life for a detailed explanation of how he began the Lawrence study and why he never completed it.

<sup>8</sup>Miller met and discussed theories of art with Otto Rank through Anaïs Nin, in Paris, while Miller was writing Tropic of Capricorn in 1933. (Cf. Anaïs Nin, Diary, 1931-1934, ed. Gunther Stuhlmann, The Swallow Press and Harcourt, Brace and World: New York). Rank, according to Nin, was also extremely interested in Lawrence, as well as deeply involved in developing his psychoanalytical theories of art and artists, some of which appeared in his book Art and Artist, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1932.

<sup>9</sup>Miller makes an indirect reference to Berdyaev in a letter published in The Books in My Life, pp. 229-230.

<sup>10</sup>Kingsley Widmer, Henry Miller, New Haven, Conn., Twayne Publishers, 1963, pp. 140-1.

<sup>11</sup>John Williams, "Henry Miller: The Success of Failure," VQR, 44 (1968), 225-245.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>13</sup>The only significantly comprehensive and penetrating discussion of Miller's works I have been able to locate is that done by William Gordon: The Mind and Art of Henry Miller, Baton Rouge, La., Louisiana State University Press, 1967, and Writer and Critic: A Correspondence with Henry Miller, Baton Rouge, La., Louisiana State University Press, 1968. Most of the other critical pieces on Miller appear to be either uncritical praise bordering on adulation, or piecemeal and poorly argued rejection. In this regard, a good sampling of these two attitudes is displayed in the collection of critical essays on Miller edited by George Wickes in Henry Miller and the Critics, Carbondale, Ill., Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1963. Some recent articles of much better quality are appearing. (Cf. Ihab Hassan's "The Literature of Silence," Encounter, vol. 28 (1967), 74-82. Perhaps the best new scholarly work that has emerged on Miller is Jane A. Nelson's Form and Image in the Fiction of Henry Miller, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970. (Unfortunately, it appeared too late to be included in any major way in this discussion.)

<sup>14</sup>Phillip Rahv, "Sketches in Criticism: Henry Miller," Henry Miller and the Critics, ed. G. Wickes, pp. 81-82.

<sup>15</sup>Ihab Hassan, "The Literature of Silence," p. 79.

## Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>A Collection of early notes and the first material Miller managed to have published is reprinted in Henry Miller Miscellanea, San Mateo, Calif: Bern Porter, Greenwood Press, 1945. Page 22 indicates a plan outline for the novels prepared in 1932. In terms of a unified group Black Spring should be excluded since it is really a collection of pieces of stories, but in fact it does not affect our grouping very significantly.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, Tropic of Cancer, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-47

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Miller, Tropic of Capricorn, New York, Grove Press, 1961, (Paris, 1939), pp. 12-13. All subsequent references to this text are taken from this edition.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>9</sup>Henry Miller, Black Spring, New York, Grove Press, 1963, (Paris, 1936), pp. 20-21. All subsequent references to this text are taken from this edition.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Chapter I., footnote 9.

<sup>11</sup>Nicolas Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, trans. Natalie Duddington, London, Geoffrey Bles, (1937), 1948, p. 290.

<sup>12</sup>Capricorn, p. 287.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Miller, Plexus, The Rosy Crucifixion, Book Two, New York, Grove Press, 1963, p. 320. All subsequent references to this text are taken from this edition.

<sup>14</sup>Capricorn, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup>Berdyaev, Destiny of Man, pp. 288-89.

<sup>16</sup>Henry Miller, Sexus, The Rosy Crucifixion, Book One, New York, Grove Press, 1962, p. 404. All subsequent references to this text are taken from this edition.

<sup>17</sup>Allan Tate, "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," in The Man of Letters in the Modern World, Selected Essays: 1928-1955, New York, Meridian Books, 1955, pp. 11-22.

<sup>18</sup>Cancer, pp. 227-28.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 225

<sup>20</sup>Capricorn, p. 68.

<sup>21</sup>Cancer, pp. 129-30.

<sup>22</sup>Sexus, p. 280.

<sup>23</sup>Capricorn, pp. 288-89.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>25</sup>Cancer, p. 167.

<sup>26</sup>Capricorn, pp. 230-31.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 128-29.

<sup>28</sup>Plexus, p. 630.

<sup>29</sup>Berdyayev, Destiny of Man, p. 290.

### Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>Capricorn, pp. 60-61.

<sup>2</sup>Cancer, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>All of the writing which he has described himself as doing in the earlier novels was never published. Apparently, most of it was a self-consciously adopted literary style of one of a number of authors whose work impressed Miller most at the time.

<sup>4</sup>Otto Rank, Art and Artist, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>Capricorn, pp. 286-87.

<sup>7</sup>Otto Rank, Art and Artist, p. 374.

<sup>8</sup>Plexus, p. 418.

<sup>9</sup>Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death, New York, Random House, 1959, p. 318.

<sup>10</sup>Plexus, pp. 634-35.

<sup>11</sup>Cancer, p. 229.

<sup>12</sup>Capricorn, pp. 76-77.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>14</sup>Sexus, pp. 269-70.

<sup>15</sup>Plexus, p. 640.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>17</sup>Capricorn, pp. 63-64.

<sup>18</sup>Plexus, p. 313.

<sup>19</sup>Cancer, pp. 163-64.

<sup>20</sup>Sexus, pp. 272-73.

<sup>21</sup>Cancer, pp. 232-33.

<sup>22</sup>Plexus, p. 384. He has also written a surrealistic short story entitled "Into the Night Life," which is part of Black Spring (pp. 133-158). It is a combination of nightmare, dream, and fantasy, appropriately subtitled "A Coney Island of the Mind."

<sup>23</sup>Plexus, p. 319.

<sup>24</sup>Jane A. Nelson, in Form and Image in the Fiction of Henry Miller, devotes a major portion of her study to a brilliant, detailed, scholarly analysis of the women in Miller's novels (cf. pp. 17-104) in terms of their significance as emblems of the "threatening unconscious" (p. 55).

<sup>25</sup>Sexus, p. 268.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

#### Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup>William Gordon, "Henry Miller and the Romantic Tradition," p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death, pp. 318-19.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Miller, Nexus, The Rosy Crucifixion, Book Three, New York, Grove Press, 1965, (Paris, 1960), p. 301. All subsequent references to this text are taken from this edition.

<sup>4</sup>Plexus, p. 632.

<sup>5</sup>Black Spring, pp. 159-182.

<sup>6</sup>Anais Nin, Diary, 1931-34, p. 256.

<sup>7</sup>Cancer, pp. 231-32.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-22.

<sup>9</sup>Capricorn, p. 305.

<sup>10</sup>Sexus, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup>Berdyayev, Destiny of Man, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>13</sup>Capricorn, p. 331.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>15</sup>Berdyayev, Destiny of Man, p. 295.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>18</sup>Plexus, p. 317.

<sup>19</sup>Black Spring, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Miller's later life at Big Sur. There his life style is close to that of contemporary dropouts from society.

<sup>22</sup>Capricorn, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup>Cancer, p. 231.

<sup>24</sup>Capricorn, pp. 176-333, commonly called an "Interlude in the Land of Fuck."

<sup>25</sup>Capricorn, p. 181

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 182-83.



<sup>27</sup>Nexus, p. 304.

<sup>28</sup>William Gordon, The Mind and Art of Henry Miller, p. 113.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Chapter III, footnote 2.

<sup>30</sup>Cancer, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>32</sup>Capricorn, pp. 319-20.

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup>They were written at rather widely spaced intervals; World of Sex was first published in 1941, then revised and republished in 1948. Colossus came out in 1941 and Big Sur was printed in 1957. My putting them together as one unified expression is somewhat artificial in the sense that they cover a seventeen year period of time, though I still think they represent a culmination of Miller's position on art and artist.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Miller, The World of Sex, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>World of Sex, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi, New York, New Directions, 1941, pp. 121-22.

<sup>5</sup>Colossus, p. 153.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Miller, Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch, New York, New Directions, 1957, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 400.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Chapter I, footnote 7. Also the Henry Miller Miscellanea contains a notebook entry written in the early thirties, referring to Rank's Art and Artist which would seem to indicate Miller's familiarity with those theories of the artist.

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