THE MORAL VISION OF HENRY MILLER

by

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ABSTRACT

Henry Miller is essentially a moralist. His autobiographical novels--Tropic of Capricorn, The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy, and Tropic of Cancer--are prose confessionals in which the author endeavors to purify himself of American materialism. In these works, Miller creates a basic opposition between the forces of evil--society and its hypocritical relationships--and the force of good which Miller finds in his confessional impulse. Miller attempts to give authority to his hero-confessor role by developing an elaborate myth of himself as a kind of Saint of Innocence. The basis of this self-proclaimed sainthood is Miller's vision of himself as Outsider, as, more specifically, the anarchic and free-spirited Brooklyn boy who never developed a need for adult society and whose values are superior to it. This mythic boy who provides the point of view for Miller's novels has both constructive and destructive impulses. On one hand, he desires to discredit completely the society which has held his creative spirit in vassalage. On the other hand, he attempts to show his own growing power as he exchanges the workaday world for the idealistic realm of creative art. Miller's moralistic boy, then, is basically an apostle for the creed of self-development. He is, moreover, a dreamer who envisions a Paradise on Earth

in which every man (through creativity) becomes his own savior; he is, finally, a hater of the misdirected and misdirecting society which discourages this kind of dreaming.

In Tropic of Capricorn, Miller the mythic boy remembers his period of entrapment in the Brooklyn world. In The Rosy Crucifixion, Miller describes his love affair with the woman who gave him the courage to leave his first wife--and job--and devote his efforts to becoming a writer. It is this woman, the Mona of Miller's novels, who by terminating their love relationship instigates Miller's "rosy crucifixion," his death to society. In Tropic of Cancer, the day-to-day journal of a Bohemian existence in Paris, Miller signals that he has fully reincorporated into his being the anarchic and self-seeking personality of a mythicized Brooklyn boyhood.

I. HENRY MILLER AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

Henry Miller is an admittedly odd child of American literature, but he is genuinely a product of our literary heritage and of a dilemma which has intrigued American writers since Emerson: namely, the failure of America to fulfill its dream of a perfect brotherly democracy. Like, for instance, Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, Miller artistically confronts a democratic dream which is at the mercy of its business ethic. And like such contemporaries as Dreiser and Steinbeck, Miller is preoccupied in his literature with recording lives which personalize the failure of that dream. Yet Miller's chief subject is himself, his own life, and his own inability to accommodate himself to the lowered standards of his society. Miller, moreover, is eventually prompted by his own failure in society to abandon the American dream for a personally-structured myth of crucifixion, resurrection and salvation. But initially, Miller can simply be defined as a dreamer of the American dream, a believer in the democratic millennium which was to have been established in our land. To quote Miller:

> I feel least of all like an American, though I am probably more an American than anything else. The American in me which I acknowledge and recognize, the American which I salute if I must put

> it that way, is the aboriginal being, the seed and the promise, which took shape in "the common man" dedicating his soul to a new experiment, establishing on virgin soil "the city of brotherly love."[1]

Frederick I. Carpenter in American Literature and the Dream contends that the American dream is a major reality, if only in terms of its failure, in the history of our literature. It is a dream, he states, which

> . . . persists, in spite of the delusions of its supporters, and the misinterpretations of its critics. It imagines a way of life which the delusion of modern times has not discredited. It praises--not nationalism, but freedom for all men; not materialism, but the progress of science; not the compulsory reform of society, but the education of the individual; and not mere success, but self-realization through struggle and even tragedy.[2]

Carpenter, in defining the mainstream of American literature as a reaction to the failure of the democratic dream, has then also defined Henry Miller. Miller fundamentally views his life as a journey passing through and beyond the American experience. His chief literary statement is that he has triumphed over the dream become nightmare by ruthlessly articulating it in terms of his own life through the medium of the autobiographical novel. In Tropic of Capricorn, The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy and Tropic of Cancer--Miller's autobiographical novels--he alternates between recollecting the nightmare and detailing his personal journey out of that nightmare. And, he insists, ". . . the more I wrote the more I became a human being. The writing may have seemed monstrous (to some),

for it was a violation, but I became a more human individual because of it. I was getting the poison out of my system. . . . Curiously enough, this poison had a tonic effect for others. It was as if I had given them some kind of immunity."[3] Out of the trackless prose of his autobiographical novels, Miller creates a hybrid fact-fiction in which he intermingles nightmare, personal triumph, and impromptu essay. The autobiographical novel, as Miller uses it, has no limitations or formal boundaries. And obviously, for Miller, it provides a mystical rather than a literary workshop; he loosely defines his "auto-novel" as

> . . . not a mixture of truth and fiction . . . but an expansion and deepening of truth. It is not the flimsy truth of facts . . . but the truth of emotion, reflection and understanding, truth digested and assimilated. The being revealing himself does so on all levels simultaneously.[4]

Henry Miller, the hero of this free-form, semi-literary document is really two people: first, he is the triumphant creative artist who has liberated himself from the world which he describes, and secondly, he is the bitter memory of himself as reluctant Brooklyn wage earner. In response to the fallen dream of a society, Miller counters the nightmare of the individual, a character to whom Kingsley Widmer in Henry Miller refers as the "apocalyptic comedian."[5] It is evident, moreover, that in the face of the failure of his society to fulfill its dream, Miller is making no excuses for the nature of his

revelations, for his literature, or for the man whom he presents himself as:

> For me the book is the man and my book is the man I am, the confused man, the negligent man, the reckless man, the lusty obscene, boisterous, thoughtful, scrupulous, lying, diabolically truthful man that I am. I am thinking that in that age to come I shall not be overlooked. Then my history will become important and the scar which I leave upon the face of the world will have significance. I can not forget that I am making history, a history on the side which, like a chancre, will eat away the other meaningless history. I regard myself not as a book, a record, a document, but as a history of our time. . . .[6]

Miller's odd literary song and the weirdly-fragmented singer of that song command critical interest for at least two reasons. Primarily, Miller merits our attention because he completes, in his extremism, at least the initial cycle of the history of the reaction of American writers to a society increasingly without its dream. Secondly, Miller's autobiographical novels represent an essentially moral reaction to the failure of the democratic dream, a reaction which deserves explication if not justification.

Writing, in Miller's morality, becomes a means of criticizing society by criticizing one's own life. As he states in The Wisdom of the Heart:

> I felt compelled, in all honesty, to take the disparate elements of our life--the soul life, not the cultural life--and manipulate them through my own personal mode, using my own shattered and dispersed ego as heartlessly and recklessly as I would the flotsam and jetsam of the surrounding phenomenal world. . . . I

> have always welcomed the dissolving influences. In an age marked by dissolution, liquidation seems to me a virtue, nay a moral imperative . . . I never felt the least desire to conserve, bolster up or buttress anything. . . .[7]

Among his American precursors, Miller draws most inspiration from Walt Whitman who also hopes to exert a sweeping moral influence upon his fellow Americans. Whitman, after all, broadened the domain of American literature. He gave birth to the particularly American traits which are always implicit in Miller's behavior and writing. Whitman, in his poetry, celebrates the fundamental joys of life: he considers nothing unworthy of his attention. He is the poet of sex, of the body. He understands that the child's optimism, the child's zest for life, the child's innocence to his surroundings are qualities valuable to manhood. In his gusto, Whitman radiates a wholeness of being which has practically been excluded from the American experience. In his cosmic personality, his inclusiveness, he offers Miller the archetype for American brotherhood. He is for Miller the true seed which can one day make the democratic dream a reality. Miller details his respect for Whitman in Tropic of Cancer: Whitman, he says,

> . . . was the Poet of the Body and the Soul. . . . There is no equivalent in the languages of Europe for the spirit which he immortalized. . . . Europe has never had . . . a free, healthy spirit, what you might call a MAN. Goethe was the nearest approach, but Goethe was a stuffed shirt, by comparison . . . a respectable

> citizen, a pedant, a bore. . . . Goethe is an end of something, Whitman is a beginning.[8]

Miller, however, is in much greater reaction to society than Whitman. Democratic Vistas is a polite, overly-formal document when compared to Miller's explosions against business America in the auto-novels. Miller's literary depictions of society are tinged with the desperation of the man who until mid-life was a trapped member of that society. His Whitmanesque celebration of life as a creative artist is tempered by the desire to return to a detailing of the nightmare from which he emerged. Miller's self-dependence is the product of an existential selfhood in which God is dead, hope for an afterworld has been dispelled, and man is only as alive as he can make himself in each, present moment of existence. Miller's determination to partake more fully of life and his moods of celebration, consequently, have a desperate quality that Whitman seems never to have known although his experiences in a Civil War hospital may be equated with the Miller generation's world depression and two world wars. Also, in at least this sense, Miller has the typical intellectual beginnings of the creative writer of the 1920's and 1930's. As he states in The World of Sex:

> I am obliged to adapt myself to a struggle in a realm wherein I see nothing to sustain me but my own powers. . . . If I slip I go down into an abyss from which no man can rescue me. The struggle is on all fronts, ceaselessly and remorselessly. Like every man I am my own worst

> enemy, but unlike most men I know too that I am my own savior.[9]

Unlike the formal European existentialists of the Twenties and Thirties, Miller maintained no relationship or day-to-day interest in political or social institutions. Miller's problem as a creative being never was one of establishing a working relationship with his government. His major philosophical insight was merely an acceptance of the fact that his potential as a man was limited by the extent to which he participated in the present society. He has nothing constructive to offer that society. Quite to the contrary:

> I use destruction creatively, perhaps a little too much in the German style, but aiming always towards a real, inner harmony, an inner peace--and silence. . . . I have no interest in the life of the masses, nor in the intentions of the existing of the world. I hope and believe that the whole civilized world will be wiped out in the next hundred years or so. I believe that man can exist, and in an infinitely better, larger way, without "civilization."[10]

Miller, as existentialist turned visionary, foresees in the dim future a mystical way out of the modern hell. The role of the creative writer in this scheme becomes prophetic and mystical because he, in a sense, is able to transcend both real and fictive worlds. He can affirm with certainty that "... the highest art is the art of living . . . (that) . . . writing is but a prelude or form of initiation for this purpose."[11] For Miller the true creative artist is a Nietzchean being who believes

that upon the death of God, and on the ruins of the present society, can be erected a new man and a new human relationship. Moreover, a lifelong discipleship to Spengler makes him firmly divide writers between those who prop up society and those who participate as visionaries in its destruction. For the latter, Miller finds a special pleasure:

> If you are an artist you have one consolation which is denied the others: you can play the role of undertaker. It is an old and honorable profession and demands only a bare working knowledge of the human anatomy. It offers the satisfaction of walking and working with death in dignity while being very much alive and joyous oneself.[12]

Miller, however, is a casual child of his philosophies, and his relation to them is generalized by his American past: his native optimism. Interestingly, after his expatriate period (1930-1940), Miller returns to a more typically American pattern when he migrates to the sparsely settled coast of Big Sur, California, and enacts from 1944 to 1955 the kind of good-natured compromise with society that Thoreau made at Walden Pond.[13] In fact, in Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch, Miller makes it quite clear that the chief virtue of life in the California artists' colony is merely its simplicity. For instance, this advice to prospective inhabitants:

> What could one bring that would be of value to the (Big Sur) community? Just a normal, modest desire to do whatever needs to be done in whatever way it can be done. Briefly, two

> capable hands, a strong heart, and a certificate of vaccination against disillusionment. If you have an intellect, bring it with you, but not the rubbish that usually goes with it. There are two many intellects here already. And if you bring nothing else, bring a sense of humor. . . .[14]

Although Miller remains throughout his life a kind of Spenglerian anarchist (awaiting the fall of a doomed Western Civilization), it is, however, evident that he is not overly burdened by the weighty European philosophies which he so loves to invoke on his native land and the facts of his life. As Ludwig Marcuse observes about Miller in Obscene: "He is the born passer-by. No tradition could hold him. No profession made him settle down. He has never belonged to a club, a lodge, a political or social organization."[15] There is, then, no great philosophical dialectic in Miller, just a process: personal salvation. Lawrence Durrell, a friend of Miller's since the expatriate days in Paris, probably best defined Miller and his relation as a literary artist to his material:

> There seem to be two distinct types of creative man. The first controls his material and shapes it. The second delivers himself over to his gifts. The first belongs to the family of Lawrence, of Blake. With this second type of artist it is useless to agitate for measure, form, circumspection. They are entirely mantic, delivered over to their pneuma. It is very exasperating, for almost any one of us talented fellows could show Blake how to improve his work, or Lawrence how to achieve the form he lacked. . . . But we should then be guilty, I have no doubt, of missing the whole meaning and content of the work of such artists--for the

> meaning resides not only in the work as a whole unit, but also in the life of its creator, and in the struggle that went into the making of the work. Unless we are prepared to admit that this type of creative man is making use of his art in order to grow by it, in order to expand the domains of his own sensibility, we will be unable to profit by what he has to offer us, which is the vicarious triumph of finding ourselves in reading him.[16]

The central elements in Miller's autobiographical novels indicate that he views his metamorphosis from Brooklyn wage-earner to Paris creative artist as a kind of Passion. In this Passion, as we shall see, Miller as a self-proclaimed Saint of Innocence insists that he experienced a Christ-like boyhood, a mythic "rosy crucifixion" by society and a resurrection at middle age into creative art. His pivotal autobiographical work, The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy, forms the link between Henry Miller, Western Union Company employment manager (Tropic of Capricorn) and Henry Miller, creative artist (Tropic of Cancer). Miller's Passion, however, is not a simple literary device; it is Miller's way of symbolizing a real salvation out of a hellish past.

While the spirit of Jesus Christ came to this earth as the emissary of his Father, Miller believes that he came to adulthood as the emissary of his own childhood. Miller the literary rebel is, in fact, oddly Wordsworthian in the respect he gives his earlier self. Although Miller as Brooklyn boy is not the "Nature's Priest" of "Ode on

Intimations of Immortality," he is presented in the auto-novels as a "Mighty Prophet . . . Seer blest . . ." to whom Miller continually contrasts adulthood.[17] Much of Miller's rebel philosophizing is based on his memory of life as a free-spirited Brooklyn boy in the boys' community. He continually reassures us that

> . . . not for naught have I attached such importance to "the boys in the street," our life together, our gropings for truth, our struggle to understand the perverse order of society in which we found ourselves enmeshed and from whose grip we vainly sought to free ourselves. . . . Every genuine boy is a rebel and an anarch. If he were allowed to develop according to his own instincts, his own inclinations, society would undergo such a radical transformation as to make the adult revolutionary cower and cringe. . . .[18]

Or he works to establish a certain cathartic morality of the New York streets:

> We established genuine hierarchies: we passed judgment according to our various levels of understanding, our various levels of being. . . . We had faith, reverence and discipline. We abided by the decisions of our superiors, or our chief. He was king who manifested the dignity and the power of his rank--and he never ruled a day beyond his time.[19]

The "rosy crucifixion" of this being occurs for the same reason that Wordsworth's child loses his "visionary gleam," his "glory and the dream."[20] After childhood, shades of the "prison-house" begin to close around the growing boy in the form of civilization.[21] To quote Miller,

> . . . this thoroughly restricted life of early boyhood seems like a limitless universe and the life which followed upon it, the life of the adult, a constantly diminishing realm. From the moment when one is put in school one is lost; one has the feeling of having a halter put around his neck. The taste goes out of the bread as it goes out of life. Getting the bread becomes more important than the eating of it. Everything is calculated and everything has a price upon it.[22]

In the Tropic of Capricorn, the first novel of Miller's mythic Passion, he immediately establishes himself as a reluctant fugitive from super-boyhood. Miller is especially careful in this novel to develop the importance of his own boyhood, because his Passion, like Christ's, is based upon a being who because of his actions proves he is part of another order of existence. Miller has a tremendous desire to establish himself as a man apart from the crowd, as a man worthy of undergoing a Passion. Christ proceeds in spirit from the holy presence, and, after the resurrection, returns to his Father's side; Miller proceeds from the holy and anarchic innocence of childhood and after his resurrection, returns to it. Miller remains living, but he has died to society. For Miller, this, or some yet unknown process of social death is the only hope for mankind. Man, Miller, states, ". . . must learn to die in his corruption, in order to enjoy a new spirit and a new body and a new life."[23]

But, to return to the Nietzchean boy whom Miller introduces on the opening page of Capricorn. Miller

informs us that what to many may seem an uneventful Brooklyn youth separated him from others:

> Even as a child, when I lacked for nothing I wanted to die: I wanted to surrender because I saw no sense in struggling. . . . Everybody around me was a failure, or if not a failure, ridiculous. Especially the successful ones. . . . I never helped any one expecting that it would do any good; I helped because I was helpless to do otherwise. To want to change the condition of affairs seemed futile to me; nothing would be altered, I was convinced, except by a change of heart, and who could change the hearts of men?[24]

This boy, we learn, was--if not the product of a virgin birth--the product of middle class American-German parents who represented a society with which he had nothing in common:

> They were painfully clean. But inwardly they stank. Never once had they opened the door which leads to the soul; never once did they dream of taking a blind leap into the dark. 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.[25]

The books of Miller's autobiographical Passion are principally concerned, however, not with childhood, but with Miller's young adulthood in New York City and with his Paris liberation. Chiefly, though, they dramatize Miller's crucifying experience in society. Tropic of Capricorn covers the period from 1920 when Miller, married and a

father, becomes employment manager for the messenger division of the New York Western Union Company to 1923 when he meets June Edith Smith (the Mona/Mara of his novels) in a Broadway dance palace. Mentioned in practically everything that Miller wrote, she is the one for whom he left his first wife and job, and determined to become a creative artist. She is the first to really put faith in Miller's abilities as a writer. In Sexus, the first book of The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy, Miller describes their romance together, their period of unmarried wedlock after he and his first wife are divorced, and ends on the day of their marriage. Plexus and Nexus, the remaining novels of the trilogy, generally cover the vagabond and Greenwich Village phases of their marriage. Nexus, the final work, terminates chronologically in 1930, on the day of Miller's departure for Europe. While the major themes of the Capricorn and Rosy Crucifixion are his struggle for self-liberation and his search for identity as an artist, the major theme of Tropic of Cancer is a finding of that identity in the boyish innocence which adult life had forced him to compromise. The boyish gospel (which will be described more fully in the next chapter) has its rebirth in Miller the Paris expatriate, and, in a sense, there his Passion comes to its close. Through it all Miller firmly maintains that, Christ-like in his boyish innocence, he had

no need of his bitter experience with the American society or with its dream:

> I accumulated thousands of years of experience in a few short years, but the experience was wasted because. . . . I had already been crucified and marked by the cross. I had been born free of the need to suffer--and yet I knew no other way to struggle forward than to repeat the drama. . . . The whole drama which the man of today is acting out through suffering does not exist for me: it never did actually. All my Calvaries were rosy crucifixions, pseudo-tragedies to keep the fires of hell burning brightly for the real sinners who are in danger of being forgotten.[26]

II. THE METAPHYSICAL BOY

Miller's boy, the vision of himself as a youth which forms the basis for Miller's mythical Passion drama, is a metaphysical rather than a purely literary creation. He is the being whom Miller tells us that he was; his qualities and attitudes constitute the state of grace to which Miller sought to return by becoming a creative artist. Furthermore, in the qualities which Miller saw in his boyhood are most of the ideals and attitudes of the autobiographical "I" of his novels. This metaphysical boy is the being Miller is striving toward in the New York books of the mythic journey of his Passion. And he is the emancipated, extra-societal "I" whom we meet face-to-face in The Tropic of Cancer.

The boy needs definition, though, in terms of his metaphysics, his system of absolutes. Primarily, as we have seen, he enjoys the anarchy of the boyish society. He is a rebel against society and totally involved in what he himself is doing. Like the Whitman of "Song of Myself" he has an enlarged receptivity for the pleasures of life. He endeavors to fully appreciate the present moment of living. Further, this boy, whom Miller remembers himself as, cherishes his liberty from society and its hypocritical relationships. He has sincere dealings with others: open

friendships, open hates. He applies imaginative insights to the business of living. His dreams, for instance, like those of the Surrealists whom Miller has long admired, constitute a broadening and educational reality. The boy's imagination, moreover, is almost visionary: he can anticipate--like Miller in The Time of the Assassins--a "Christmas on Earth."[1] This boy renews mankind's hope for paradise on earth simply by being a wholehearted believer in it. Finally, for Miller, this Nietzchean boy embodies the lost potential out of which a new, super race might one day evolve.

In contrast to Miller's metaphysical boy are the sinners who occupy the New York hell of the autobiographical novels. For the most part, Miller's acquaintances as a young adult are portrayed flatly and without depth: they are frozen by their dependence upon society into impotency. They expect, Miller believes, a fulfillment and satisfaction from society which it cannot give them. Society partitions the man to meet its needs: it makes the same individual perform as businessman, father, buyer, seller, lover, mourner, vacationer. He becomes merely a servant to his roles; he gains what Miller has termed a "divided self."[2] Unlike Miller's boy, he is unable to feel his whole being in what he does. His roles are automatically rather than consciously assumed. This societal man is socially responsible, but half-dead. A slave to his

responsibilities, he is never truly responsible. What he calls freedom at times is merely a long leash.

Miller decries the plight of modern man throughout his works, but nowhere with greater exposition than in The Hamlet. In this work, he defines contemporary man in terms of the Hamlet dilemma, the inability to act on one's convictions. And, in so doing, he comes closest to defining his own predicament during the period of his life described in the Capricorn and Rosy Crucifixion books. Trapped in society, he finds that he has assumed the objective "me"-Hamlet personality; he is the being to whom things happen rather than the "I" actor of boyhood and Cancer. In Miller's perspective it is only the boy or the creative artist who can be truly the "I," who unites thought with action and whose life can be said to have great potential. It is this reuniting of boyhoods--one substantially real and enjoyed and the other metaphysical--which eventually occurs in Miller and vanquishes the civilized Hamlet. Ultimately, it is this boyish victory which is celebrated at the outset of Tropic of Cancer:

> 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. . . . This is not a book, in the ordinary sense of the word. No this is a prolonged insult, a gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants to God, Man, Destiny, Time, Love, Beauty . . .

> I will sing while you croak. I will dance over your dirty corpse.[3]

Miller has accomplished his resurrection from the Hamlet dilemma by regaining his boyish perspective. The "money," "resources," and "hopes" of which he has rid himself have all connected him with the adult world. The "insult" is directed toward society and its civilized manner of communication through literature. Art, God, Man, Destiny, Love and Beauty are all abstractions which society provides in order to focus man's attention outside of himself, in order to maintain him in his Hamlet state. The "corpse" of the quotation is the society in its Spenglerian death throes. Finally, the "I" who dances is Miller in his Paris blossoming, Miller the self-liberated and anarchic believer in himself, Miller the boy again.

The boyish metaphysics which Miller develops has a more formal aspect also. If Miller as cosmic boy is Spenglerian in his forecast of doom for society, Nietzchean in his conception of himself as metaphysical boy with <u>super</u> possibility, and Whitmanesque in his celebration of that boyhood's return; he is also Freudian in his attempt through autobiographical confession to crucify himself back to boyhood and renewed innocence. Freudian self-examination becomes an integral part in the social death which is at the heart of Miller's "rosy crucifixion."

The boyish innocent of Paris who turns to the semi-truthful rendering of his life in the auto-novels attempts, essentially, to become his own psychiatrist. Instead, however, of cherishing a normal, accommodating relationship between the ego and the world, Miller looks boyishly inward. And he records his experiences imaginatively, allows his mind to wander indiscriminately. He admires, for instance, the writer who has ". . . the courage to put down what he himself did not understand knowing that he was drawing from a divine source which could not fail to eventually manifest its meaning."[4] Miller, accordingly, confines his writing only to his own life and experiences, to his memories. In searching for psychic health through composition, Miller takes dictation from the subconscious, he records and catalogs symbols, dreams, horoscopes and other psychic events with zest. His auto-novels, to a great extent, are composed of a mélange of short anecdotes, fanciful flights of the imagination (i.e., dreams, hallucinations), and soliloquoy. All of these forms (of creative inspiration) constitute Miller's attempts to tap the upper level of his subconscious, to skim his memories for their truths. In writing, for instance, Miller states that he endeavors

> . . . to move freely upward and outward from the "present" in all directions, achieving a momentary unity with past, present and future. My whole method of obtaining release lies in my achieved ability to start from any moment in the

> present and work backward, forward and around ad lib. In thus operating simultaneously on all levels I feel that I am able to accomplish the creative act, which is to take wing and sing.[5]

In his psychic singing, Miller stands outside the rather derogatory, Freudian conception of the creative artist. Frederick J. Hoffman in Freudianism and the Literary Mind states that Freud conceived the writer as ". . . a 'neurotic' who seeks and finds in art a 'substitutive gratification' for his 'thwarted desires.'"[6] Hoffman more directly quotes Freud to the effect that ". . . with his special gifts . . . (the creative artist) . . . moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favorite he desired to be, without pursuing the circuitous path of creating real altercations in the outer world."[7] Summarizing, Hoffman states that

> This extension of therapy to aesthetics comes very close to regarding the artist as a successful neurotic;--wheras the patient is obliged to give up his neurosis, or to redirect it by means of effective sublimation, the artist is applauded and honored for his. . . .[8]

Miller, however, has no intention of being a child of his neuroses and inhibitions, either in literature or in life. To want to triumph in a make-believe world would mean that he merely desires to compensate for real frustrations incurred in the limited, social role which he has chosen to maintain. This Miller refuses to do. The

average neurotic, he would say, is not out of joint with the world; the world is out of joint with him. Society, by curtailing man's boyish potential, has created a race of maladjusted human beings. For this maladjustment, the average man blames himself; Freud blames the ego for failing to make a realistic adjustment to society; and Miller blames society.

In considering a fellow writer critically, Miller always values the man's life as carefully as his literature. He sharply criticizes the writer whose ". . . whole art is the pathetic and heroic effort to deny his human defeat."[9] He disdains the introverted craftsman, the word-juggler, because ". . . to become a sick man in order to produce a great and healthy work seems . . . like a contradiction in essence."[10] Ultimately, Miller respects the writer who shares, with him, the visionary spirit. Miller, himself, hopes for a future in which a society of originally solitary singers (like Whitman or Miller's cosmic boy) have evolved, through their greater capacity for love, a new collective ego which exists without selfishness, without, in fact, the Freudian dilemma. He looks to that future man

> . . . who has no feeling of class, caste, color or country, the man who has no need of possessions, no use for money, no archaic prejudices about the sanctity of the home or of marriage with its accompanying tread-mill of divorce. A totally new conception of individuality will be born, one in which the collective life is the

> dominant note. In short, for the first time since the dawn of history, men will serve one another, first out of an enlightened self-interest, and finally out of a greater conception of love.[11]

In his visionary stance, Miller indicates that his metaphysical boy is and is not a Freudian child. Miller uses the basic Freudian psychoanalytic machinery of free-style composition and dream interpretation in order to move closer to himself, to the truths which he believes are hidden in the subconscious. His own great problem, however, was not finally the Freudian one of adjustment to society, but rather the opposite--until

> I lived out the social problem by dying: the real problem is not one of getting on with one's neighbor or of contributing to the development of one's country, but of discovering one's destiny, of making a life in accord with the deep-centered rhythm of the cosmos.[12]

Miller believes that through the act of creative writing, he has made a successful compromise with Spengler's perishing civilization, become, as he calls himself, "the happy rock."[13] Because he has become a confessional "truth teller" in the auto-novel, he can accept the state of the world and live guiltlessly in it without involving himself in its affairs.[14] And it is, finally, this Miller as metaphysical boy who is the happy rock born from the social death. At once ruthless and innocent--yet always liberated and liberating--, it is the boy who arrived in

Paris to enact his wisdom, and to relate the adventures of that wisdom with adulthood.

Consider for a moment the component philosophies and prejudices which Miller's metaphysical boy brings to bear on the craft of writing. The author-hero of Miller's novels is--within a few pages of the average book--burlesque New Yorker, Nietzchean visionary-superboy, Whitman singer, Spenglerian critic, and Freudian dictator of psychic truths. Kingsley Widmer comments caustically on this ambush of styles, purposes and philosophies in Henry Miller:

> In the two decades (1940-1960) following the one spent in Europe, Miller had several ways of sustaining his role as artist-sage, but his perplexed and nostalgic account of how he became the Henry Miller dominates them all. For a writer whose most congenial modes were burlesque, caricature, invective, buffoon poses, and apocalyptic flights, the over-weening ambition to re-create time and place, development and destiny, seems grotesque. At his best a sardonic and ecstatic maker of rebel gestures, and at his worst a diffuse and bombastic rhetorician, Miller at all times writes in egotistical, fragmented ways. When these characteristics are directed toward complex people, a life pattern, and mythologies of romance and salvation, the results can only be a weird mélange.[15]

I find it impossible, however, to do justice to Miller as a human being--as a moral being--without granting him what I have discussed as a mythic resurrection into metaphysical boyhood, and the rhetoric of that boyhood. Miller has intentionally applied impulsive and

compulsive writing methods to his auto-novels because they reflect the power (the health in life rather than literature) of the resurrected self, the "I" of Cancer who has become a novelist. He uses obscene language and grotesque incident because they are a part of the life which he led and because he desires his literature to stand as a harsh criticism of the society that is. Miller's memories, furthermore, are the emotions reflected in tranquility of a man trying to make sense out of the past, present and future of a confused but (he feels) enigmatic life. If the experiences which he records are preponderantly obscene, it is because he feels that the sinners of the New York world (to which he belonged) led obscene lives, possessed obscene values. Miller believes that the world needs a shock treatment, needs to take the plastic wrap off a fellow man and take a look at what he is doing. By gratuitiously offering himself and his own life in this capacity, he feels that he is filling a certain experiential void in literature. Moreover, Miller feels that an education in obscenity is the truest introduction to the dilemma of the modern world. "Life," Miller states, "for the modern man, has become an eternal Hell for the simple reason that he has lost all hope of attaining Paradise. He does not even believe in a Paradise of his own creation. By his own thought processes he condemns himself."[16]

Miller has always admitted that his work has serious deficiencies as formal literature. The parts--anecdotes, psychic flights, metaphysical pronouncements--too frequently serve to occlude the larger thematic purposes of his novels. This lack of formality, of single-mindedness of purpose, is however basically due to the committments of the boyish metaphysician whom Miller has resurrected. To this being, writing is basically an arena in which the boyish power to stand aside from society and tell it the truth is asserted. To this boy, moreover, the inability to become seriously involved with the woes of the present civilization is a virtue, and anarchy--even in writing--is to be prized as a basic element of one's salvation. At seventy, Miller still asserts that the form of his particular salvation has no defense other than, as I have maintained, its function as an instrument for truth telling and as the means by which Miller institutes his particular resurrection:

> Sometimes I say to myself, quite seriously, I mean "when will you begin to write?" Write like other writers do. Like Larry (Durrell), for instance, who is definitely what is called "a born writer." Or, to put it another way, like Larry who has respect and reverence for his tools, his materials. What I have done all through my work is to repeat: "This is the best I can do; take it or leave it." Or again: "If it isn't literature, call it what you like. I don't give a damn."[17]

III. TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

Tropic of Capricorn, the first novel of the mythic journey to salvation, presents only one character of significance: Henry Miller. Miller, furthermore, has two basic roles in the book. First, he is the self-important "I" of metaphysical boyhood who introduces the novel by establishing his own sanctity:

> From the very beginning I must have trained myself not to want anything too badly. I had need of nobody because I wanted to be free, free to do and give only as my whims dictated. The moment anything was expected or demanded of me I balked. That was the form my independence took. I was corrupt, in other words, corrupt from the start. . . . I was a philosopher when still in swaddling clothes. I was against life, on principle. What principle? The principle of futility.[1]

Although the "I" personality is almost omnipresent in Capricorn, it is evident that Miller feels his essential being during the Western Union days to be a second person: the objective "me" on the societal treadmill. This former self is a man whom the "I" writer strives to recreate, but clearly is not proud of. As Miller tells Lawrence Durrell in the Art and Outrage correspondence:

> Remember always that with the exception of 'Cancer', I am writing counter-clockwise. My starting point will be my end point--the arrival in Paris--or, in another way of speaking, the breakthrough. So what I am telling about is the story of a man you never met, never knew; he is mostly of a definite period, from the time he met June (Mona-Mara)

> until he leaves for Paris. Naturally, some of what he is at the time of writing comes to the fore. In evitable. (But the attempt is--I am talking only of the auto-novels, of course--to be and act the man I was during this seven year period.)[2]

Miller's portrait of himself, however--alleviated for us by the consistent diatribes against society of the "I" sensibility--is almost flattering when compared to his treatment of the New York sinners who surround him. Miller comments, for instance, on the men whom society had spewed up to the desk of the employment manager for messenger boys:

> From all over the earth they had come to me to be succored. . . . I heard men beg for work who had been Egyptologists, botanists, surgeons, gold miners, professors of Oriental languages. . . . I sat riveted to my desk and I traveled around the world at lightning speed, and I learned that everywhere it is the same--hunger, humiliation, ignorance, vice, greed, extortion, chicanery, torture, despotism: the inhumanity of man to man: the fetters, the harness, the halter, the bridle, the spurs.[3]

The denizens of the New York hell are, Miller informs his reader in Capricorn, representative of that ". . . late-city man of which Oswald Spengler speaks . . . the last decimal point of sexual calculation."[4] They are the offspring of the American business community--and its credo which is business, not brotherhood. An enthusiastic do-gooder when he first becomes an employment manager at Western Union, his spirits are soon dampened from above. He is continually lectured for having "too big a heart."[5]

> Be firm! Be hard! they cautioned me. . . . I said to myself I'll be generous, pliant, forgiving . . . I heard every man to the end; if I couldn't give him a job I gave him money, and if I had no money I gave him cigarettes or I gave him courage. But I gave.[6]

The women with whom Miller becomes involved in Capricorn embody, for the most part, warped attitudes toward the sex act. They almost invariably reflect the frustrations induced by their objective-"me" roles in society. Miller's first wife Maude, for instance, who appears only briefly in Capricorn is depicted as the wastefully frigid product of a Puritanical upbringing. In fact, she feels guilty whenever life becomes enjoyable. Miller, moreover, introduces anecdotally a number of other women whose sexual activities constitute more obvious sublimations of the pressures of society. There is Francie, for example, who enjoys sexually arousing Miller in the New York subway, not really because she is so enamored of him, but for the joy of ". . . doing it under people's noses."[7] To this Freudian stew add Agnes who found it necessary to talk religion while engaged in copulation, another who wanted to have relations only on the kitchen table, and a dignified woman whom Miller catches masturbating in her bathroom. It all amounts to--he indicates--a furious masturbation, an obscene but frustrated gesture which one makes toward society, toward ". . . 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."[8]

Although Miller depicts himself in Tropic of Capricorn as a determined monkey wrench in the societal machinery, he is, he admits, ". . . still . . . part of the death racket."[9] What sustains him in his struggle to free himself from society is the essential element of his Passion: the boyish metaphysics, the strategy of innocence with which he began, which keeps him merely a journeyer in hell--a wayfarer:

> Neither the men who thanked me, nor the men who cursed me, knew with whom they were dealing. Nobody ever got on to a solid footing with me, because I was constantly liquidating my personality. I was keeping what is called the "personality" in abeyence for the moment when, leaving it to coagulate it would adopt a proper human rhythm.[10]

Miller, consequently, writes a novel in which his is the only personality which really takes shape. There is little conversation as such in Capricorn (and in the auto-novels in general); Miller rarely replies to the long confessional monologues which his sinners speak before him. He writes out of memory and he is aware that the people who peopled his Brooklyn world never accomplished anything with their lives. One of his major intentions, in fact, is to make this point unavoidably evident: to contrast their lack of development as human beings with the potency of the

mythic role which he has adopted. When Capricorn is not merely burlesque description of his pseudo-role as fellow-sinner or as objective "me" helpless in the New York hell, it is a platform for Miller as metaphysical boy. In contrast to his descriptions of life in ". . . the cemetary, which is to say--the world of sexual intercourse . . ." are the visionary pronouncements of Miller the mythic journeyer.[11] As, for instance, this passage spoken in soliloquoy:

> The wonder and the mystery of life--which is throttled in us as we become responsible members of society! Until we were pushed out to work the world was very small and we were living on the fringe of it, on the frontier, as it were of the unknown. A small Greek world which was nevertheless deep enough to provide all manner of variation, all manner of adventure and speculation. Not so very small either, since it held in reserve the most boundless potentialities. I have gained nothing by the enlargement of my world; on the contrary, I have lost. I want to become more and more childish and pass beyond childhood in the opposite direction.[12]

Aside from being a source of vision and lament, the boyish philosophy furnishes Miller with the peculiar hardness with which he deals with the sinners of Capricorn. It allows him to be as cruel to a dying civilization as he is "generous, pliant, forgiving."[13] Deriving being from both Nietzche and Spengler, he commits himself to assisting in the demise of Western Civilization. Or, in terms of pre-resurrection Miller and his New York Hades,

> If your best friend dies you don't even bother to go to the funeral; if a man is run down by a streetcar right before your eyes you keep on walking just as though nothing had happened . . .

> and, if you happen to be an artist, you record the passing show. . . . Sympathy alone flourishes, but it is not a human sympathy, a limited sympathy--it is something monstrous and evil.[14]

Miller proves himself in Capricorn, because of his destructive motivation, to be the Twentieth Century anti-hero brought to a grotesque extreme. Consider, for example, an incident out of Miller's boyhood which he relates at the beginning of the novel. It concerns a Jack Lawson, a friend of the twelve-year old Miller who endures a slow and painful death. Miller recalls his feelings about the tragedy: "I grew quite callous about his suffering. I said to myself he ought to die and the sooner he dies the better it will be and having thought this I acted accordingly . . . I promptly forgot about him, abandoned him to his fate."[15] When Miller learns of the boy's death, he finds that he could only envision his friend's brief life in terms of ". . . the sufferings he had endured and the sufferings he had unwittingly inflicted on others."[16] As a creative artist, Miller continually emphasizes this boyish indifference to the fate of his fellow man. In his writing he works diligently to develop his destructive impulses, to underline his role among the sinners. Miller states, for example, in The Hamlet:

> . . . after having digested Oswald Spengler, D. H. Lawrence, Elie Faure, Frederick Nietzche and all the others, I feel very happy about the bad times we are living through. I am glad to be a maggot in the corpse which is the world. I feast on death. . . . Sometimes I begin to

> munch before the corpse is cold. A friend is talking to me, for example, and not realizing that he has yet turned cold, I begin to bite him. . . . It's like eating cold turkey with a hot sauce.[17]

In Capricorn, Miller's boyish scalpel is applied perhaps most viciously to his family. His sister has an underdeveloped mentality, a natural innocence that embarrassed his parents before society: "Often in my presence she was whipped like a dog for having performed some beautiful act of grace in her absent-mindedness, as they called. Nothing was worse, I learned as a child, than to do a good deed without a reason."[18] Miller portrays his father as a relatively mild-hearted failure, an alcoholic Brooklyn tailor who becomes the invalid prey of a domineering and cruel wife.

The real center of Capricorn, however, does not lie in the sinners, who are a hopeless segment of a dead past, but in the roles which Miller adopted in dealing with this world. First, he acts as ruthless, anarchic judge and freestyle critic of the American society--The Air Conditioned Nightmare[19]--which he views as ". . . a huge piece of stale cheese with maggots festering inside it. . . . Blow it to hell! Kill, kill, kill."[20] Secondly, Miller presents himself as boyish innocent: "My whole aim in life is to get near to God, that is to get nearer to myself."[21] Thirdly, he goes forth in the New York hell as the mythic journeyer in his isolation:

> 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 . . . one lives a supernormal life. . . . That is to say one is unnaturally gay, unnaturally healthy or unnaturally indifferent.[22]

The final amalgam of purposes, the character who dominates Capricorn, The Rosy Crucifixion and Cancer, is the servant of two compulsions. Strictly as witness to the Sinners Sinning of New York, he is the anti-hero who desires to expose all--to impose a new reality in the novel by ". . . recording . . . all that which is omitted in books . . . (by) . . . making use of those elements in the air which give direction and motivation to our life."[23] On the other hand, this autobiographical Miller is the omniscient prophet of Paris; he is the singer of self-liberation and seer who predicts an earthly paradise.

Certain sources outside of this ambivalent, mythic hero provide him comfort in his progression out of the New York hell. The first of these are the Miller acquaintances who recognize the mythic importance which he has attached to himself. For instance, Kronski, a fellow employee at the Western Union Company who tells him:

> Listen, when I hear you talk--sometimes I think to myself--if only that guy would put it down on paper! Why you could write a book that would make a guy like Dreiser hang his head. You're different from the Americans I know; somehow you don't belong.[24]

A second source of comfort to Miller are his efforts to write and the books which he is reading in order

to link up with the creative world, the books which ". . . assured me that there were other men in the world like myself."[25] At the Capricorn stage of Miller's Passion, however, his efforts to write are of little value, either to him or to the world (his first novel, Clipped Wings, apparently a saga of the plight of twelve messenger boy victims of society, never saw the light of day).[26] Because, moreover, he is too much an accomplice to the adult world, Miller finds himself unable to control the fictive world: "I didn't lack thoughts nor words nor the power of expression--I lacked something much more important: the lever which would shut off the juice. . . . I was not only in the middle of the current but the current was running through me and I had no control over it whatever."[27] Until, in other words, he had separated himself from society, he found himself unable to write about it. And the victory in life, the separation, supersedes in importance the literature of struggle which he created in order to accomplish his liberation. Miller always, in fact, values his liberty more than his literature. Throughout his work he attests to the fact that his Passion, the resurrection into a fuller life through a renewal of the boyish spirit was a more commanding desire to him than was the need to create great literature. Miller:

> . . . I proved to my satisfaction that, like any other mortal, I too could write. But since I wasn't meant to be a writer all that was this

> business of writing and being a writer; in short, my own private struggles with this problem. My grief, in other words. Out of the lack I made my song.[28]

Finally, in Tropic of Capricorn, Mona, the high priestess of Miller's crucifixion out of society, is introduced. She is the taxi dancer whom Miller meets in a Broadway dance palace in 1923, and who is the connecting link between his pose as New York breadwinner and the Paris boyhood. Capricorn is dedicated "To Her," and, in fact, early in the novel Miller sums up the entire meaning of his mythic journey in terms of her:

> Until the one for whom this is written came along I imagined that somewhere outside in life, as they say, lay the solution to all things. I thought, when I came upon her, that I was seizing hold of life, seizing hold of something which I could bite into. Instead I lost hold of life completely. I reached out for something to attach myself to--and I found nothing. But in reaching out, in the effort to grasp, to attach myself, left high and dry as I was, I nevertheless found something I had not looked for--myself.[29]

It is difficult to define Mona's meaning either to Miller or to his novels. Kingsley Widmer in a chapter of Henry Miller entitled "The Brooklyn Passion" takes a rather dim view of the mythic Mona whom Miller endeavors to create:

> The Dark Lady, Mona/Mara, "Her," has become the "She" of murky Circe-myth in which personal failure is not understood, explained or presented but simply heightened into the unitary vision. Some sly personal mystification, and literary-occult 'oneness,' subsumes a bad marriage under the guise of eternity.[30]

Mona, Widmer continues, has no literal basis for the metaphysical importance which Miller attaches to her: "She," he states, "merely turned into an ordinary woman to be exploited--the somewhat erratic female who indulged, supported and encouraged Miller in his ambitions to lead an 'artistic' life in Brooklyn."[31] It appears, however, from the auto-novels that it was Miller, not Mona who was used. Capricorn, in one sense, is written because the man of Paris has lost Mona; it is the beginning of his effort (completed in The Rosy Crucifixion) to merge her into the mythic pattern of crucifixion and resurrection which he has discovered in his past. As Miller confesses in Capricorn:

> . . . the intolerable truth had to be incorporated into something greater than the frame of personal misfortune. I felt that I had made an imperceptible switch into another realm of tougher, more elastic fiber which the most horrible truth was powerless to destroy.[32]

In Tropic of Capricorn, Miller makes it evident that he had, in fact, sincerely believed Mona to offer some sort of refuge from society, and that only after she ceased loving him did he attempt to view her loss as fortunate: as the means by which he was crucified out of society. The contradiction in purposes between Miller the creative writer and Miller the heartsick lover is apparent in Capricorn. In the former person, for instance, he can state that ". . . I wasn't thinking of her any more; I was thinking of this book which I am writing, and the book had

become more important to me than her, than all that had happened to us."[33] Speaking, however, as the latter being, Miller gives indication that his memory of Mona is more than mere ceremony, that "In the tomb which is my memory I see her buried now, the one I love better than all else, better than the world, better than God, better than my own flesh and blood."[34] Also, in Capricorn, we are given fanciful visions of Mona as the cosmic being who will lead Miller out of the wilderness of his job and first marriage. In these passages, Miller attempts to create a Mona worthy of her mythic importance: a creature of love, anticipation and witchery into whose black being Miller merges his destiny:

> We walked upside down, hand in hand, at the neck of the bottle. She dressed in black almost exclusively, except for patches of purple now and then. She wore no underclothes, just a simple sheath of black velvet saturated with diabolical perfume. We went to bed at dawn and got up just as it was darkling. We lived in black holes with drawn curtains, we ate from black plates, we read from black books.[35]

The Mona affair, in effect, opens a new kind of sexual relationship in Capricorn and in the Rosy Crucifixion trilogy. Miller heretofore has been primarily the bemused connoisseur of the absurd sexual moment--a separate entity, as it were, from the women with whom he has relations. With Mona, however, Miller attempts to establish in the sex act a new voice, a "we" in which for the first time he relates his destiny to that of another being. Although

this attempt is going to prove illusory, he at least offers himself the hope in Capricorn that their love affair itself can constitute a salvation from society. In Sexus this new bond will constitute, in its failure, the cathartic basis of Miller's "rosy crucifixion." The final pages of Capricorn give indication that Mona will be a pseudo-solution for Miller's desire to liberate himself from society. It is the morning after Miller has met Mona at the dance hall; he muses: "Sunday, the first Sunday of my new life, and I am wearing the dog collar you fastened around my neck. A new life stretches before me."[36] In Sexus, however--which will be next discussed--the "dog collar" is to prove irreconcilable with Miller's visionary hope for "a new life."

IV. THE ROSY CRUCIFIXION

In considering Miller's Rosy Crucifixion trilogy, I will devote most attention to Sexus the opening novel. An analysis of it, I feel, will bring to light all of the important people, events and ramifications of Miller's crucifixion without venturing into the seemingly endless anecdotal chambers of its companion volumes. Sexus depicts the failure of the metaphysical couple--Miller as a saint of his own innocence (through his anarchic disavowal of society even when shipwrecked in it), Mona as his she-goddess--to make a success of the Brooklyn life. Chronologically, Sexus (written between 1940 and 1945) begins in 1923 immediately after Miller the family man and Western Union employment manager meets Mona; it ends one year later at the Minsky Burlesque Palace in New York where they spend their honeymoon.[1] The interim is a typically anecdotal mixture of the burlesque, the tragicomic, and the mundane. Eventually, Miller and Mona are discovered in his wife's bed by her. She divorces him, and he and Mona begin an unmarried life together. After a year of the chaotic free-loading existence which accompanies Miller's creative endeavors, he is still convinced that Mona is herself the answer to his metaphysical longing. So greatly is he convinced, in fact, that he marries her, afterwards

claiming ". . . I'm whole again. All one piece. A man in love. A man who got married of his own free will. A man who was never really married before. A man who knew women, but not love. . . . Now I'll sing for you."[2]

To the chronological end of Sexus, however, in a quick reversal of purposes, Miller attaches a "hallucination" and an anecdotal look into the future, in both of which he impatiently foretells the doom of their marriage.[3] The hallucination occurs during the honeymoon visit to Minsky's. Miller's attention wanders inward from the automatic movements of the performer to the actions of a character named "Osmanli" ("obviously . . . invented") who re-enacts the principal events of Miller's mythic salvation.[4] First, Osmanli suffers a death incurred by society: "A man passed him running at top speed. Behind him is an officer of the law with drawn revolver. He begins to run too. Now all three of them are running. He doesn't know why, he doesn't even know that someone is behind him . . . the bullet pierces the back of his skull and he falls flat on his face. . . ."[5] Secondly, Osmanli-Miller resurrects himself from the societal death by simply rising from the pavement ". . . grass already sprouting in his ears."[6] In the next moment, however, having freed himself from society Osmanli remembers that he has been deserted by his wife--the woman he loved--who had informed him ". . . with brutal, direct, frankness that she never loved him."[7]

Finally, he realizes that this cruel departure has left him with a new and undreamed of freedom:

> Recovering from the shock, he experienced the most amazing exhilaration. It was as if she had said to him: "You are now free to act!" He felt so mysteriously free that he wondered if his life up to that moment had not been a dream. To act! It was so simple. He had gone out into the yard and, thinking; then, with the same spontaneity, he had walked to the dog kennel, whistled to the animal and when it stuck its head out he had chopped it off clean. That's what it meant--to act![8]

Immediately following the Osmanli hallucination, Sexus concludes with the invitation to ". . . jump a few years--into the pot of horror."[9] We are transported from 1924 to 1929 or 1930, their final year together. The mystic union foreshadowed in Capricorn has collapsed. Mona has shifted her affection from Miller to a lesbian girl friend, and the "we" metaphysic has been replaced by a "they" swan song. Miller has become the doggish pet of Mona and her girl friend; he is tolerated chiefly because "there are nights when I amuse them no end by roaring like a wounded lion. At times I knock them down with a velvet-thudded paw. I have even peed on them when they rolled about on the floor convulsed with hysterical laughter."[10] The end of the sketch and of Sexus finds Miller in utter dejection and subjection: again dog-like in his suffering. Mona offers him ". . . a magnificent knuckle bone, full of marrow, encircled by a gold wedding ring."[11] He replies, "Woof woof! Woof woof!"[12]

Plexus, the second novel of The Rosy Crucifixion, is a seven hundred word rambling digression which covers the Millers' Bohemian life together from their marriage in 1924 until the unstated time (probably a year or so before Miller's 1930 departure for Europe) when Mona enters her lesbian relationship. Nexus, the final book of the trilogy resumes the "woofing" of Sexus for its opening lines and chronicles both the lesbian relationship and Miller's increasing independence from Mona. At the close of Nexus Miller indicates that his crucifixion by his native land has been accomplished, and that, permanently cured of his belief that self-fulfillment could be earned through someone outside himself, his resurrection is at hand. He is at ship's rail, departing for his expatriate decade in Europe: a caustic and liberated Osmanli bidding farewell to the nation which has become a parody of its own promise. Miller:

> . . . Good-bye Walden Pond! . . . Good-bye, Oh Fountain of Youth! Goodbye, Daniel Boone! Goodbye, Grosspapa! Goodbye, Street of Early Sorrows, and may I never set eyes on you again! Good-bye, everybody . . . good-bye. . . .[13]

It is during the Nexus period, after Mona and her lesbian friend have departed for a short sojourn in Europe, that Miller makes the great decision of his resurrection. He elects to not merely wait for her, but to plan a series of books--the autobiographical novels--which will expose not only his life, but the lives of those around him. He

will attempt to depict in the microcosmic Miller suffering, the macrocosmic world suffering. He will be the spokesman for the decline of the West, present the obscene experience of being ". . . of the last moment of time in the greatest city in the world. . . ."[14] Miller reveals, in what may be more intended analogy than fact, that the day of his artistic decision to re-create the story of his life (to make, in fact, this story into an entire literature) was the day on which Lindbergh opened other horizons in man's progress. Miller maintains, moreover, that for the first time in his life composition had become easy for him:

> I wrote rapidly in telegraphic style, commencing with the evening I first met her. For some inexplicible reason I found myself recording chronologically, and without effort, the long chain of events which filled the interval between that fateful evening (in which he met Mona) and the present. . . . As I wrote I laughed and wept. Though I was only making notes, it seemed as if I were actually writing the book there and then; I relived the whole tragedy over again step by step, day by day.[15]

Miller tells us that he wrote from five in the afternoon until "long after midnight."[16] Presumably, when he finished he had what amounted to a rough outline for a "book" which was later to be expanded from The Tropic of Capricorn to a continuum which would also embrace The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy. Furthermore, at this point, Miller began to envision a style of writing in which he could employ the metaphysics of his boyish instincts. Already alienated from society, and now cast aside by Mona, he

begins to formulate a philosophy of existence based upon creative self-interest (his Passion) and a boyishly cruel attitude toward society. Miller defines this watershed in his mythic development in Capricorn when he soliloquizes about the point in his life when ". . . 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."[17] It is this rebirth of the boyish philosophy which is at the heart of The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy: this decision is the beginning of Miller's resurrection.

On the opening page of Sexus, Miller grandly (and mythically) opens the wound of his life with Mona: "I was approaching my thirty-third year, the age of Christ crucified. A wholly new life lay before me, had I the courage to risk all. Actually there was nothing to risk: I was at the bottom rung of the ladder, a failure in every sense of the word."[18] The fact, however, is that Miller is about to embark into the second great detour--after the adult workaday world--of his life: Mona. Although he is determined at the beginning of Sexus ". . . to make absolute, unconditional surrender to the woman . . . (that he loves),"[19]

> . . . yet she is nothing like the women I dreamed of, like those ideal creatures whom I worshiped as a boy. She corresponds to nothing I had conceived out of my own depths. She is a totally new image, something foreign. . . . She is completely mine, almost slavishly so, but I do not possess her . . . my hands are forever

> fluttering, forever grasping and clutching, seizing nothing.[20]

The metaphysical dilemma of Miller's love affair as described in Sexus is implicit in the above passage. Miller once again is caught between the imaginative expectation of boyhood and a reality which does not meet its absolute standards. Furthermore, Miller, from the beginning of Sexus, is determined to sacrifice the dramatic potential of his great romance to the mythic Passion with which he was to replace it. Early in the novel, for instance, Miller creates an encounter with a mysterious woman who informs him that

> Because the woman (Mona) can never give you what you want you make yourself out to be a martyr. A woman wants love and you're incapable of giving love. If you were a lower type of man you would be a monster; but you will convert your frustration into something useful. Yes, by all means go on writing. Art can transform the hideous into the beautiful. Better a monstrous book than a monstrous life. . . . You will always be trying to dominate yourself; the woman you love will only be an instrument for you to practice on. . . .[21]

In spite of all Miller's mythical gesturing, however, he makes it evident in Sexus that Mona has myth-making machinery of her own, and that to a great extent he was dominated by it. During their life together, she has a confusing array of occupations. When Miller meets Mona, she is a taxi-dancer; during their life together, she has a number of mainly nocturnal employments, ranging from waiting on tables and bit-part acting to soliciting money

from wealthy old men--or so she told Miller. Between them there is a copulation of identities: he saintlike yet lovesick, she ". . . the world's lying machine in microcosm."[22] Miller the confused beau, moreover, finds himself giving Mona's obvious sexual promiscuity something other than a literal translation. For instance, when he states,

> Why was it that I always got a thrill when I thought of some one making love to her? . . . My ideal--it gave me quite a shock to formulate it! was that of a woman who had the world at her feet. . . . The more lovers she garnered the greater my own personal triumph. Because she did love me, that there was no doubt about. Had she not singled me out from all the others, I who had so little to offer her?[23]

Conversely, though, Miller as mythic boy hopes to close forever the old wound of his love by reassuring himself that being this woman's dupe was necessary to the crucifixion phase of his journey out of society. The Mona of Sexus, consequently, has an impressive elasticity which conceals rather than reveals her:

> She was sensitive to pressures, not the pressure of others' wills but of their desires. The histrionic role with her was not something to be put on and off--it was her way of meeting reality. What she thought she believed; what she believed was real; what was real she acted upon.[24]

In all fairness to Miller, though, Mona's activities lend themselves to mythmaking--or at least to his confusing perception of her. Their life together is punctuated by her mysterious arrivals and departures, and it is financed by sources of income which she rarely

identifies for him. Mona's true identity as the daughter of an ordinary New York Jewish family is hidden behind a vague story of being born and reared at some idyllic New England college. Her eventual venture into lesbianism is abruptly broached and never fully explained in The Rosy Crucifixion; in all likelihood the lovesick and idealistic Miller was never able to fully confront this aspect of the woman whose love was supposed to transfigure his life.

To a great extent, Sexus is based upon the degenerated relationship between men and women which Miller sees as a part of modern city life. The novel begins in marital infidelity with Miller the married man musing about the taxi dancer whom he had met the evening before. Miller's chief motivation through the early stages of the book is evidently to continue that infidelity at all costs. After his divorce and remarriage to Mona, they inexplicably--considering the great love they profess for each other--begin a fatalistic, sideline sex life with the sinners of hell. While Mona's liaisons, other than with Anastasia the lesbian, are never brought fully to light, Miller resumes the alley cat escapades which he enjoyed in Capricorn. Although this kind of behavior may be an outgrowth of Miller's increasing identification with liberation in any form, it is as destructive to their marriage as ordinary infidelity. The outcome, inevitably, is the Miller "woofing" on the final page of Sexus.

As in Capricorn, Miller's sexual adventures in Sexus usually provide him with an opportunity for a moral judgment of his partner and her problems vis-a-vis society. His first wife, Maude, for instance--denounced in Capricorn as frigid--comes suddenly awake after the social relationship of marriage is removed from between them. Miller, visiting her in order to see their child, begins to find himself the object of an increasingly persistent amorousness. The whole affair, detailed extensively in the novel, culminates in a sexual orgy in which Maude invites her girl friend to participate. Miller muses afterward about the amazing transformation of this woman who had been ". . . so damned prudish and proper":[25] "When the conversion takes place before your eyes you begin to wonder if you ever did know the person with whom you were living all your life."[26] Oddly, then, even the orgy has a moral in the Miller scheme: communal sexual activity has instituted a new selflessness in Maude, almost enigmatically it has enabled her to overcome the selfishness which had destroyed their marriage--and is to destroy the Mona-Miller marriage.

Before, however, attempting to further define Miller's notion of the value of a communal human relationship, the revulsion he feels for the present one-to-one relationship should be emphasized. For this experience, one need only return to that level of Sexus which is merely a chronicle of Miller's sexual encounters--and the

unflattering motivations of his partners. In one incident, for example, Miller has relations with a woman whose husband is dying in the room adjacent to them. At first he is reluctant, but ". . . then, as I was about to descend the stairs, she pulled me back, her lips glued to my ear. 'He won't last another week!'"[27] In another anecdote, Miller is accosted by the wife of an acquaintance. She is frigid to her husband only because ". . . she had the heart of a whore"; she needed strangers for the sex act.[28] Endlessly in the auto-novels, Miller compiles such obscene evidence against society. Always he insists that he was there, that he was irrefutable witness to the New York sinners and to the lives of quiet obscenity which they lead. In this harsh reality which he develops, the basic human motivation is the dull, compensatory greed for sexual power of the unfulfilled denizens of civilization's hell.

Miller believes, it seems obvious from the auto-biographical novels, that the traditional, romantic relationship between a man and a woman has only a limited future. Marriage perpetrates selfishness; it forever stands in the way of group love, of a brotherhood and sisterhood among human beings, of "Christmas of earth."[29] Unlike D. H. Lawrence, Miller does not have metaphysical confidence in the renovating powers of the sex act. Henry Miller would probably feel, for instance, that the relationship between Lady Chatterley and Mellors at the close of

Lady Chatterley's Lover has no extraordinary future if it is to be built only, say, on their marriage and its sex acts. Miller finds marriage, based upon the bitter experiences of the two which have been discussed (he has married twice more since), to be part of the doomed machinery of the declining Western Civilization.

In the painting, "The Oranges of the Millenium" which is reproduced on three pages of his Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch, Miller displays his image of an ideal existence on earth.[30] The greater part of the work depicts a nude and communal man, a veritable beehive unity between man and his brother, man and the animal, man and God. In this fantasy civilization he discovers a communal victory over selfishness toward which the Big Sur artist's colony only makes a minimal advancement. Miller believes, as Dante and Milton, that hell is really a state of mind and that, furthermore, mankind will remain in that (obscene) state of mind until a new relationship among men can be erected on the ruins of the old. Miller, the visionary:

> That we shall all live one day as did Christ I have not the slightest doubt. That we shall all deny our individuality first, I have no doubt about either. . . . We are preparing for the death of the little self in order that the real self may emerge. . . . Our appeal to one another must be as direct and instantaneous as is the man of God's to God. . . . Man will never perish, depend on that. It is a culture, a civilization, a way of life which will perish.[31]

In the closing pages of Sexus, Miller applies his visionary bias when at Minsky's Burlesque Palace (the honeymoon), he uses the stripper to apotheosize the sexual world of Users and Used which his novel has just chronicled. He muses that her act

> . . . has only one honest purpose in view--to augment the box office recepts for the Minsky brothers . . . I see a mannikin who under the lustful gaze of the cosmopolitan eye has assumed flesh and blood. I see her draining the passions of a supposedly civilized audience in the second biggest city in the world. She has taken on their flesh, their thoughts, their passions, their lascivious dreams and desires, and in doing so has truncated them . . . I suspect that she has even robbed them of their sexual organs, because, if they were still men and women, what would hold them in their seats.[32]

By contrast, he gives us the communal emphasis of the visionary: sex viewed as a means to a new and greater relationship among people, as, for instance

> In Africa (where) the dance is impersonal, sacred and obscene. When the phallus becomes erect and it is handled like a banana it is not a "personal hard-on" we see but a tribal erection. It is a religious hard-on directed not towards a woman but towards every female member of the tribe. Group souls staging a group . . . (copulation). Man lifting himself out of the animal world through a ritual of his own invention. By his mimicry he demonstrates that he has made himself superior to the mere act of intercourse.[33]

The final threads in Sexus which bear either on Miller's mythic journey out of hell or on the development of his mythic personality can be related to a few characters who have moderate importance in the author's metamorphosis into the creative artist. The most important of

these figures is Ulric, readily identifiable as Emil Schnellock, a painter and lifelong friend of Miller's. During the lean Brooklyn years of Miller's young adulthood, Schnellock is probably the aspirant writer's only link with the world of creative art. In Sexus, moreover, we learn that Ulric has a magnified importance because he has just returned from abroad. Miller tells us that "For me he represented Europe, its softening, civilizing influence. We would talk by the hour of this world where art had some relation to life, where you could sit quietly in public watching the passing show and think your own thoughts."[34] It is Ulric, in a sense, who embodies the form which Miller's escape from Mona is to take, who has lived the artistic life, romantic, faraway--. It is Ulric who, early in Sexus, inspires Miller's daydreaming about Europe: "Would I ever get there? How would I live? What language would I speak?"[35] Ulric, moreover, has a sincere faith in Miller's genius. He tells him in the novel:

> You don't write like you talk. . . . You seem to be afraid of revealing yourself. If you ever open up and tell the truth it will be like Niagara Falls. Let me tell you honestly--I don't know any writer in America who has greater gifts than you. I've always believed in you. . . .[36]

This kind of statement, of course, is not unique in the mythic journey. Miller makes it about himself; Mona makes frequent testament to Miller's exceptional powers as a talker--presumably, at least in the beginning, this is

the basis of her affection for him. A number of other figures in cameo roles, like the Kronski of Capricorn or the mysterious lady of Sexus, attest to Miller's dormant potential as a writer, or to his sainthood among the sinners. To typify the more brief of these appearances, one might cite the Monahan anecdote. Monahan is a detective whom Miller meets in a bar and berates as a dupe of society. After Miller completes an increasingly caustic monologue, Monahan answers, surprisingly, by saying

> Life hasn't spoiled you. . . . You know what it's like and yet it doesn't make you sour or mean . . . I was going to take a swing at you. Why didn't I? Because you weren't talking to me. You were aiming at all the guys like me who got off the track somewhere.[37]

An additional two figures in Sexus bear more than minor importance in the progression of the novel and require some comment. They are Rebecca and Arthur Raymond, a couple who give the Millers shelter during the course of their freeloading, unmarried year together before the marriage. Rebecca whose maiden name Valentine is the same as Miller's middle name, evidently functions as his alter ego in matters regarding Mona. All of the characteristics which he gives to Rebecca are in direct contrast to Mona's. "Rebecca," Miller says, ". . . never denied her Jewish blood, lived completely in the present . . . was normal, healthy . . . ate with gusto, laughed heartily, talked easily . . . and slept well."[38] She is, moreover, a verbal

critic of Mona who warns him against marrying her: "You seem to choose (women) with your eyes shut. Don't you ever think beforehand what it's going to mean to live with them?"[39] And to this comment Miller juxtaposes the arrival of Mona. She has just gotten a small part as an actress, her most fitting employment:

> On and on she ran . . . the kind of gloves she liked, the way to place the voice, how the Indians walked, the value of Yoga exercises, the way to train the memory, the perfume that suited her mood, the superstitiousness of theatrical people, their generosity, their intrigues, their amours, their pride, their conceit. How it felt to rehearse in an empty house, the jokes and pranks that occured in the wings, the attitude of the stage hands, the peculiar aroma of the dressing rooms. And the jealousy! Every one jealous of every one else. Fever, commotion, distraction, grandeur. A world within a world. One became intoxicated, drugged, hallucinated.[40]

Arthur Raymond, Rebecca's husband serves to personify the theme--often expounded directly by Miller the visionary in his essays--of the futile intellectual: "He read like a sponge, intent upon absorbing the writer's thoughts. Each new book represented a new conquest. Books fortified his ego. He didn't grow, he became puffed with pride and arrogance."[41] In various out-of-sequence anecdotes throughout Sexus, Miller develops Raymond's tragi-comic career as creative artist and intellectual. A child prodigy at the piano, he had, however, exchanged his childhood to become a "performing chimpanzee" for his mother.[42] In reaction, "He had done everything to destroy the

virtuoso which his mother had created."[43] He becomes an intellectual and eventually a sort of cardboard Communist. Miller closes his account of Raymond by informing us that when he ran into the man some twenty years later, he found a middle-aged father who had transferred all of his dreaming to his son, a college football player. In the end, according to Miller, Raymond had not only failed to right the world, but in ignoring his great talent, failed to do justice to his own potential.

By the close of Sexus, Miller the artist has brought Miller the journeyer within sight of his mythical crucifixion from society through the break with Mona. In Plexus and Nexus, however, he will torture himself at great length at the altar of Mona--and further torture the denizens of hell for failing to take the road of their own truths. In the final pages of Nexus, on the eve of his departure for Europe where he intends to live or die by the creative life, he will make the Osmanlian declaration of liberation from the American dream. Through it all, he will continue to assert that the man he became by writing is of greater importance than the blend of anecdote and myth that he had to pour out to become that man. In The World of Sex, he perhaps best represents his philosophy of literary composition--one which will ever frustrate the specific criticism of individual works. Miller's is the philosophy of the visionary, rather than the writer. He is a man who

fundamentally hopes for no more than to give meaning and direction to his own life through the release of writing. He says,

> In telling the story of my life I have frequently discarded the chronological sequence in favor of the circular or spiral form of progression. The time sequence which relates one event to another in linear fashion strikes me as falsely imitative of the true rhythm of life. The facts and events which form the chain of one's life are but starting points along the path to self-discovery. I have endeavored to plot the inner pattern, follow the potential being who was constantly deflected from his course, who circled around himself, was becalmed for long stretches, sank to the bottom, or vainly essayed to reach the lonely, desolate summits. I have tried to capture the quintessential moments wherein whatever happened produced profound alterations. . . . Distortion and deformation are unavoidable in the re-living of one's life. The inner purpose of such disfigurement, of course, is to seize the true reality of things and events.[44]

V. TROPIC OF CANCER

Tropic of Cancer is Miller's document of liberation and resurrection from the New York hell and its black romance. Here is the Miller of the Lindbergh proclamation, the man who can write for the first time in his life "without effort."[1] "To sing," he exults, "you must have a pair of lungs, and a little knowledge of music. It is not necessary to have an accordion or a guitar. The essential thing is to want to sing. This then is a song. I am singing."[2] In Paris--lonely, broke, without affiliations or expectations--Miller begins to confront life boyishly again and to construct the anecdotal journal (from which Cancer is distilled) that is to allow him to re-initiate the boyish truths. It becomes the most important fact of his life:

> . . . the book has begun to grow inside me. I am carrying it around with me everywhere. I walk through the streets big with child and the cops escort me across the streets. . . . Nobody pushes me rudely any more. I am pregnant. I waddle awkwardly, my big stomach pressed against the weight of the world.[3]

This book which was born in Paris is remarkably like its metaphysical father. In it, Miller makes all of the declarations which constitute the boyish reaction to a degenerating civilization. He determines that he must be a prophet of the Spenglerian wisdom, spread the gospel that

". . . the world is a cancer eating itself away. . . ."[4] He announces that he must be non-institutional, non-literary ("the age demands violence"[5]), animalistic ("I made up my mind that I would hold on to nothing, that I would expect nothing, that henceforth I would live as an animal, a beast of prey, a plunderer"[6]), anarchic ("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 . . ."[7]). Finally, he proclaims that freedom from the civilized hell and its dwarfed manhood constitute for him a new and cosmic health: "I'm healthy, incurably healthy. No sorrows, no regrets. No past, no future. The present is enough for me. Day by day. Today."[8]

Paris is primarily of value to Miller because, there, for the first time since boyhood, he is his own master. By going to Paris, Miller recovers, in other words, the period of grace which society allows the growing boy. In the absence of having to be this or that for others--of having a societal role--, Miller finds that what he has to say becomes clear, comes to the fore of his consciousness. But Paris, he muses, ". . . of itself . . . initiates no dramas. They are begun elsewhere. Paris is singly an obstetrical instrument that tears the living embryo from the womb and puts it in the incubator."[9] Miller discovers,

similarly, that Paris is, in some respects as deep a hell as New York. The sinners are just as numerous, except, perhaps, that there is a preponderance of the intellectual variety: transplanted Arthur Raymonds, dilettantes, in the arts. Eventually, moreover, Miller has to take employment--and does, as, among other things, teacher, poser for nude postcards and copy reader for the Paris office of the Chicago Tribune. Yet, primarily, and to the real exclusion of his jobs, he finds that he is a writer; he is a resurrected worker on his own temple of truth, a "truth teller."[10] And he sincerely believes that one day he will be able to subsist from his literature, from his boyish voice.

In Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature, Sidney Finkelstein defines Miller as being an existentialist without being aware of it.[11] Certainly it is a kind of wry existentialist wisdom which is the source of the comic venom which Miller begins to develop as a creative tool in Cancer. The world, for instance, parades before the existentialist in continuing refusal to take life seriously. It is absurdly committed to the deadening of the potential of its individuals. It provides a realm of pseudo-acts, pseudo-events and pseudo-emotions with which to befuddle the "I" actor in man. And it is in reaction to this world that Miller typically builds his comedy. Consider, for instance, his Paris employment as proofreader. It appears to be a perfect vantage point on

the absurd world because "it doesn't matter what the nature of the calamity is, only whether it is spelled right. Everything is one level . . . the latest fashion for evening gowns, a new battleship, a plague."[12] Miller, moreover, is inevitably an existentialistic performer in his occupations; he naturally desires to upset the apple cart. A perfect example of Miller in this role is his account of his performance as an unpaid instructor in a French lycee:

> Here was I, supposedly to spread the gospel of Franco-American amity--the emissary of a corpse who, after he had caused untold suffering and misery, dreamed of establishing universal peace. Fjui! What did they expect me to talk about, I wonder? About Leaves of Grass, about the tariff walls, about the Declaration of Independence, about the latest gang war? . . . I never mentioned these things. I started right off the bat with a lesson on the physiology of love--that was it! It caught like wildfire. After the first day there were no more empty benches. . . . They asked all sorts of questions, as though they had never learned a damned thing. I let them fire away. I taught them to ask still more ticklish questions. Ask anything!--that was my motto. I'm here as a plenipotentiary from the realm of the free spirits.[13]

To return, however, for a moment from the man to the city and its atmosphere. Obviously the Miller of Cancer falls in love with its great beauty, with the sights, smells and sounds of its streets, with its wonderful cuisine. Moreover, in Paris, as a member of the community of Bohemian writers, Miller finds kindred spirits with whom to re-establish the old, iconoclastic neighborhood gang of

his Brooklyn boyhood. He and Alfred Perles, the "Boris" of Tropic of Cancer (and author of My Friend Henry Miller) share a flat in Clichy, a suburb of Paris.[14] Kingley Widmer not unjustly refers to them as ". . . the typically innocent footloose boys on the town and out of the settled world; they curse, drink, whore, and gripe. . . ."[15] And in the anarchic, hand-to-mouth life which they lead, Miller at last discovers--or rediscovers--the boyish freedom to again peruse the streets, to taste carefully of life. Also, in this world he experiences a certain communal feeling toward his fellow man, which, while not fulfilling his visionary dream, is for Henry Miller life at its best. For instance, this passage concerning a fresh air Paris urinal:

> I put my bicycle in the rack under the tree and I go to the urinal to take a leak. It is all gravy, even the urinal. As I stand there looking up at the house fronts, a demure young woman leans out of the window to watch me. How many times have I stood thus in this smiling, gracious world, the sun spashing over me and the birds twittering crazily, and found a woman looking down at me from an open window, her smile crumbling into soft little bits which the birds gather. . . .[16]

Perhaps, too, it is the Paris prostitute to whom Miller owes a great debt for his well-being in that city. In the philosophy and manner of these girls, Miller finds an answer to the burlesque queen of Sexus. He discovers a good-natured, realistic, generous response to a genuine human need. In Cancer, Miller revels in the sexual ambience created by the French prostitutes with whom he

mingles. These girls were, he feels, the product of an enlightened attitude toward the sex act and they embodied real desire. He mentions Germaine, for instance, who "... was a whore from the cradle; she was thoroughly satisfied with her role. ... The principal thing was a man. A man! That was what she craved."[17] Miller is also fond of citing the case of a girl who solicited on a wooden leg and who had customers who preferred her. In Cancer, Miller extensively praises the society of prostitutes for being democratic, for engendering this human activity in which they daily make themselves available to all men. He pays homage to these women who bring knowledge and intimacy to a trade, a trade which in the scheme of things frees mankind for other and more important endeavors.

Henry Miller stated in The Hamlet that "writing is its own reward," and in a great sense the reward which he received in Paris was the metaphysical boyhood which has been formulated and discussed at length in this study.[18] This mythic boy, as has been emphasized, is a diffuse being. First, perhaps, he is the natural heir to his own real boyhood, to the youthful Brooklyn anarchist defiantly measuring the life within against the life without. Secondly, however, he is the troubled man who took to heart Emerson's invitation to "... write that I may know you."[19] He is, moreover, the traditional American individualist who sought --like Thoreau at Walden Pond--to live without the bonds of

civil authority, and who found in his own breast the same zest for life which Whitman enthroned with his poetry. He is, further--also in the same being--the prophet of Spengler's vision of doom for our civilization, the teller of Freudian truth, and the visionary who invokes a collective future peopled with super beings. Somehow, though, in being this fantastic amalgam, Miller manages to calm--at least for himself--the troubled waters of our times. He eats with zest and sleeps with a clean conscience. He hears society telling him that ". . . if you want bread you've got to get in harness, get in lock step," but after the publication of Tropic of Cancer he knows that by extending his boyish knowledge to writing, he can earn enough bread to survive upon.[20] The boyish but metaphysical wisdom and the man's life are at last re-united. Finally, to Miller's credit--and in the tradition of American letters--it is the more elemental and more easily recognizable American boy in his innocence, good spirits and expectation who ever shines through the metaphysics and the journey which has been described:

> All my rebelliousness, all this crazy tampering with the world, the divine set-up, or rather the man-made set-up, for it was the human never the cosmic woes which disturbed me, spring from my failure to comprehend what people meant--and by people I mean parents, sweethearts, friends, counselors--when they urged me to do this or that, become this or that. Let me be, was all I wanted. Be what I am, no matter how I am. Why is it that at this moment, and I have thought it a thousand times to myself, I always summon as proof of the

> foregoing this image--of myself as a little boy going down into the street to play, having no fixed purpose, no particular direction, no especial friend to seek out, but just divinely content to be going down into the street to meet whatever might come.[21]

This, then, is the man--not boy--of Paris: journey's end. Easter.

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29. The Time of the Assassins, p. 136.

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