



Cowe, Jennifer (2016) *Killing the Buddha: Henry Miller's long journey to Satori*. PhD thesis.

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/7105/>

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

Killing the Buddha: Henry Miller's Long Journey to Satori

Jennifer Cowe

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Critical Studies
College of Arts
University of Glasgow

2016

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the relationship between Henry Miller, Zen Buddhism and how this may offer new ways of reading Miller. By exploring the life-long interest of Miller in Eastern Philosophy I hope to show that far from being the misogynistic, sexual miscreant of legend, he was in fact a deeply spiritual man who wished his work to inspire and motivate readers rather than be a form of titillation. My attempt here is not to rehabilitate Miller's reputation in regards to race, religion or gender, but rather to examine his work through a more spiritual lens.

In the process I will attempt to use a more complete selection of Miller's works than is commonly utilized by critics, although particular attention will be given to *Tropic of Cancer*, I will show how later, more spiritual works illuminate Miller's Zen Buddhist beliefs. By using novels, essays, letters and pamphlets I hope to provide a wide-ranging examination of Miller's oeuvre both chronologically and spiritually.

Two key words that will be found to re-occur throughout the thesis are 'journey' and 'progression'. Journey in the sense that Miller saw his own life in Zen Buddhist terms; he existed to evolve and gain awareness through his life experiences through the writing and re-writing them until he could move beyond them. Progression in the sense that movement is crucial to the development of spirituality, the mind and heart must be open to new knowledge and understanding. I will show that Miller came to conceptualise both his life and work through the Zen Buddhist teaching of The Four Noble Truths and Miller's daily implementation of The Eight Fold Path.

I will start by arguing that it is impossible to understand Miller's journey without first examining the process by which he came to shape his own life narrative. The Zen peace of Miller's later years was hard fought and gained at considerable price to both him and those close to him. Miller first had to develop a conceptualisation of creativity before he could be open to meaningful spiritual change. This thesis will examine the lasting influence of both Otto Rank and Henri Bergson on Miller's idea of what it meant to be a writer, how reality in relation to his life experiences was malleable and how this provided Miller with the foundation on which to explore his spirituality. I will show how Miller's close relationship to Surrealism caused him to re-think some of his positions in relation to language, style and freedom, yet ultimately why he felt impelled to continue on his journey to Zen Buddhism enlightenment.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
Author's Declaration	5
Introduction	6
Chapter 1 – I am an Artist: Henry Miller and Otto Rank	32
Chapter 2 – The Art of Becoming: Henry Miller and Henri Bergson	56
Chapter 3 – Refusing the Automatic Message: Henry Miller and Surrealism.....	85
Chapter 4 – Killing the Buddha: Henry Miller and Buddhism	110
Conclusion	137
List of References	142
Bibliography.....	154

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Christopher Gair for his guidance and unstinting patience and the College of Critical Studies at the University of Glasgow for their administrative support. My thanks to Professor David S. Calonne for his help in locating obscure publications and Professor James M. Decker for encouraging my interest in the lesser known Miller. To my parents Margaret and John Cowe I thank you for your support throughout my education. To Ralph, Tracey and Françoise I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for your forbearance, encouragement and support. Thank you.

Declaration of Originality Form – Research Degrees

This form **must** be completed and signed and submitted with your thesis.

Please complete the information below (using BLOCK CAPITALS).

Name	JENNIFER COWE
Student Number	1008247
Title of degree	PhD AMERICAN STUDIES
Title of thesis	KILLING THE BUDDHA: HENRY MILLER'S LONG JOURNEY TO SATORI

The University's degrees and other academic awards are given in recognition of a student's personal achievement. All work submitted for assessment is accepted on the understanding that it is the student's own effort. **Plagiarism** is defined as the submission or presentation of work, in any form, which is not one's own, without **acknowledgement of the sources**. For further information on what may be considered 'plagiarism', please read carefully the University's Statement on Plagiarism as contained in the University Calendar.

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and that I have:

Read and understood the University of Glasgow Statement on Plagiarism	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clearly referenced, in both the text and the bibliography or references, all sources used in the work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fully referenced (including page numbers) and used inverted commas for all text quoted from books, journals, web etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Provided the sources for all tables, figures, data etc. that are not my own work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not made use of the work of any other student(s) past or present without acknowledgement. This includes any of my own work, that has been previously, or concurrently, submitted for assessment, either at this or any other educational institution.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not sought or used the services of any professional agencies to produce this work	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
In addition, I understand that any false claim in respect of this work will result in disciplinary action in accordance with University regulations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DECLARATION:

I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and I certify that this thesis is my own work, except where indicated by referencing, and that I have followed the good academic practices noted above

Signed.....

Jennifer Cowe

Introduction

The publication of *Tropic of Cancer* in 1934 would secure Henry Miller's legacy as one of the most notorious writers of the twentieth century, leading to his being pigeonholed as everything from a counter-cultural icon, a sexual libertine to a misogynist pornographer.¹ The fact remains that Miller is often judged purely upon his first novel, or novels that concentrate on the same specific time frame. The emphasis upon these works, *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) and *The Rosy Crucifixion*, comprising *Sexus* (1949), *Plexus* (1953) and *Nexus* (1960) has led to a skewed perception of Miller as a writer. Despite publishing his first novel at forty-three years old, Miller had a prodigious output over his lifetime, publishing almost thirty books and collections, seventeen pamphlets and small print runs, ten volumes of correspondence and one play. By limiting our understanding of Miller to selected texts as has been the case with many critics, then using those texts as biographical sources, we run the risk of fundamentally misinterpreting and undervaluing what Miller was trying to accomplish in his work. I will argue that Miller's lifelong output should be read in relation to his growing interest in and adherence to Zen Buddhism. In this introduction I will show how Miller's life was saturated with spirituality from an early age and how works relating specifically to Eastern Philosophy played a key role in shaping how Miller understood his life experiences and propelled his progression forward into a deeper understanding of Zen Buddhism. It is important that I first clarify the question of Miller's work as autobiographical and explain how I will approach it within this thesis.

'Autobiography is the purest romance. Fiction is always closer to reality than fact.'
(Miller, 1952, p.37) Miller is at his most contradictory on how autobiographical his novels are. He completely identifies with the narrator as himself in *Tropic of Cancer*, going so far as to write in his response to Edmund Wilson's review 'The theme of the book is myself, and the narrator or the hero, as your reviewer puts it, is also myself... it is me, because I have painstakingly indicated throughout the book that the hero is myself.' (Dorrit, 2000,

¹ *Tropic of Cancer* was recently placed at number 59 in Robert McCrum's *100 Best Novels*, however it came with the proviso 'At first, his book was treated as the fruit of Miller's complex relationship with Anaïs Nin, who was an object of veneration within the American feminist movement. Later, feminists like Kate Millett denounced Miller as a male chauvinist, while Jeanette Winterson asked, perceptively: "Why do men revel in the degradation of women?" This question still hangs over the pages of *Tropic* like a rebuke, but (with a few misgivings) I'm still going to add it to this series'. Mc Crum. R. (2015). *100 Best Novels in English*. *The Guardian*, [online]. August 17. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/17/the-100-best-novels-written-in-english-the-full-list>

p.35) Yet Miller contradicts himself when he writes ‘The most fictive of all, possibly, are what are called autobiographies, that is, those which boast of being truthful accounts.’ (Miller, 1950, p.7) It cannot be denied that the vast majority of the characters in Miller’s novels are real, recognisable people from his life. Admittedly names are changed and in the case of his wife June Mansfield changed repeatedly, but for anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of Miller’s milieu, the characters are perfectly congruent with their real life counterparts. It must also be accepted that Miller was not above embellishing the truth to make it more interesting and this is perhaps just one of the problems with reading his work as autobiographical. There are several key moments in Miller’s mythologizing of his own life that do not stand up to close scrutiny. An example of this is in *Tropic of Capricorn* when he relates an episode relating to his years in a childhood gang in which they allegedly accidentally killed a young boy. In later versions of the story Miller seems to imply that the boy did not die, but was just injured. It seems likely that the boy in question, if he existed, was simply injured. As Miller does not record any of the usual repercussions that would transpire from a child’s alleged murder, it is hard to credit the first recording of this story in *Tropic of Capricorn* as true. What it does do is add to Miller’s outlaw credentials, something I will look at closely in relation to Miller’s perceived anti-Americanism and embellish his romanticised representation of his delinquent gang years. Likewise Miller’s representation of his exit from Western Union is suspect. In *Plexus* Miller portrays himself as the brave rebel who refuses to be a wage slave anymore and resigns from Western Union to become a full-time writer. This is a crucial episode in Miller’s narrative of his own life; he walks up Broadway swearing that he will never work for anyone else again and he is true to his word. A different version is given by his co-worker Mike Rivise, who relates that Miller was given two week’s notice of his dismissal due to his inability to fulfil the job requirements. It does seem unlikely that Miller would have chosen this exact moment to leave his job as he had just married June Mansfield and had rented an apartment he could barely afford with his salary let alone as someone unemployed. I would argue that Miller is shaping his own life experiences into material from which to write. This constant shifting and re-shaping of his own narrative is something that Miller will continue to pursue throughout his life; it is the cornerstone of his growth as a writer and a man. Miller was so absorbed in *Tropic of Cancer*, both physically and emotionally, that he had problems separating himself from the narrator in the months following publication. The toll that the writing and publication had taken on him led to a complete identification with his work. Over time Miller was able to take a more nuanced approach to this identification and he began to use his life experiences with a more philosophical approach in mind, although unfortunately, not all critics have been able to see this progression.

Perhaps the most influential of these appraisals was Kate Millett's inclusion of Miller in *Sexual Politics* (1970), classifying him as a misogynistic abuser of women and in the process ruining his reputation to the present day. Jeanette Winterson's recent review of Frederick Turner's *Renegade: Henry Miller and the Making of Tropic of Cancer* (2012) shows that the conceptualisation of Miller as a phallocratic, user of women is still the dominant matrix through which Miller is judged:

George Orwell, writing in 1940 about Henry Miller, has very different preoccupations to Kate Millet writing about Miller in 1970. Orwell doesn't notice that Miller-women are all 'cunts.' In fact, his long essay, *Inside a Whale*, does not mention women at all. Millet does notice that half the world has been billeted to the whorehouse, and wonders what this tells us about both Henry Miller and the psyche and sexuality of the American male. When Miller sailed for Paris he had a copy of *Leaves of Grass* in his luggage... He left behind him an ex-wife and small daughter for whom he had made no provision, and a current wife, June, who was his lover, muse and banker, until Anaïs Nin in Paris was able to take over those essential roles... Turner never troubles himself or the reader with questions about Miller's emotional and financial dependency on women. Miller was obsessed with masculinity but felt no need to support himself or the women in his life. Turner sympathises with the Miller who must sell his well-cut suits on the streets of Paris for a fraction of their worth, but is indifferent to the fact that June was selling her body on his behalf. Indeed, Turner tells us that Miller had to endure 'the most awful humiliation a man might suffer' (p.101). This, presumably, is June's lesbian affair, one she brought home to their apartment, so much so that Miller wrote a novel, *Lovely Lesbians*, one of his lifelong rants against women.. It never occurred to him that no matter how poor a man is, he can always buy a poorer woman for sex. It does not occur to Frederick Turner either, who calls Miller throughout a 'sexual adventurer.' This sounds randy and swashbuckling and hides the economic reality of prostitution. Miller the renegade wanted his body slaves like any other capitalist – and as cheaply as possible. When he could not pay, Miller the man and Miller the fictional creation work out how to cheat women with romance. What they cannot buy

they steal. No connection is made between woman as commodity and the 'slaughterhouse' (p. 84) of capitalism that Miller hates...²

I have quoted Winterson's review at length because it gets to the crux of the autobiographical question on Miller. Winterson is perfectly correct; Miller did rely throughout his life on women to provide for his financial needs. This included conniving in his wife's prostitution, taking money and food from the French prostitutes he frequented and allowing Anaïs Nin to pay for his apartment in Paris and the printing of *Tropic of Cancer*. That Miller sometimes writes of women in objectionable terms is also quite obvious, and his language is often unnecessarily coarse and debasing. The focus of this thesis is not to re-address Miller's reputation in regards to women however what both Winterson and Millett fail to do is differentiate between Miller the writer, Miller the man and Miller the character. Miller's quest to find a language to write in that mirrored the language of the streets led him to an authenticity that many still find obscene. Miller uses episodes from life, not necessarily his life, and employs them to create a mood or as a signifier of a deeper question. He is, after all, a writer experimenting with language and form. For example in *Tropic of Cancer* when Miller relates the episode of Van Norden and the prostitute, something I examine in depth in chapter 2, Miller is not simply relating a sexually titillating incident, that the likes of Winterson and Millett would find objectionable, but rather it allows the narrator to muse on the mechanised nature of sex in a capitalist society and explore the Rankian concept of the Biological Imperative in the artist.³ Miller is also a man in search of spiritual growth; he is evolving as his adherence to Zen Buddhism grows. Miller is suddenly not so easy to categorise as the chauvinist bigot, there is spiritual and philosophical reasoning behind his work and an experimental nature to his writing. The question of how autobiographical Miller's novels are, and if and when,

² Winterson, J. (2012). *The Male Mystique of Henry Miller* *The New York Times* [online] January 3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/books/review/renegade-henry-miller-and-the-making-of-tropic-of-cancer-by-frederick-turner-book-review>.

³ This debate shows no signs of abating as James Gifford's article 'Dispossessed Sexual Politics: Henry Miller's Anarchism Qua Kate Millett and Ursula K. Le Guin': Decker, J. (ed.) (2015). *Henry Miller: New Perspectives*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London. pp. 173-186. Gifford compares Millett's interpretation of a specific scene in *Tropic of Cancer* with a similar scenario in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*: 'He finds he can't "get it into her." With his never-failing ingenuity, he next tries sitting on the toilet seat. This won't do either, so, in a burst of hostility posing as passion, he reports: "I come all over her beautiful gown and she's sore about it." In *Tropic of Capricorn* he repeats the stunt; in *Sexus* too. It is a performance that nicely combines defecation with orgasm... What he really wants to do is shit on her.' (p.178) Gifford compares this to the scene where the Anarchist physicist Shevek gets drunk whilst visiting a capitalist planet and much like Miller's narrator fails to have full intercourse and ejaculates on his female 'partner'. Gifford implies that there is a double-standard at play in relation to Miller the misogynist and Le Guin the Anarchist Feminist.

we should read the narrator as Miller will be examined throughout this thesis in regards to Miller's intellectual and spiritual progression, but I think a level of caution is required when reading certain episodes as 'fact' or 'history'.

In recent years there has been a resurgence in academic research on Miller. These works have approached Miller in the context of Surrealism or psychoanalysis: Jane Nelson's *Form and Image in the Fiction of Henry Miller* (1970), Gay Louise Balliet's *Henry Miller and Surrealist Metaphor: Riding the Ovarian Trolley* (1996), James M. Decker's *Henry Miller: Constructing the Self, Rejecting Modernity* (2005) and Caroline Blinder's *A Self-Made Surrealist: Ideology and Aesthetics in the Work of Henry Miller* (2000). As informative as some of these books are, they aim to place Miller into a predefined category, often focussing on specific Miller novels to make their argument stick. I will take an interested if cautious approach to the more recent school of thought that aims to re-discover Miller as a Modernist writer in the Anglo-European tradition, seeing in his work the key Modernist motifs of disenfranchisement with industrial society, the diminishing freedom of the individual and the need to find new ways of literary expression. In *Henry Miller: The Inhuman Artist* (2013)⁴, Indrek Manniste takes this theory a step further by showing the underlying influence of Nietzsche and Spengler upon Miller's concept of the 'inhuman', examining Miller's self-presentation as 'inhuman' as a means by which to distance himself from conventional modes of morality. I will look at this idea of the 'inhuman' in relation to Buddhism rather than Modernism in chapter 4. Whilst I agree with much of Manniste's central argument, I fundamentally differ on how we should view Miller's 'inhumanity'. Sarah Garland has examined how Miller's use of language aims to create an aggressive dynamic between writer and reader; almost a deviant's pact, which includes and assaults the reader simultaneously. She also highlights Miller as a 'magpie'⁵, a collector of innumerable styles and tones. I will consider this idea of Miller as a 'magpie' very specifically in relation to his adoption of certain philosophical schools of thought, specifically in relation to his utilization of Rank and Bergson. It is crucial to my argument that Miller is not an adherent to any collective ideology or organised religion and this is something that will be stressed and shown repeatedly throughout this thesis. Following on from Garland's idea of an aggressive pact is *The Secret Violence of Henry Miller* (2011) in which Katy Masuga uses Gilles Deleuze's theory of 'minor' literature to place Miller as a

⁴ For a brief review of what I see as the weaknesses in this argument see: Cowe, J. (2014). Indrek Manniste, *Henry Miller: The Inhuman Artist*. *Journal of American Studies*, 48, p.148.

⁵ Garland, S. (2005.) *Rhetoric and Excess: Style, Authority, and the Reader in Henry Miller's 'Tropic of Cancer', Samuel Beckett's 'Murphy', William Burroughs' 'Naked Lunch', and Vladimir Nabokov's 'Ada or Ardor'*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, p.17.

surreptitiously antagonistic writer who employs frustrating and obtuse language to illustrate the belief that language is an impossible medium through which to express reality. I accept Masuga's premise, however I will examine Miller's belief in the difficulty of using language in relation to reality from a Bergsonian perspective. I will also show that this hypothesis is something that Miller only plays with in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* and in fact returns to conventional representations of time, plot and language in his later fiction. Whilst I greatly appreciate the finesse of these arguments and may even accept their premise to a point, I will explore them as a step in Miller's evolution as a writer, rather than as the final destination.

Likewise I will treat those critics who place Miller firmly in the realms of sexual aesthetics with a certain vigilance. For many years this approach, along with biographies, were the main focus of Miller study and as such framed how Miller was perceived. They in many ways bolstered the view of Miller as a libertine, without adding much to the overall study of his work. Charles Glicksberg (*The Sexual Revolution in Modern American Literature*, 1970), Norman Mailer (*Genius and Lust*, 1976) and Michael Woolf ('Beyond Ideology: Kate Millet and the case for Henry Miller', 1992) are all good examples of studies where Miller is pigeonholed as the sexual adventurer. In the case of Kenneth Rexroth's ('The Reality of Henry Miller', 1959), however, this stereotype leads to an interaction with Miller's Eastern spirituality and I think this can be a valuable area of research. Most critics accept Miller's gradual move towards Buddhism, but the fact that it coincided with a perceived fall in the standard of his work has led to it being ignored. Unarguably the revolutionary nature and literary genius of Miller's work peaked early with *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*; the vast majority of his work, however, was produced after his decade in Paris. In dealing with Miller's work as a whole, one must consider his growing spirituality. William Gordon's *The Mind and Art of Henry Miller* (1968) is the only full length study of Miller's spiritualism from an Eastern perspective, whilst also including Miller's interest in more esoteric pursuits like astrology and Jewish mysticism. Most recently David Stephen Calonne published the article 'Samhadi All the Time: Henry Miller and Buddhism' (2000)⁶ offering a general overview of Miller's Buddhism, but in a manner greatly constricted by its length. Following on from this Calonne published a short biography, *Henry Miller* (2014) which again emphasises the influence of Eastern Philosophy in Miller's life. Whilst Calonne's biography is a welcome addition, and undoubtedly a step up from the more lurid Miller biographies that saturate the market, he

⁶ Calonne, D.S. (2000). 'Samhadi All the Time: Henry Miller and Buddhism'. *Stoker*, 67, pp.9-19.

does not necessary deal with how Miller progressed from a derivative, would be writer to a writer with the confidence to play with language and form. In other words, how did Miller find his authentic voice? I will argue that in keeping with the idea of Miller as a ‘magpie’ he searched for theories from many sources to understand what it meant to be an artist and how this had and would affect his life and work. I will show in chapter 1 that the theories of Otto Rank provided Miller with a model for the creative life, marked Miller out as ‘chosen’ and gave him a concrete identity based upon his creativity and most importantly introduced him to the creative necessity of re-evaluating important life experiences to gain insight and material. In chapter 2 I will show how the work of Henri Bergson combined with Rank to give Miller a firm foundation on which to base his view of creativity and the nature of reality. Bergson’s theories of Duration and Intuition altered Miller’s idea of time and timelessness and the crucial act of memory and remembrance in relation to ‘truth’. Chapter 3 will explore Miller’s relationship to Surrealism, but in a marked difference from other works on the subject, I will look at it as an example of Miller exploring Rank’s concept of ‘Art-Ideology’ and how Miller considered, utilised, but ultimately rejected Surrealism for his own individual path. I will argue in chapter 4 that it was only by going through this process that Miller was open to Zen Buddhism both in his life and in his writing. As I shall show the study of Eastern Philosophy was a life-long pursuit for Miller, it did not within itself, however offer Miller the immediate foundation that Rank and Bergson did as a writer. Miller needed this foundation so as to be able to build upon it; his ability to conceptualise his life and creativity through Rank and Bergson is what frees him to explore his true spirituality. Miller’s acceptance of his role as artist and of the creative necessity of his suffering is what allows him to progress to a Zen Buddhist understanding of both his life and work.

Vital to understanding Miller is to understand how Miller conceptualized his own childhood. He always saw himself as an outsider, alive to the basic rottenness at the roots of America. Miller, by his own admission, was profoundly influenced by his childhood in Brooklyn, New York. He never described himself as a New Yorker, but rather as a Brooklyn boy of the Fourteenth Ward. The specification of geography here gives us an insight into Miller’s self-perception. Miller paints the first nine years of his life in Williamsburg as the happiest of his life, his father’s business was doing well and his maternal grandfather lived with the family, providing Miller with his first non-conformist hero. Valentin Nieting was a confirmed pacifist and Socialist, who had fled Germany to avoid conscription in the Franco-Prussian war. Miller’s happiest early memories are of the times he spent with his maternal grandfather in the tailor’s shop where he worked and of

the camaraderie between the men. Nieting had no time for the concept of bettering himself and much to his daughter's disgust, was happy to remain on the shop floor. Miller had clear memories of the political discussions that would take place and of the differences with those he heard at home from his mother Louise. Nieting was a passionate anti-colonialist and as such was against the Spanish American War; on the other hand, Miller's mother was so supportive of the war that she hung a portrait of Admiral Dewey above Miller's bed. What would appear to be nothing more than political differences within a family, for Miller, were to take on far deeper connotations. His grandfather's politics and mode of life would come to serve as an example for Miller in later life, whilst his mother came to symbolise the stifling, bourgeois, repressive society that Miller could not, and later on, would not fit into. It is important to outline the America into which Miller was born. Miller was born only five years after the Haymarket Affair. The Haymarket Affair started as a May Day parade, but finished tragically when an anonymous bystander threw a bomb into the police cordon, which resulted in the deaths of eight officers. Officers then opened fire, indiscriminately killing eleven people. The authorities then chose eight random people from the crowd and charged them with murder; seven were given the death penalty. The idea being that to attend such a parade was guilt enough and somehow un-American. Although the sentences were overturned eight years later, three of the defendants had already been hanged. For Valentin Nieting and those who thought like him, Haymarket came to be a byword for government repression and state sponsored murder of its citizens for exercising their constitutionally guaranteed rights. For Louise Miller the fact that five of the Haymarket Eight were German immigrants, just like the Millers themselves, would have been a source of deep shame. The shame that Miller's mother felt would have been intensified by the assassination of President Mc Kinley by an anarchist in 1901. The assassin was in fact American born however this did not stop the paranoia propagated by the newspapers that America was under attack from within by immigrant radicals determined to bomb their way to power. Miller's childhood and adolescence were fairly normal for a boy of his time. He did reasonably well at school when motivated, and played the piano to a high standard. He did not attend college for long mainly due to his father's business failing and a suspicion of institutionalised education, but under pressure from his mother he agreed to become an apprentice tailor to his father. It was in the workroom with his father's employees, many of them immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe that Miller was once again drawn into political discussion and exposed to European philosophy. During the first nine years of Miller's life in Williamsburg, his family situation had not deteriorated enough to prevent him from romanticizing it for the rest of his life. The contradiction between Miller's controlled home life and the chaos and poverty of the

streets in his neighbourhood provided him with the first of a series of dual personality episodes, which would mark his adult life. On one hand, Miller was the product of a respectable lower middle class home, well-dressed, a high achiever at school, and an able pianist from a young age. Conversely, some of his happiest memories are of the rough and tumble streets around him, becoming part of a gang of rough children, whom his mother could only have disapproved of. Miller's mythologizing of his childhood friends reads more like a rap sheet of juvenile delinquents; their names pervade his more autobiographical works, Stanley Borowski, Lester Reardon, Jack Lawson and Johnny Paul, as do their minor anti-social exploits. For Miller these names never lost the veneer of adventure and mischief. His time with them was spent hanging around saloon doors, spying on prostitutes, watching illegal gambling on trot horses and fighting with other gangs of kids. Miller and his friends loved the seamier side of life in their neighbourhood, admiring the petty criminals and grifters for the ease and enjoyment with which they seemed to live, in marked contrast to the Miller household values. From an early age Miller learned to live two separate lives, one living up to the expectations of his mother and society in general, and the other a simultaneous life of living on the margins of respectable society, a pattern that would be visible in Miller's adult life.

In his book, *Renegade: Henry Miller and the Making of Tropic of Cancer* (2012)⁷, Frederick Turner argues that this duality is one of the main ways to understand Miller's novels, especially if one is seeking to place him as an American writer. Turner sees Miller as an American outlaw, harkening back to the frontier days and the narratives of that period, which were essentially narratives of lawlessness and colourful criminal characters, living at times both geographically and socially on the margins. For Turner, Miller is directly tapping into the early American experience of expansion, resistance to federal government and general mayhem. The years after the American Revolutionary War were far from stable, with rebellions against government policy and parts of the country controlled by regional militia who interpreted the law to suit them. Washington worried as late as 1786 that the whole experiment could possibly deteriorate into "anarchy and confusion". The volatility of the American people was commented on by many of the founding fathers, or as Alexander Hamilton allegedly called them 'the great beast' (Turner, 2012, p.23). From J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) through to the oral traditions of the Mississippi Delta, Turner paints a picture of

⁷ For my analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Turner's approach to *Tropic of Cancer* see: Cowe, J. (2013). *Frederick Turner, Renegade: Henry Miller and the Making of Tropic of Cancer*. *Journal of American Studies*, 47, 3, p.215.

degeneracy and hardship that marked the first hundred years of America. From the frontiersman that Crevecoeur describes as ‘hideous, ferocious, gloomy, mongrel and half-savage’ (Turner, 2012, p.25) to the legends of the Mississippi, still remembered a generation later through oral history, the criminals, the professional fighters, the Indian killers and the freaks. Turner argues that the work of Mark Twain can be seen as the literary bridge between the oral traditions of the Mississippi and the later writing of Miller. Twain sought to reproduce the rough vernacular of the period on the page, bringing the lives of those on the margins to a wider literate audience. Unsurprisingly it was impossible to do justice to the language due to its inherent vulgarity, but also the subject matter. Americans wanted their frontiersmen and river dwellers to be colourful but law abiding, interesting but subordinate. Twain was constricted by the time he lived and wrote in. American culture was re-claiming its outlaws, centring its collective memory on the humble yeoman farmers, carving their livelihoods out of the wilderness with gratitude and the immigrants who didn’t speak English who wanted nothing more than a stable job for their children. Miller belonged to another tradition; the America that was built not on the backs of honest labour, but rather the America of the frontier with all the veniality and crime that accompanied it, an America that briefly offered a second chance for a people to re-order how they wanted to live with each other, to decide for themselves what was success or failure. Although I would not necessarily agree with what I consider to be Turner’s over identification of Miller with an overtly American historical perspective, there is something to be said for locating Miller within the outlaw milieu, in both the literary and societal sense. The idea of two conceptualizations of America living and growing side by side, both claiming as its foundation the very formation of the nation, will become more apparent to Miller in his Big Sur years. The suggestion that you can have a community within a nation that lives more closely to the nation’s origins than that of country itself is something Miller will come to ponder.

I think it is fruitful to consider the idea of Miller as ‘outlaw’ alongside that of Miller the expatriate. Countless books have been written on the American literary expatriates of the 1920’s and 30’s and I have no intention to re-treading well-worn paths however it is worth clarifying how Miller was different from, and in some ways similar to, other American writers and artists of this period and how it shaped his relationship to home. Miller was not unique in the sense that he felt alienated from the politics, lifestyle and prevailing moral values of the period. He was not unique in that he chose to leave America; he had the financial ability to make such a decision. In his article ‘Henry Miller: The Pathology of Isolation’ (1952) Alwyn Lee observed that Miller himself was ‘important as a symbol of

how deep a fissure has grown between our culture and its own origins, how this century may exclude those apparently living in its midst'. This is interesting in that it touches on not only Miller's alienation from his own time, but also how alienated America had become from its 'outlaw' roots. Lee is also adamant to separate Miller from the Lost Generation, contributing to the stereotype of the earlier literary expatriates as somehow phony and effete, whilst Miller's poverty-stricken existence somehow adds to his wrong-side-of-the-tracks authenticity:

Those of the lost generation (Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Cowley, etc) were mere truants, who despite bull fights, the Ritz, or the Left Bank remained American as Dodsworth- not-yet-returned natives enjoying a temporary expatriation. Not Miller, a true waif, achieved exile without nostalgia, which Santayana, who ought to know, says is a bad thing... a dramatic form of inner condition rendered him rootless, an internal exile, able in *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, to see his country with a tourist's eye. (Baxter, 1961, p.160)

In *Henry Miller: Literature and Life* (1986) J.D. Brown directly links the length of Miller's 'spiritual exile' to his levels of anger. Miller completely immersed himself in and identified with French culture, despite difficulties with the language. It is unarguable that Miller's time was spent on the periphery of respectable society, at least in his early years in Paris. Miller was more likely to be hanging around a café frequented by prostitutes and their pimps than *Les Deux Magots* or *Café de Flore*. His break from America somehow seemed more permanent and complete than that of other American writers. In *American Writers in Paris 1920-39* (1980) Karen Lane Rood states that 'He knew intimately the litany of complaints earlier expatriates had formulated, and he had lived in the heart of an industrialized, inhuman society far longer than those who had fled to Paris in the twenties. His rejection of America was therefore unequalled in its bitterness.' (Rood Lane, 1980, p.283) In *Henry Miller: Expatriate* (1961) Annette Baxter observes that this kind of alienation can have acute consequences for the artist 'the artist's natural tendency to live within, to carry on a perpetual inner monologue, may become intensified, rendering him, as he loses contact with the life about him, more vulnerable to artistic and personal disorganization.' (Baxter, 1961, p.16) This certainly seems to have been the case with Miller at times; however I would argue that Miller is always outward looking and this is something I will return to in due course. A crucial influence upon Miller's expatriate experience was its deep questioning of the American way of life. Miller was walking away from something just as much as he was walking to something when he went to Paris.

Again it must be pointed out that Miller was not alone in these feeling it was a wide-spread sentiment amongst the American intelligentsia in the 1920's. Yet again, Miller was not unique in his rejection of what he saw as American life. Samuel Putnam described this sentiment as 'the overwhelming material values enforced by a standardized and machine-made civilization, the lack of any spiritual death, the falsity, the sentimentality, the hypocrisy, the repression that goes with such a civilization.' (Baxter, 1961, p. 3) Malcolm Cowley spoke of a 'wide spread revolt amongst American artists against Puritanism, prohibition and booster clubs.' (Rood Lane, 1980, p. 12) Miller was adamant in later life to explain that he had never been a part of the American expatriate literary scene. In the *Paris Review* interview of 1963 he made clear that he had never met Gertrude Stein nor known any of her group. He carefully propagated the impression of himself as lone writer, independent and autonomous. This may be in part to do with Edmund Wilson placing Miller within what he calls 'The Twilight of the Expatriates', with other critics, specifically Philip Rahv in his article 'Sketches in Criticism: Henry Miller' (1957), continuing to see Miller as belonging to neither decade due to his lack of ideological commitment in the 1930's and his inability to connect with the expatriate community in the 1920's. I am not sure that trying to pigeonhole Miller in this way is terribly helpful in saying that I think Annette Baxter places Miller within this school of thought about as well as can be expected:

Whereas the disillusionment of the twenties encouraged escape from native inadequacies and iniquities, the disillusionment of the thirties provided a strong incentive for home-based reform. The expatriate of the thirties must then have been little affected by contemporary social and political movements. In abandoning his country at this time, he was expressing not only his dissatisfaction with America, but also with collectivist ideals. While the expatriate of the twenties seemed to be transferring his loyalty from one country and its institutions to another, his successor a decade later felt that loyalty was a tenable concept only when it sprang from a deep personal involvement with one's environment, whatever it may be. Thus the expatriates of the thirties appear more as isolated figures, each searching for fulfillment on his own terms, rather than as adherents to a self-conscious cult of disenchantment. (Baxter, 1961, p.6)

He may not have been part of the Lost Generation or for that matter the remnants of what was left of it in the 1930's, but he was far from alone. Miller relied upon the kindness of strangers from day one, cultivating friendships that would afford him food, lodgings, sex

or money. Intellectually, his most fruitful years would be spent at the Villa Seurat, surrounded by other writers, artists, mystics and philosophers. He was far from the lone wolf he portrayed himself to have been.

Miller's return to America in 1939 was not to be by choice. Forced to leave Europe by the approaching war, Miller left with little financial security and the manuscript for *Tropic of Capricorn* in his publisher's safe for safekeeping. I will consider Miller's return in connection to his growing Zen Buddhist beliefs later in this introduction, what I plan to focus on here is what we mean when we talk about Miller's anti-Americanism:

There was a reason, however, for making the physical journey, fruitless though it proved to be. I felt the need to effect a reconciliation with my native land... I didn't want to run away from it, as I had originally. I wanted to embrace it, to feel that the old wounds were really healed, and set out for the unknown with a blessing on my lips... The American coast looked bleak and uninviting to me. I didn't like the look of the American house; there was something cold, austere, something barren and chill about the architecture of the American home. It was home, with all the ugly, evil, sinister connotations which the word contains for a restless soul. There was a frigid, moral aspect to it which chilled me to the bone. (Miller, 1945, pp.10-11)

The above passage from *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (1945) perfectly illustrates the hopes and fears that Miller felt upon his return to America. He starts in hope, with the confidence of a man who has spent the last decade evolving and becoming emotionally and intellectually stronger. He wishes to forgive America for all the slights and suffering of the past, to return as an equal. Yet upon seeing the American coast he is immediately set upon by his old demons. He feels unwelcome, an eternal outsider. Part of this relates to Miller's own prejudices his growing sense of foreboding have their foundations in his old perceptions. The use of words like 'frigid' and 'austere' conjure up images of Miller's Germanic childhood with all the accompanying trauma. The America Miller sees is Protestant, Puritanical and dead. He has made his mind up to this before he even makes landfall. He may be right to think this way or not however it sets the tone for Miller's re-integration into American society. It may also explain why Miller chooses not to visit his family until a month after his return. The America that Miller has such a problem with is the industrialized, capital obsessed country that he believes has corrupted and alienated the people from their own land and well-being:

I can think of no street in America, or of people inhabiting such a street, capable of leading one on towards the discovery of the self. I have walked the streets in many countries of the world but nowhere have I felt so degraded and humiliated as in America. I think of all the streets in America combined as forming a huge cesspool, a cesspool of the spirit in which everything is sucked down and drained away to everlasting shit. (Miller, 1939, p.4)

Miller is appalled by the role of relieved expatriate that he is expected to play in New York. He is surrounded by people telling him how happy he must be to have escaped the war in Europe, how lucky he is to be an American, ‘The expatriate had come to be looked upon as an escapist. Until the war broke out it was the dream of every American artist to go to Europe... With the outbreak of the war a sort of childish, petulant chauvinism set in. “Aren’t you glad to be back in the good old U.S.A?”’ (Miller, 1945, p.16) *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* is scathing in its representation of America and it is not surprising that despite being ready for publication in 1942, it was not published until after the war. In a period of hyper-patriotism, Miller was at odds with the vast majority of his compatriots yet determined to expose what he saw as the truth:

Everything worth saying about the American way of life I could put in thirty pages... nowhere else in the world is the divorce between man and nature so complete. Nowhere have I encountered such a dull, monotonous fabric of life as here in America... Actually we are a vulgar, pushing mob whose passions are easily mobilized by demagogues, newspaper men, religious quacks, agitators and such like. To call this a society of free people is blasphemous. What have we to offer the world beside the superabundant loot which we recklessly plunder from the earth under the maniacal delusion that this insane activity represents progress and enlightenment? (Miller, 1945, p.20)

I think it is interesting that Miller is highlighting the dissonance between the American people and their land. This links back to Turner’s perception of Miller as an inheritor of the authentic ‘outlaw’ tradition. Capitalism has alienated the people not only from their labour but from their land. Miller sees them as soulless drudges, driven on to work harder for an unfulfilling fantasy of success and happiness:

The saddest sights of all (in America) are the automobiles parked outside the mills and factories. The automobile stands out in my mind as the very symbol of falsity

and illusion. There they are, thousands upon thousands of them, in such profusion that it would seem as if no man were too poor to own one. When the American worker steps out of his shining tin chariot he delivers himself body and soul to the most stultifying labor a man can perform. (Miller, 1944, p.196)

I would not want to go so far as to paint Miller as a proto-environmentalist, but he does show a growing awareness in *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* of the toll that industrialization has taken upon the land. Wallace Fowlie also sensed this connection between Miller and the land, although he placed it within the American Transcendentalist tradition⁸:

He has always been the pure singer of individual freedom who was a-political because he believed that to give up to a capitalistic regime for a socialistic regime was simply to change masters. His personal creed may be attached in part to the European utopia of the noble savage, and in part to the American tradition of return to nature we read in Thoreau and Whitman. His sense of anarchy is partly that of Thoreau and partly that of the Beat generation. (Fowlie, 1975, p.16)

I would argue that this is Miller's emerging sense of the need for harmony, another example of his Zen Buddhist beliefs. He sees America held up as the epitome of success and happiness, progress and civilization, and is made sick by the reality. As I shall show in chapter 4, as Miller's Zen Buddhism grew he began to see America as its absolute opposite. The greed, brutality and suffering that Miller saw as the real America was so far removed from the spirituality that Miller tried to live by, that he despaired for the future. It is fair to say that one can open any random page of *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* and find Miller ranting against what he saw as the reality of America; however the visceral levels of rage that we can almost feel seeping from the page were quite frankly untenable. Miller's Zen Buddhism was flourishing alongside his hatred and one had to give. I will

⁸ The connection between Miller and Transcendentalism is one that has been thoroughly researched and written about by Miller scholars. The links are easy to see and Miller was especially open about the influence of Whitman upon his intellectual development. One of the most interesting books on the subject is, McCarthy, H. (1971). 'Henry Miller's Democratic Vistas' (On Miller and Whitman). *American Quarterly*, 23, pp.221-235. McCarthy argues that Paris can be viewed as Miller's Walden Pond, although I am not sure how successful he is in showing this, I do think it is an interesting interpretation. Most recently Eric D. Leman once again placed Miller as living a Transcendentalist lifestyle in Big Sur. There is not anything new to research in this area, yet it continues to garner interest. I can only deduce that this is part of a desire to somehow re-connect Miller to his American roots. Leman, E.D. (2015) 'Big Sur and Walden: Henry Miller's Practical Transcendentalism' In Decker, J. (ed.) *Henry Miller: New Perspectives*. Bloomsbury, London.

now go on to show how it was that Miller's Zen Buddhism became the most important foundation in his life and helped him to negotiate living in America for the rest of his life.

To understand Miller's work and what he was trying to achieve, it is essential to understand the narrative that Miller created of his own life. In unpacking Miller's creation of himself we not only see how his use of his own life experiences adapts, but also how important it was to Miller that his work be understood as novels that would spiritually stimulate readers. When Miller was hesitating over the American publication of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* in 1961, well aware of the potential controversy, he wrote to his publisher Barney Rosset:

I would triumph as the King of Smut. I would be given the liberty to thrill, to amuse, to shock, but not to edify or instruct, not to inspire revolt. Certainly you must be aware that throughout my autobiographical works, including *The Colossus of Maroussi*, *The Books in My Life*, *Hamlet* and the *Oranges*, the overlying thought is to inspire and to awaken, not merely to titillate and amuse the reader. (Calonne, 2015, p.127)

What this shows is that Miller was well aware of how much his reputation would be damaged by and forever connected to the publication of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* in America. It is also worth noting that Miller no longer considers *Tropic of Cancer* or *Tropic of Capricorn* as 'autobiographical' and that he envisages his writing as something that should be inspirational and instructional to his readers. This begins to make more sense if we see Miller as he saw himself, a deeply spiritual man, who had gained a level of awakening through his suffering. I believe that Miller wanted his work to be understood as a chronicle of his journey to Buddhist enlightenment, but it is important to unpack Miller's spirituality and its evolution throughout his life. Miller was a life-long autodidact, having found formal education so restrictive that he left the City College of New York after only one month. He read widely in literature, philosophy and politics and seems to have first read A.P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* (1884) when only eighteen years old. Around this same period he encountered Lao-Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* and was introduced to The Theosophical Society by his colleague's brother, Robert Hamilton Challacombe. Challacombe appears as 'Roy Hamilton' in *Tropic of Capricorn* and in many ways is the first in a series of wise men that Miller looked to for instruction. It was through Challacombe that Miller first heard the name Swami Vivekananda:

I felt I was in the presence of a being such as I had never known before... He was indeed strange, but so sharply sane that I at once felt exalted. For the first time I was talking to a man who got behind the meaning of words and went to the very essence of things. I felt that I was talking to a philosopher, not a philosopher such as I had encountered through books, but a man who philosophized constantly – and who lived this philosophy which he expounded. That is to say, he had no theory at all, except to penetrate to the very essence of things and, in the light of each fresh revelation to so live his life that there would be a minimum of discord between the truths which were revealed to him and the exemplification of these truths in action... Naturally his behaviour was strange to those about him. It had not, however, been strange to those who knew him out on the Coast where, as he said, he was in his own element. There apparently he was regarded as a superior being and was listened to with the utmost respect, even with awe. (Miller, 1939, p.147)

Not long after this Miller moved to California with the hope of becoming a cowboy, but in reality to leave behind his rather mundane life and personal problems in New York. Miller ultimately failed to become a cowboy; however what we can see is that as early as twenty one years old, Miller is already searching for spirituality and a like-minded community. It was also during this trip that Miller heard Emma Goldman lecture and was exposed to Anarchist ideology for the first time. Upon Miller's return to New York he acquiesced to his mother's wish that he work alongside his father in his tailor's shop and through the Eastern European Jews who worked there discovered and/or discussed Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ* and Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*. Miller was slowly beginning to view himself as an outsider; questioning the societal framework that he had been brought up in and how he envisaged his future in it. As the Russian Revolution waged, Miller listened to the open-air lectures of Goldman, Larkin and Harrison. He read Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) and began to consider the idea of mutual-aid communities. During this period Miller married his first wife Beatrice Wickes, a respectable, bourgeois pianist who Miller would paint as a sexually repressed tyrant in *Tropic of Capricorn*. Despite being unhappy almost from the beginning, they stayed together long enough to have a child together, whose advent led to Miller applying for a job at Western Union. This period of Miller's life is vital to any understanding of him as it is the next decade which will provide the life experiences that will not only provide him with his primary material, but also shape how Miller sees himself.

The job at Western Union is Miller's last attempt at a normal, stable job and life. That Miller would write of Western Union as 'The Cosmodemonic Company' gives one an idea that he was not well suited for the position. His growing dislike of American capitalism and the culture it produced will ripen into something akin to hatred by the end of his time at Western Union. His position as an employment manager led to him seeing firsthand the desperation of men to get work and his arbitrary role in accepting them or not. Miller depicts this period as a time in which he truly met societal misfits, unsuited to modern American life. His identification with the outsider begins to crystallise, as his awareness of inequality and the capricious nature of the capitalism begins to take hold. On the surface, Miller was a petty bourgeois success; he was a white collar worker with a wife and small daughter. Underneath he was suffocating; he hated family life, was ashamed of the power his job gave him over the lives of ordinary people and he longed to be a writer. Miller's life may well have continued like this as it does for millions of other people, if he had not met June Mansfield in Wilson's Dancehall in the summer of 1923.⁹ Mansfield was a twenty-one year old taxi dancer and Miller was infatuated with her from their first dance. Miller seemed to be well aware from the beginning of their affair that this was a seminal moment in his life:

I was approaching the thirty-third year of my life, 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... That this was to be the grand week of my life, to last for seven years, I had no idea of course. To make the fatal step, to throw everything to the dogs, is in itself an emancipation: the thought of consequences never entered my head. To make absolute, unconditional surrender to the woman one loves is to break every bond save the desire not to lose her, which is the most terrible bond of all. (Miller, 1949, p.5)

That Miller saw himself as a failure at a time when to the outside world he was at his most successful is telling. Miller's concept of success has irrevocably broken with that which is

⁹ What little that is known of June Mansfield is seen through the eyes of others. Apart from Miller, we have recollections of her from Nin, Perles and Brassai, but nothing in her own words. Many critics have come to believe that Mansfield was bi-polar and that this instability may be the cause of her many lies regarding her background. At different times in her life she lied about her name, age, religion and family. It has not even been possible to assert when Mansfield died as she had changed her name again and her social security number was suspected of being used in fraud after her 'death'. For an examination of what is most likely the truth regarding Mansfield see: Decker, J. M. (2006) 'June Mansfield: Remnants of a Life'. *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*, Volume 3, pp.82-97.

predominant in America. Mansfield provides him with the impetus to divorce his wife (and in reality abandon both Beatrice and his infant daughter) and very quickly to resign from his secure job and become a full-time writer. Miller's break with bourgeois society was swift and permanent.

As I have already stated, our image of Mansfield is always through the gaze of someone else. To Miller she was the initially liberating yet ultimately destructive force that permanently altered his life. In 'Notes on June' under the heading 'Destructiveness' he paints a portrait of Mansfield that is both impetuous and exhilarating with a hint of apprehension:

Clothes, towels, shoes, socks, hats, expensive gowns, worn to shreds in no time, or ruined by cigarette holes, by spillt [sic] wine or gravy, or paint. Habit of doing what she likes regardless of what she has on- because it would cramp her style. Allowing others to wear her things and ruin them for her: fur coat, beautiful slippers, evening wrap, mantillas, scarves, etc. (Miller, 1971, p.143)

There are two things worthy of note in this passage; firstly Miller is afraid that someone so cavalier in their attitude to objects could also be so in relationships. Secondly Miller's catalogue of Mansfield's belongings and his disapproval of her treatment of them speak to his Germanic upbringing. Miller worried until the end of his life that he would never truly break away from the puritanical lessons of his mother and in this passage we see Miller's unease with what he perceives as slovenliness and waste. In these few lines, written at the beginning of their relationship, we see the issues that will destroy it. Mansfield is erratic and irresistible Miller is afraid and insecure. Miller now began the most peripatetic of existences with Mansfield; this included selling candy door to door, opening a speakeasy/brothel with Mansfield, openly begging, the prostitution of Mansfield, and the sale of Miller's work as Mansfield's to wealthy male patrons who 'subsidised' Mansfield. Calonne argues that we can read this period of Miller's life as his unconscious imitation of the life of a Hindu *sannyasin*, a wandering beggar who has turned his back on materialism and is dedicated to a life of the spirit. I am not sure if I would quite go this far, but what I would suggest is that this is the period that Miller sees as the crucible of his suffering. Mansfield's introduction of her female lover Jean Kronski¹⁰ into their lives in October

¹⁰ Very little is known of Jean Kronski including her real name. She has been identified by Miller scholars as Marion Fish or Mara Andrews, but no conclusive evidence of her identity has been found. It is thought that she was twenty-one years old when she became involved with Mansfield and Miller. Miller gave her the pseudonym Stasia and Thelma in different works and his portrayal

1926 led Miller to such misery that he tried to commit suicide. The daily humiliations the women placed upon him and his fear that Mansfield would abandon him seems to have seriously unhinged Miller. By the time Miller arrived home one night in March 1927 to find a note on the table telling him that Mansfield and Kronski had sailed that morning for Paris without telling him, he was broken and without hope for the future. Miller would write and re-write this relatively short period of his life in many of his novels. We see his relationship and marriage to Mansfield followed by the advent of Kronski told from the viewpoint of the year after in *Crazy Cock* (1928-30) right through to the perspective that time brings with *Nexus* in 1960. The reason that Miller spends thirty years returning to the same period is that he recognises this as the time in which his life unequivocally altered. He comes to see the suffering he endured through Zen Buddhism; Miller seeks to understand his suffering through the Second and Third Noble Truths. I will look at this subject in more detail in chapter 4; I would argue, however, that it is important that we see Miller's repetition of material in the light of the Zen Buddhist concepts of awareness and acceptance. Mansfield's return to New York (without Kronski) and Miller's eventual departure for Paris in February 1930 (paid for by one of Mansfield's 'patrons') would mark the beginning of the end of their relationship and despite attempted reconciliations they divorced in 1934.

Miller's immersion in spirituality continued in Paris as did his interest in astrology and the occult. Through Anaïs Nin he met the astrologer Conrad Moricand¹¹ and for a period Miller and Moricand were inseparable. The titles *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* relate to astrological signs rather than circles of latitude. Although their friendship ended badly as chronicled in *A Devil in Paradise* (1956) Miller maintained a lifelong interest in astrology and would often have his chart read before making momentous decisions. It was Moricand who introduced Miller to Aleister Crowley and his Rosicrucian faction Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO). Miller read Dane Rudhyar's *Astrology of Personality* (1936) and entered into correspondence with the author. Through fellow

of her is as a mentally unstable, destructive woman with her bizarre puppet side-kick, Count Bruga. Miller biographers believe she died in an insane asylum in New York in 1930. For what little information exists see: Orend, K. (2007) 'Dear Ghost- A Few Fragments of Henry Miller's Nemesis, Jean Kronski'. *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*. Volume 4, pp.197-217.

¹¹ Conrad Moricand (1887-1954) was a Swiss astrologer who immersed himself in astrology and all forms of mysticism culminating in the publication of Moricand, C. (1923) *Les Interprètes: Essai De Classement Psychologique D'après Les Concordances Planétaires*. Nabu Press, Paris. Moricand is depicted as a self-obsessed monster by Miller in *A Devil in Paradise* however the validity of this portrait has been questioned by some critics. Moricand came from a wealthy family but died penniless in a home for the destitute paid for by *Le Fondation Suisse* in Paris, ironically a foundation founded by his own family amongst others.

Villa Seurat member David Edgar, Miller was introduced to the writings of the Jewish mystic Erich Gutkind,¹² finding his *The Absolute Collective: A Philosophical Attempt to overcome our Broken State* (1937) very stimulating. As the royalties from *Tropic of Cancer* began to make Miller's everyday life more secure he seemed to retreat more from the world. As I show in chapter 4, Miller's absorption in getting *Tropic of Cancer* published and then the responsibility he took upon himself to get it read and reviewed by fellow writers and critics, left him feeling like an outsider from the literary elite. I would argue that this final humiliation, as Miller perceived it, led to an even deeper immersion in Eastern philosophy. In his letters to Emil Schnellock from this period he writes of his immersion in Lao-Tzu and Chuang Tzu's *The Musings of a Chinese Mystic*. To Lawrence Durrell he wrote:

Above all, the determination to be absolutely responsible myself for everything. I have no fight any longer with the world. I accept the world, in the ultimate sense. Yes, I fight and I bellyache now, but it's rather old habit-patterns than anything real in me... And that is how I interpret your Chinese allusions. Am I right? One enters a new dimension, certainly non-English, non-American, non-European. That world belongs to the past, to infancy- it gets sloughed off, like a snake's skin. So how to talk to Eliot, Mairret, Orwell, Connolly- all these bloody, bleeding blokes with their navel- strings uncut. (MacNiven, 1988, p.49)

By 1938 Nin observed that Miller was entering into a 'mystic stage' he began to spend more time meditating, painting watercolours, listening to music and generally 'turning inwards' (Calonne, 2014, p.67). He started to limit his social life and instead chose to communicate through sending a list of books he thought important to close friends. Included in these twelve titles were works by Blavatsky, Howe, Sukuki and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. As the world became more urgent and intrusive - after all this was Paris

¹² Erich Gutkind (1877-1965) was a German Jewish philosopher whose work drew upon his interpretations of the Kabbala. He moved to America in 1933 and taught at the New School and the College of the City of New York. He published three books which can best be described a mixture of pacifism and mysticism: *The Absolute Collective: A Philosophical Attempt to overcome our Broken State*. (1937) Translated from the original German by Gabain, M. C.W. Daniel Co, London. *Choose Life: The Biblical Call to Revolt*. (1952) Reprint: Scholar's Choice, Rochester, N.Y. 2015. *The Body of God: First Steps Toward an Anti-Theology. The Collected Papers of Eric Gutkind*. (1969.) (ed.) Lucie B. Gutkind/ Henry LeRoy Finch, Horizon Press: New York. *The Body of God* is the translated English version of Gutkind's first publication *Siderische Geburt: Seraphische Wanderung vom Tode der Welt zur Taufe der Tat* (1910). To further understand Gutkind's work and his influence see: Rutherford. H.C. (1975) *Erich Gutkind as Prophet of the New Age*. Bradford, New Atlantis Foundation.

1938 - Miller retreated further into himself and further into Zen Buddhism. The publication of *Tropic of Capricorn* in May 1939 marked the end of Miller's Parisian sojourn. Miller had changed and evolved exponentially during the decade; he was on a spiritual journey that would last and shape the rest of his life. Miller's forced return to America did not start propitiously; he was penniless and homeless yet again. Much like his first years in Paris, he relied upon the kindness of friends to survive. He wrote two short stories 'Quiet Days in Clichy' and 'Mara-Marignan' which would combine to become *Quiet Days in Clichy* (1956) perhaps his most romantic and humorous representation of Paris before embarking on a cross country trip, the material from which would come *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*. His decade abroad had done nothing to temper Miller's disgust at America. The materialist, nationalistic, soul-destroying culture of American left Miller depressed and isolated. His time in Detroit brought to life Celine's *Voyage to the End of the Night* (1932) but also Spenglerian visions of an industrialised hell on earth, 'The Duraluminium City! A nightmare in stone & dust. Terrifyingly new, bright, hard- hard as tungsten. Glitter of cruelty. Tough to be a beggar here in winter. The city of the future! But what a future! ... Bomb Detroit out of existence! (Miller, 1989, p.264) The death of Miller's father required his return to New York and the opportunity to met Swami Nikhilananda, who gave him Rolland's biographies of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Miller was also reading the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study of the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1901) and Manly P. Hall's *The Phoenix: An Illustrated Review of Occultism and Philosophy* (1932), the effect of his reading is clear to see:

Ramakrishna appeals to me tremendously- because he was the incarnation of joyousness, of wisdom, of tolerance, and above all because he found God everywhere, because he raised man beyond belief and devotion to a realization of his own divinity, his own creativeness... I do believe Ramakrishna went further than Christ- in his conception of man's relation to man and to God. Ramakrishna corresponds to my own secret ideal of what man should be on earth. (MacNiven, 1988, p.146)

Miller went to live in California in 1942, finally settling in Big Sur in 1944. He relied upon friends and admirers for everything; from a place to stay, clothes, to paper and pen. His books were banned in America and it was impossible to get hold of royalties from France due to the war. His relationship with Nin was slowly and painfully coming to a close and he had no security to speak of. Yet a description of Miller by Gilbert Neiman shows a man at peace not only with both his past and present, but also with whatever his future holds:

Here is a person who grasped, who kept the infant in himself alive, and refused to strangle it. Like holding a red hot iron, he was seared time and again, until he plunged the iron straight into the pool of the sky. When he lost his suffering he lost his callouses, so now he can touch fire with hands as soft as a baby's. That is one way of losing suffering, yet only a handful of men throughout printed history have been able to do it. (Standish, 1994, p.101)

Miller had finally found the community he had been seeking for years. Big Sur and the immediate area around it was a haven of spirituality and alternative living. Those around him practiced a variety of religions and lifestyles, providing Miller with a community outside the America he had come to loath. He lived beside the Christian Scientist Jean Wharton, the Jungian ethnologist Maud Oakes and Jamie de Angelo, the Native American scholar. Krishnamurti had his commune at Ojai and the Vendanta Society was based in Los Angeles when Miller felt troubled he visited Swami Prabhavananda and felt re-invigorated. Life in Big Sur was basic and hard, but Miller seemed to thrive in the simplicity that life without modern conveniences brought. He lived in a shack without electricity or water, bartered for food and walked around in his underwear. He was dead broke and had to send out begging letters for clothes, books and writing materials, but he was happy. In returning to the earlier representation by Annette Baxter of Miller's years at Big Sur as isolated both geographically and personally, I would suggest rather that Miller's so-called isolation does not inhibit his constant desire to make connections both socially and intellectually. One need only consider Miller's enormous correspondence archive to see just how connected Miller remained. Miller's alienation from America is what pushes him not only to leave, but upon his return to remain as connected to the outside world as he chooses. I think it is misleading to represent Miller's years at Big Sur as a period of insularity. Miller's outlook becomes more focused after 1940, not because of a sense of alienation, but due to Zen Buddhism. As disgusted as Miller remains with American life, he is no longer so angry in the style recognizable from *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*. It is replaced by a more measured and deliberate approach, that seeks to understand and adapt through Zen Buddhist teachings. Miller's so-called isolation is more a reaction to his practice of awareness and non-involvement, both of which I will explore in chapter 4.

Miller would live in various abodes in Big Sur until he moved to Pacific Palisades in 1963. The years in Big Sur saw two more unsuccessful marriages, the birth of two more children, endless financial difficulties and the completion of *The Rosy Crucifixion* along with many other publications. Miller in time became a celebrity and an attraction for many visitors to

Big Sur. Over time it took its toll and he put this copy of Meng-Tse's plea displayed on his front door:

When a man has reached old age and has fulfilled his mission, he has a right to confront the idea of death in peace. He has no need of other men; he knows them already and has seen enough of them. What he needs is peace. It is not seemly to seek out such a man, plague him with chatter, and make him suffer banalities. One should pass the door of his house as if no one lived there. (Calonne, 2014, p.155)

The outside world's view of life in Big Sur was somewhat at odds with the reality. In her notorious article 'The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy' published in Harper's in 1946, Mildred Edie Brady portrayed life in Big Sur as some kind of sex, Anarchist cult who worshipped the orgasm above all else:

"The great oneness," however, is an intimate participant in the sexual emotions of his worshippers. In fact, he reveals himself fully only in the self-effacing ecstasy of the sexual climax. This, they hold, is the moment of deepest spiritual comprehension of "the outer reality," the one moment when there is living communication between "the vital life source" and the individual... And is quite a different flavour from the revolt of the twenties – this lofty inner objective which turns every sexual encounter into a religious rite and give us, in this day of scientific agriculture and contraceptives, a modern version of ancient fertility cults. It is not on behalf of the oranges and avocados, however, that "the source of all creation" is offered such intense pantomimes of worship. (Grana, 1990, p.293)

The above passage gives an idea of just how bizarre Brady's article is. She uses all the right names (Freud, Bergson, and Blavatsky) to make readers think that she may have insight into what she calls the 'New Bohemianism', but it is most rambling and incoherent and its odd linking of sex and vegetables speaks for itself. By 1958 Big Sur had changed considerably according to Miller's neighbour Nancy Hopkins:

Big Sur is beginning to get rather respectable, for as it has gotten more 'chic' the prices have risen accordingly and fewer and fewer of the Bohemian element can afford to buy or rent homes here... And Henry Miller has two cars (one a Cadillac) and plays ping-pong and has become positively bourgeois – his son reads nothing but

comic books and his daughter pin-curls her hair at a pink-satin-and tulle vanity table. Quel malheur! Whither the Left Bank? (Calonne, 2105, p.121)

The reality of life in Big Sur may rest somewhere in between. Prices did go up as it became a more desirable place to live, both due to the interesting inhabitants and its beautiful location. Brady's article brought its own consequences as Miller humorously portrayed in *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* (1957):

And there stands Ralph. Though it's midsummer he's wearing a heavy overcoat and fur-lined gloves... "Are you Henry Miller?" he says. I nodded, though my impulse was to say no. "I came to see you because I want to have a talk with you." ...He continued by informing me that he too was a writer, that he had run away from it all (meaning job and home) to live his own life. "I came to join the cult of sex and anarchy," he said, quietly and evenly, as if he were talking about toast and coffee. I told him there was no such colony. "But I read about it in the papers," he insisted. (Miller, 1957, p.45)

Whatever the community at Big Sur may or may not have been and what it may have turned into, it provided Miller with the sense of community he had been searching for all his life. He was living in America, but removed enough not to feel his personal freedom restricted. He had the quiet in which to work without the sense of being alone and isolated from the wider world. It was the right place and the right time.

Miller's quest for a spiritual understanding of his life remained with him until the end. One of his final publications is a pamphlet called *Mother, China, and the World Beyond* (1977) a meditation of death, reincarnation, acceptance and forgiveness. In the pamphlet Miller relates a dream in which he has died and is met by his mother in the period before his reincarnation. His mother asks for forgiveness for her ill treatment of Miller as a child and Miller is relieved to discover he has already forgiven her. She is proud of Miller's achievements and offers him compassion and love. Miller is released from the origins of his suffering and is able to embrace his next incarnation.

In keeping with a Zen Buddhist motif, in reaching the end we find that we are at the beginning. For Miller to reach this elevated point of acceptance and forgiveness took a lifetime of study, experience, false starts and above all, openness. In chapter 1 I will

examine the influence of Otto Rank's theories upon Miller and the integral part they played in forming him as a writer.

Chapter 1 - I am an Artist: Henry Miller and Otto Rank

Otto Rank entered Henry Miller's life both physically and intellectually during a period in which Miller had experienced immense upheaval, geographically and emotionally, and was beginning to lay the foundations of not only his creativity, but also his life philosophy. Miller's gamble in leaving behind his established life in New York, and most importantly his wife June, all in a vague attempt to discover personal freedom and with it his authentic creativity, had created in Miller a thirst for investigation. Having painfully broken the prevailing social contract, Miller opened himself up to an eclectic range of influences; he was actively searching for new ways to comprehend society and his place in it. Miller flirted heavily with both Stirner and Nietzsche during this period, yet it is Rank that was to prove to be the life-long influence on Miller. Rank is barely remembered today; in fact when he is remembered it is usually in relation to Miller and Miller's mentions of his works in *The Books in My Life* (1952). The fact that his work in no way compares to the impact of intellectual heavy weights of Stirner and Nietzsche, has led to him being sidelined by Miller critics. Whether Rank is a second rate mind is debatable however his lasting effect on Miller is not. What made Rank so attractive to Miller was that he was directly answering questions that Miller had in relation to himself. Other thinkers may have offered a grander, more nuanced overview of history, society or literature, but that was not what Miller was looking for. Miller's intellectual needs were deeply individual; he wanted to understand the nature of his past suffering and how it had moulded his creativity he wanted to grasp what being an artist meant individually and its place within society. These questions were loosely framed in Miller's mind what Rank provided was a framework that reinforced the validity of the questions in the first place, but also supplied the means by which to construct the answers. Miller approaches Rank with a fluid hypothesis in mind. That he simplifies Rank at times to fit his own agenda is clear Miller was not a qualified psychoanalyst nor was he attempting to be. I will explore the influence of Rank mainly through *Tropic of Cancer* as this was being written during Miller's initial contact with Rank both intellectually and personally; however I will go on to show the lasting influence of certain concepts not only on Miller's later work, but also as a central component of Miller's conception of what makes an artist.

Miller was living at the Villa Seurat during this period and it is important to understand the effect that this had upon Miller's intellectual development and how he came to be so influenced by Rank. *Tropic of Cancer* begins with Miller living at the 'Villa Borghese', the

fictional version of the Villa Seurat in the fourteenth arrondissement.¹ The atmosphere that Miller found himself in at the Villa Seurat attracted many writers and artists including Anaïs Nin, Lawrence Durrell, Betty Ryan, Hans Reichel, Brassai, Alfred Perles and Michael Fraenkel. Creativity was the one thing all these different people had in common, and more precisely the nature of creativity. Those who gathered at the Villa Seurat were fascinated by what creativity was and where it might come from. This striving for knowledge led many of them to consult with psychiatrists in an attempt to comprehend their own lives as artists.² It was during this time that Miller met Michael Fraenkel, portrayed as Boris in the novel. Fraenkel was to become Miller's intellectual foil, pushing him harder than he had been pushed before to turn his rambling thoughts into a workable philosophy. Miller would ridicule Fraenkel later in life³, especially for his contention that *Tropic of Cancer* could never have been written without him, but the intellectual rigor that Fraenkel brought to Miller's life during this period is obvious, especially if one reads their correspondence, published as, *Hamlet: The Henry Miller-Michael Fraenkel Correspondence* (1988).⁴ He helped open Miller's mind to philosophy and psychoanalysis. Nin was especially involved with psychiatry and consulted many of the leading analysts of the day. As was Nin's pattern, each new analyst was flavour of the month only to be replaced by someone new who offered a perspective more in keeping with her own ideas.⁵ Through Nin, Miller met Otto Rank, a former student of Freud's, whose own work focused on the nature of the artist as an individual in relation to society. Rank's theories regarding

¹ Not much has been written on the inhabitants of the Villa Seurat, situated at 18 Villa Seurat, 75014. The apartment block still exists today, with no formal recognition to its former inhabitants, perhaps due to the peripheral nature of their existence in Paris. For the best representation of the intellectual atmosphere and lifestyle of the Villa Seurat see Chapter 4 of Bloshteyn, M.R. (2007) *The Making of a Countercultural Icon: Henry Miller's Dostoevsky*. University of Toronto, Toronto.

² This was far from the only group that saw psychoanalysis as a means by which to understand their creativity. For a more rounded view of the influence of psychoanalysis within artistic circles see Micale, M. S. (ed.) (2003) *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology and the Creative Arts in Europe and America 1880-1940* Stanford University Press, Redwood City.

³ Michael Fraenkel (1896–1957) was born in Lithuania but immigrated with his parents to New York City in 1903. He made a fortune buying and selling encyclopedias and remaindered books and was able to retire to Paris in 1926 to set up The Carrefour Press. It mainly published his own work and that of his friends. His most famous works both concern Miller directly: Miller, H. and Fraenkel, M. *Hamlet: Volumes 1 & 2*. Carrefour Press, 1939 & 1941) and his article on Miller: Porter, B. (1947) The Genesis of *Tropic of Cancer* featured in *The Happy Rock*. Packard Press, Berkeley.

⁴ The two volumes of *Hamlet* started out as a lengthy epistolary exercise regarding the significance of death in relation to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by Fraenkel, Miller and Alfred Perles. Perles quickly dropped out but Miller and Fraenkel continued with the project from 1935-1938 resulting in the two volumes that were published respectively in 1939 & 1941 by Fraenkel's Carrefour Press.

⁵ Nin's relationship to psychoanalysis and the psychoanalysts she frequented was to say the least unorthodox. In her biography of Nin, Deidre Bair shows that Nin entered into sexual relationships with a number of her psychoanalysts during treatment, including Rene Allendy and Otto Rank. She also briefly practiced as a psychoanalyst in New York despite no professional training or qualifications: see Bair, D. (1996) *Anaïs Nin: A Biography*. Penguin Books, London. Miller likewise briefly practiced as an amateur analyst in 1935 during a visit to New York, taking on patients for the overworked Nin, before concluding that it was not the job for him.

the liberation of the artist and the necessity of the re-evaluation of the artist's past would deeply influence Miller throughout his life.

The interaction between members of the group in relation to psychoanalysis could often be mockingly humorous in tone, especially between Miller and Durrell, nothing should distract from the fact that psychoanalytical concepts and systems were of central importance for Henry Miller and the group that surrounded him at this time. The Villa Seurat and those who inhabited and frequented it provided Miller with the overheated intellectual atmosphere in which his mind was constantly challenged and introduced to new ideas. Although, later in life, Miller would come to scoff at many of his friends from the Villa Seurat days, this period was to provide Miller with perhaps the most rigorous and intellectually fruitful time of his life. The Villa Seurat group were not alone in this interest in psychoanalysis, yet in some ways they were out of step with the contemporary currents in literature the move to a more political and social stance by many writers, artists and critics. The Villa Seurat group approach to psychoanalysis was based upon some rather adhoc generalisations regarding Freudianism. Freud was seen as too scientific and empirical and any work showing any Freudian influence was routinely ridiculed and discarded. For example, René Allendy, one of the most prominent Freudians in France and founder of the *Société Psychoanalytique de Paris*, became an early target for the group's disdain and derision. Allendy had treated both Anaïs Nin and Antoine Artaud earlier in the 1930s, only to be mentioned as 'unimaginative', 'dogmatic' and his approach 'over-simplistic' (Nin, 1966, p.291) in Nin's diary of the period. Nin's disloyalty was especially vicious considering that Allendy had been her lover as well as her analyst for a number of years. Other psychoanalysts and writers whose interests intersected with the groups were treated with reverence. When their work focused on art, spirituality, literature, sex and religion, the likes of C.G. Jung, E. Graham Howe, Havelock Ellis and D.H. Lawrence could do no wrong, with Howe, Ellis and Lawrence forming a lasting lifelong influence on Miller. The true influence of the Villa Seurat group's interest in psychoanalysis can be seen in what they published in *The Booster* magazine⁶, which illustrates the extent that

⁶ The Booster was the magazine of the American Country Club of France. Alfred Perlés took over the editorship in summer of 1937 with the intent of turning it into an avant-garde literary magazine that would publish the work of those living at Villa Seurat and their associates. Under the threat of legal action from the ACCF the name was changed to Delta. The Booster published 4 editions and Delta only 3. Perlés is almost entirely remembered due to his association with Miller. He was born in Vienna in 1897 to Czech Jewish parents. He led a peripatetic life until settling in Paris in the early 1930's. He was regularly referred to as Joey or Carl by Miller and is the main character, alongside Miller in *Quiet Days in Clichy*. He was often portrayed as an inveterate, if less than successful, womaniser. Anaïs Nin found his attention so overbearing that she insisted Miller leave their shared apartment in Clichy for the Villa Seurat. He was a writer in his own right, publishing several novels. Key works include: *Sentiments Limitrophes* (1936) *The Renegade* (1943) and *Alien Corn* (1944) He was little read during his lifetime, but continued to publish throughout his life,

psychoanalytical terminology permeates their work, their openness to new forms of creativity and the use of their own lives as artists. The influence is easy to see when we consider the editorial for the third edition of *The Booster*, in which the ease with which complex psychological concepts are utilised in a poem and are expected to be clearly understood. This speaks to the saturation of psychoanalysis into the everyday life of the Villa Seurat. In *Ballad of Kretschmer's Types*, finally published in full in 1960, Durrell could write of 'Kretschmerian typological dualism of the schizothyme-cyclothyme and schiziod-cycloid personality structures', (Durrell, 1962, p.204) and fully expect the complex psychological jargon and theory to be understandable to those reading it.⁷ It is difficult to assess the influence of *The Booster* within the literary community or for that matter whether it was ever supposed to be influential. In *The Little Magazine* (1947) Frederick Hoffman places *The Booster* under the heading 'The Psychoanalytical Theme' and in this he is surely correct: Hoffman's premise, however, is that the little magazines of this period were by definition avant-garde and as such sought no influence outside of a small, insular intelligentsia. This idea of a minority writing in direct opposition to the mainstream has been challenged by Mark Morrisson in *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences and Reception, 1905-1920* (2000), and *The Booster*, although strictly speaking out with Morrisson's time scale, is a significant example of a magazine that sought to connect with a wider audience in a recognisable way. The layout and use of advertising in *The Booster* was much in keeping with that which had been employed when it genuinely represented the ACCF.⁸

although a re-issue of Perles, A. *Sentiments Limitrophes*. (1984) Union Generale d'Editions, Paris, shows that an interest in his work exists. He is best known for his reminiscences relating to his friendship with Miller: Perles, A. (1956) *My Friend Henry Miller: An Intimate Biography*. John Day Company, New York. He moved to England when the Second World War broke out and gained British citizenship shortly afterwards. He changed his name to Alf Barret, lived the rest of his life in Wells, Somerset and died in 1990.

⁷ Refers to the work of the German psychologist Ernst Kretschmer (1888-1964). He related body type to psychological state. His classification system was based on three main body types: leptosomic (small, thin and weak/introvert and timid), athletic (muscular and large-boned) and pyknic (stocky and fat/friendly and dependant). He directly related these physiques to personality traits: Schizothymic, which contain a 'Psychaesthetic proportion' between sensitive and cold poles and Cyclothymic which contain a 'Diathetic proportion' between happy and sad. The Schizoids consist of the Hyperesthetic (sensitive) and Anesthetic (cold) characters and the Cycloids consist of the depressive (or as Kretschmer terms them the 'melancholic') and Hypomanic characters, see: Kretschmer, E. (1931) *Physique and Character*. Routledge, London. Rather unfortunately he is more remembered today as a proponent of the Nazi Eugenics policy, resigning from the AAGP (The General Medical Society for Psychotherapy) in 1933 and joining the SS, see: Singer, L. (1988) 'Ideology and Ethics: The Perversion of German Psychiatrists. Ethics by the Ideology of National Socialism'. *European Psychiatry*, 13, pp.87-92.

⁸ Morrisson's work relies heavily on Habermas and the concept of a 'counterpublic sphere'. He argues that rather than existing outside public discourse, the little magazines in fact sought to incorporate advertising, publicity and photography and were well aware of the concept of product in consumer society. Morrisson uses *The Masses* as an example of a magazine that used advertising and graphic art modeled on the most popular mass circulation magazines of the day. It would appear that conventional formatting had a palliative effect on a sometimes unsuspecting readership.

The Villa Seurat group fascination with the world of psychoanalysis is easy to appreciate. As intense and all absorbing as their collective study and analysis of the giants of psychoanalysis was (and one need only observe the convoluted footnoting done by Miller and Nin on their personal copies of texts to see how passionately they sought to fully comprehend these densely academic texts), however, the study lacks focus and structure. What does become clear is that there is an underlying desire to find an alternative model for understanding human existence. In a group that had rejected both religion and politics, there was a void that needed to be filled by a new system or structure. Structure was likewise missing from the group as a whole. Made up of different nationalities, age groups and genders, and working in different mediums, the only thing that united the group was an address and the yearning for new perspectives on creativity and life. The group's enthrallment with psychoanalysis was a function of their own lack of an integrating perspective. Psychoanalysis may have been the glue that held them together intellectually, but that does not mean that they were unthinking acolytes. The following quote from Anaïs Nin shows the calming assurances of the latest psychoanalyst, yet this was tempered by an underlying mistrust of the very practice itself: 'In the climate of his certainties, his leadership, there is the rest from doubt, (Nin, 1975, p.344). Nin writes with an almost religious sanguinity, yet could just as easily note that psychoanalysis 'has become in reality the worst enemy of the soul' (Nin, 1992, p.363). Comments exposing the fear that psychoanalysis was merely another orthodoxy to be obeyed were as regular as admiring acknowledgements, although it should be noted that these lines from Nin's diaries are in fact quoted from Rank who intended them to be seen in relation to Freudianism, but that Nin applied here to all psychoanalysis.⁹ We can see the growing mistrust of psychoanalysis as a means to explain everything when Miller wrote derisively to Anaïs Nin: 'But psychoanalysis is going to explain it. Yeah!!! Psychoanalysis will explain everything in time, the new state religion, *Sic hoc semper aeternitus*- or some such crap' (Miller, 1976, p.135). This constant shifting between acceptance and rejection of psychoanalysis as a means to understand and interpret their lives caused the kind of friction that was not unique to the group. The Villa Seurat group fluctuated between what some analysts have termed the modern artist's growing tendency toward the cognitive sciences as a way of inuring himself against disintegrating world of his imagination, and the attendant move away, the

⁹ Rank was evidently much in favour with Nin during this period, as her diaries are full of direct quotes from his work and he is written of as the lone psychoanalyst who comprehends the true nature of artistic creation. In time Rank would be discarded by Nin and is represented in her diaries as a man who was incapable of living life instinctively and could only analysis and dissects experience, rather than live it.

need to create artistically, that is, to safeguard his own identity as artist against the lures of logical explanations and scientific gravity.

This interpretation of the modern artist's curiosity about psychoanalysis leads directly on to Otto Rank and his work regarding the artist in contemporary society. When Rank wrote that 'diversion of the artistic creation from a formative into a cognitive process seems to me to be another of the artist's protections against his complete exhaustion in the creative process' (Rank, 1932, p.205), he could have been writing specifically for the Villa Seurat group and, especially, for Miller. Of the numerous influences on the Villa Seurat group from psychoanalysis, Rank was possibly the most significant. His work seemed to coincide with many of the topics the group were most interested in, with his work having a special resonance for Miller. The author of *Art and Artist* (1932), a book that at one time inspired the interest of many in the group, would come to be acknowledged by Miller later in his life as one of his greatest influences, as is evident in his reflection that 'Never shall I forget the impact which Otto Rank's *Art and Artist* made upon me' (Miller, 1967, p.84). It is with Rank and the influence of some of his ideas upon Miller that the rest of this chapter will be concerned.

Miller, it seems, first came upon Rank's *Art and Artist* in the year of its publication. From the winter of 1932 on, *Art and Artist* was a favourite subject in Miller's long discussions with Nin. In March 1933 Miller met Rank, a meeting that he reported in great detail in a fourteen-page letter to Nin 'there was in that quick, brilliant challenge of minds a tremendous and fathomless exultation' (Miller, 1988, p.108). Nin was already well under the sway of Rank's work having read *The Double* (1925), with its influential combination of the 'double' motif, narcissism and incest that arguably may have furnished Nin with a more solid foundation for her ground-breaking autobiographical novel *House of Incest* (1936), already in the early stages of revision, reinforcing 'an authoritative confirmation of the direction in which her own poetic instincts were leading her' (Jason, 1974, p.74). One can also assume that she was aware of Rank's *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* (1912), considering how thematically of interest this was to her life and work. Thus it is clear that both Miller and Nin were not only in direct correspondence with Rank, but also studying his theories as they both worked on their own seminal works, *Tropic of Cancer* and *House of Incest*. Before analysing the influence of Rank's concepts on Miller any further, it is important to get a sense of Rank's own work and background, and how this in turn influenced his ideas.

Rank was born in Vienna in 1884 as Otto Rosenfeld. In 1905 he joined the circle of Freud,

who was quick to recognise Rank's abilities. On the occasion of one of his first visits to the famous Wednesday night meetings at Freud's house he read a paper entitled *Kunst und Künstler (Art and Artist)*, which was published in 1907 as *Der Künstler (The Artist)*. He studied at the University of Vienna and gained his PhD in 1911 with his thesis examining The Lohengrin Saga being the first thesis to use Freudian analysis. He became Freud's personal secretary in 1907 and was responsible for taking the minutes of the sessions of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society; he was also the general secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association. Rank was a true adherent; he proofread and published Freud's work, took care of his financial matters and had the right to negotiate upon Freud's behalf. By the 1920's Rank seems to have begun resenting Freud's importance in his life and sought to further his own work and career. He showed Freud the manuscript for *Das Trauma der Geburt (Trauma of Birth)*, a work (published in 1924) that reasoned that the experience of birth was 'the ultimate biological base of the psychological' (Rank, 1924, p.13). All later fears and neuroses, in fact, all subsequent behaviour resulted from the bid to master the traumatic shift from a condition of uninterrupted pleasure into one of total deprivation. It was not long before Freud felt that this theory was a direct threat to his own teachings and began to distance himself from Rank. By 1926 the relationship had become untenable for both men and Rank felt the need to both practically and geographically remove himself from Freud's life and influence. With Rank's move to Paris, he set in place the estrangement from Freud that would cast a pall over the rest of his life, leaving Rank with feelings of guilt and regret for having left Freud behind. This struggle to free himself from Freud seems to have given Rank the experience that led him to consider more closely the relationship between the artist and the freedom to create. As his biographer and student Jessie Taft¹⁰ pointed out, the personal devastation that Rank lived with in relation to freeing himself from Freud fuelled his interest in how the artist must liberate himself from mentors and re-establish his own creative spirit. Rank's vision of the this struggle for self-liberation as explored in *Art and Artist* can be seen as a key theme in Miller's work:

...the overcoming of previous supporting egos and ideologies from which the individual has to free himself according to the measure and speed of his own growth,

¹⁰ Jessie Taft (1882-1960) completed her thesis on 'The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness' in 1913 at the University of Chicago: see Seigfried, C.H. (1993) Introduction to Jessie Taft, "The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness". *Hypatia*, 8, Spring, pp.215-218. Denied an academic position due to her gender she became an early American expert on child placement and adoption. She met Rank in 1924 and translated *Will Therapy* from German to English in 1936. The influence of Rank is clear in her major work Taft, Jessie. (1933) *The Dynamics of Therapy in a Controlled Relationship*. Macmillan Company, New York. Upon Rank's death in 1939, Taft was given all his academic and personal papers and became the main American exponent of his work. In 1958 she published *Otto Rank, A Biographical Study Based on Notebooks, Letters, Collected Writings, Therapeutic Achievements and Personal Associations*. The Julian Press. New York.

a separation which is so hard, not only because it involves persons and ideas that one reveres, but because the victory is always at bottom and in some part, won over a part of one's own ego. We may remark here that every production of a significant artist, in whatever form, and of whatever content, always reflects more or less clearly this process of self-liberation. (Rank, 1932, p.375)

Miller would have been able to sympathise with Rank's feelings of trauma and guilt. Miller felt immense guilt for abandoning his father in New York to ill health, financial ruin and a domineering wife, and came to see his own suffering in New York and in his early years in Paris as the price which had to be paid for his artistic freedom and liberty from social constructs and everyday life:

Everything that belongs to the past seems to have fallen into the sea; I have memories, but the images have lost their vividness, they seem dead and desultory, like time bitten mummies stuck in a quagmire. If I try to recall life in New York I get a few splintered fragments, nightmarish and covered in verdigris. It seems as if my own proper existence had come to an end somewhere, just exactly where I can't make out. I'm not an American anymore, nor a New Yorker, and even less a European, or a Parisian. I haven't any allegiances, any responsibilities, any hatreds, any worries, any prejudices, any passion. I'm neither for nor against. I'm a neutral. (Miller, 1934, p.157)

The reason for Miller and Nin's veneration of Rank during this period is twofold: firstly, his subject matter, the role of the artist and creativity was of intimate interest to both; secondly, the role that Rank saw for the patient in psychoanalysis. Freudianism conformed to the idea that there had to be a breakthrough that would occur through the repeated attempt to find an objective truth from the patient's past. Rank's method was far more dynamic and, crucially, centred on the patient's ability to accept the past quickly and move forward, rather than endless analysis of the past in a fruitless and ultimately obsolete way, which he saw as leading only to a sense of powerlessness for the patient. It is easy to understand why this more pro-active role for the patient appealed to Miller. The Freudian concept that the artistic urge came from an uncontrolled sense of frustrated sexuality was something that Rank had subscribed to in his early career, but by the time he wrote *Art and Artist* his view had changed. Although he never completely discounted the influence of frustrated sexuality in creativity, he saw the role of individual will as the primary factor. Rank called it 'the psychological factor par excellence' (Rank, 1932, p.39).¹¹ Rank made

¹¹ The relationship between Freud and Rank, both professionally and personally, was fraught with hurt

clear the importance of individual will in *Art and Artist* and in *Will Therapy* (1936), and both works aim to show that there existed in his mind a explicit connection between creativity, the will and psychoanalysis. Rank believed that, ‘Art presupposes a voluntaristic psychology’ and the treatment of neurosis additionally presupposed a ‘voluntaristic psychology’ (Rank, 1932, p.375). Within this theory, the life impulse was dominated and channelled by individual will. Again Rank did not wholly disregard the Freudian notion of sublimation; he just didn’t agree about its precise nature. Instead, he argued that the creation of art was a conscious act of individual will, rather than an unconscious response to a perceived outside danger or societal taboo, and believed that the repression of the sexual impulses had little to do with creativity. Rank wrote of the ‘masterful use of the sexual impulse in the service of individual will’ (Rank, 1932, p.40), stating that it was the will that could show the way to the sexual impulse and employ it creatively. Rank’s concept of will was a constructive and optimistic hypothesis as opposed to the more negative Freudian one of repression and inhibition. The differences between the two men and their theories is apparent in Rank’s distinction: ‘To put it more precisely I see the creator-impulse as the life impulse made to serve individual will’ (Rank, 1932, p.39).

The influence of Rank over Miller is varied and complex. Miller uses Rank’s theories only partially and only in so far as they are useful to him. It should also be noted that Rank’s books are rather dense and were not written with the layman in mind. Miller’s comprehension may at times not have been exact, plus I would argue that Miller approached Rank with a hypothesis already in mind. Miller was enjoying one of the first stable and intellectually fruitful times in his life, in which he didn’t have to worry about money, was finally writing full time and had a supportive lover and champion in Nin. Miller believed he had to confront his past to be able to write honestly and in his own style the fact that Rank was essentially arguing that this must be part of the artistic process must have appealed to Miller.

Although *Tropic of Cancer* is not simply the story of Miller’s marriage to his second wife June Mansfield, in a few key passages we come to see Miller attempting to understand his relationship with Mansfield, a point that is especially interesting given that the relationship was coming to an end during the writing of the novel. Miller would return repeatedly in future novels to his relationship with Mansfield, re-working and re-editing it in one form or another through another four novels. What is of interest in *Tropic of Cancer* is that we see

feelings, misunderstandings and eventual mutual dislike. The disintegration of their relationship is recorded in their letters to each other see: Lieberman J. E. (2011) *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside Psychoanalysis*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Miller at the beginning of the process, using Rank's ideas of not only sexual impulse and individual will, but also the role of re-invention within the artistic process. In the following passage we get an idea of the complex nature of Miller and Mansfield's relationship, but also an example of Rank's fear of the biological imperative upon the artist:

It seems to me I understand a little better now why she took such huge delight in reading Strindberg. I can see her looking up from her book after reading a *delicious* passage, and, with tears of laughter in her eyes, saying to me: "You're just as mad as he was... you *want* to be punished!" What a delight that must be to the sadist when she discovers her own proper masochist! When she bites herself, as it were, to test the sharpness of her teeth... We came together in a dance of death and so quickly was I sucked down into the vortex that when I came to the surface again I could not recognize the world. When I found myself loose the music had ceased; the carnival was over and I had been picked clean.... (Miller, 1934, p.185)

Miller must free himself from his biological impulses and turn his experience into art. He must reject the sinister complexity of his relationship with Mansfield, in order to regain individual will and the ability to work again. It is the perfect example of Rank's theory of sexual impulse submitting to individual will and in turn becoming material from which to create. Mansfield's sexuality is a rite of passage through which Miller must pass, acquiring the experience through the recovery of his own individual will to create a work of art 'It is not difficult to be alone if you are poor and a failure. An artist is always alone-if he *is* an artist. No, what the artist needs is *loneliness*. The artist, I call myself. So be it.' (Miller, 1934, p.72) That Mansfield played the muse for Miller is clear. She continues to be the spark that initiates the narrator's creativity as Mona/Mara in *The Rosy Crucifixion*, entering his life when he needs her most:

Embracing her, trembling with the warmth of her passion, my mind jumped clear of the embrace, electrified by the tiny seed she had planted in me. Something that had been chained down, something that had struggled abortively to assert itself ever since I was a child and had brought my ego into the street to glance around, now broke loose and went sky-rocketing into the blue. Some phenomenal new being was sprouting with alarming rapidity from the top of my head, from the double crown which was mine from birth. (Miller, 1949, p.15)

Rank anticipates the role that Mansfield will play for Miller and that which Mara plays for the narrator:

Thus, as the artist-type becomes more and more individualized, he appears on the one hand to need a more individual ideology – the genius concept – for his art, while on the other his work is more subjective and more personal, until finally he requires for the justification of his production an individual “public” also: a single person for whom ostensibly he creates. This goes so far in a certain type of artist, which we call the Romantic, that actual production is only possible with the aid of a concrete Muse through whom or for whom the work is produced. (Rank, 1932, p.51)

That Miller and Mansfield’s initial relationship followed this pattern is well documented. Mansfield believed Miller to be a genius and actively encouraged him to stop working at Western Union to start writing full-time. Mansfield’s belief in Miller was such that she was willing to undertake any kind of work to keep them financially afloat whilst Miller wrote. In *Sexus* Miller’s friends clearly see how crucial Mara is to the narrator’s well-being: ““And you met her in a dance hall? Well I must congratulate you for having the sense to recognise the genuine article. That girl can make something of you, if you’ll let her. It’s not too late, I mean. You’re pretty far gone, you know. Another year of that wife of yours and you’re finished.” He spat on the floor in disgust”. (Miller, 1949, p.69) Mara is not only the Muse to the narrator she truly is his saviour. She removes him from the shackles of his former life, re-invigorates and encourages his creativity. She brings him back to life. According to Rank, a female Muse will always have limitations ‘If the poet values his Muse the more highly in proportion as it can be identified with his artistic personality and its ideology, then self-evidently he will find his truest ideal in an even greater degree in his own sex, which is in any case physically and intellectually closer to him.’ (Rank, 1932, pp.52-53) The female Muse is found to be unequal to the task; she cannot be an intellectual equal. In time the artist will turn away in the hopes of finding a disciple of his own sex:

‘What aborted me in the beginnings, what almost proved to be tragedy, was that I could find no one who believed in me implicitly, either as a person or as a writer. There was Mara, it is true, but Mara was not a friend, hardly even another person, so closely did we unite. I needed someone outside the vicious circle of false admirers and envious denigrators. I needed a man from the blue.’ (Miller, 1949, pp.28-29)

Not only is Mara no longer enough to spark his creativity, she is no longer a separate entity. She has been absorbed into the narrator they are united but not as equals. She is somehow lesser than a man that does not yet exist.

It is important here, for the sake of clarity, to unpack Rank’s theory on the artist and

sexuality. Rank believed that the creative impulse was not in any way sexual; rather, it was markedly anti-sexual in nature. In writing that the creator impulse ‘expresses the anti-sexual tendency in the human beings, which we may describe as the deliberate control of the impulsive life’ (Rank, 1932, p. 39), Rank was expounding the belief that the anti-sexual bent in the artist was a significant part of his fight against the collective. The life impulse triggered in man a desire for immortality that was customarily satisfied biologically by way of sexual reproduction, or, in other words, in a collective manner. The narrator turns away from Mara because he needs to substitute the biological imperative to one of self-creation. He turns to other men not out of any latent homosexuality, but because of the dynamism of the pupil/teacher relationship rather than the frenzy of the sexual ‘In this manner does the mature man, whose impulse to perpetuate himself drives him away from the biological sex-life, to live his own life over again in his youthful love; not only seeking to transform him into his intellectual counterpart, but making him his spiritual ideal, the symbol of his vanishing youth.’ (Rank, 1929, p.56) One could certainly argue that Miller’s growing friendship with Lawrence Durrell could be viewed as the same-sex, pupil/teacher relationship that Rank writes of. The meeting between Miller and Durrell and their immediate bond does coincide with the period in which Miller accepted that his marriage to Mansfield was over and agreed to a divorce. The narrator in *Sexus* clearly echoes Rank on the biological imperative when he writes, ‘If we were all angels we wouldn’t have any sex – we’d have wings. An airplane has no sex; neither has God. Sex provides for reproduction and reproduction leads to failure.’ (Miller, 1949, p.465) Mara/Mona gives the narrator that initial push and the accompanying release that he needs to break away from the collective, but in time she becomes a hindrance to him; he cannot progress with her in situ. The artist understands his immortality by way of his creativity; he seeks to break away from the collective. The primary event in this voluntary and deliberate act is his self-appointment as an artist:

...he, so to say, appoints himself as an artist, though this is only possible if the society in which he lives has an ideology of genius, recognizes it, values it... the creative, artistic personality is thus the first work of the productive individual. (Taft, 1958, p.272)

To Miller this idea of self-appointment is a crucial landmark in his understanding of the nature of his creativity. In *Tropic of Cancer* we have the famous quote on page one, ‘A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I *am*. (Miller, 1934, p.1) Miller had found the designation that explained so many of the questions he had had all his life. He writes most eloquently of his early manhood as a

period of great misery, mainly because of his inability to understand his own unhappiness. Those surrounding Miller seemed to be happy with their lot in life; his friends did not question or try to evade the roles allotted to them. Later on when Miller worked at Western Union he met many people who were unhappy or so-called social misfits, but they never seemed to articulate the feeling that Miller had of being unable to fit in. These unhappy misfits found themselves in dire straits due to circumstance in many ways Miller sees himself as unfit by design. Given every opportunity to succeed in society, Miller always fails. In Miller's open declaration of Rankian artistic self-designation, he begins to put in place the concepts that will lead him to understanding his inability to function within conventional society. Miller begins to comprehend that he was never built to be an upstanding member of the community, as an artist he perceives both his past and present in a new way. This is especially pertinent in how Miller begins to appreciate his childhood. Rank is markedly different from Freud in that he sees no connection between the artistic personality and childhood:

Here then begins the ethical ideal-formation in the self although the individual may turn to external models, ideal figures from life or history. But these ideals he chooses in terms of his own individuality which, as we know, has nothing to do with infantile authorities, least of all the parents. It does not matter whether the individual succeeds wholly in freeing himself from the traditional moral concepts; probably he never does, especially not as long as he must live with other individuals who more or less depend on this traditional morality. It is important, however, that for everything creative, regardless of how it manifests itself, even in neurosis, we can thank this striving of the individual, of his individual will to free himself from the traditional moral code and to build his own ethical ideals from himself... (Rank, 1936, p.263)

The above passage would have resonated deeply with Miller. Deep antagonism towards his mother, his guilt at the family's treatment of his mentally challenged sister and his father's wasted life had caused Miller to see himself as the only catalyst for change within his family, yet he thought that he had repeatedly failed them. His inability to finish college or find a stable job, the humiliation to his family caused by his affair with a much older neighbourhood woman and his abandonment of his first wife and child, led Miller to see himself as a burden and failure to his family. The idea that somehow his childhood, adolescent and early adult calamities did not define him, but that his willingness to face them head on and to re-evaluate their hold over him was in fact part of the creative process, would have given Miller great comfort. Miller would combine Rank's theories on the artist's prior life experiences with Bergson's concept of Duration and interpenetration to

provide a firm foundation on which not only to understand his life to date, but also as material to write about. Yesterday's shortcomings became today's grist for the mill, this is something I will look at in reference to Bergson in chapter 2, however it was through Rank that Miller started to expand his ideas on the matter. It no longer mattered that Miller had not been able to assimilate to normal life in New York, he was never supposed to. His so-called failure was a sign of providence.

Miller's attempts at freeing himself from societal codes are at their most basic in *Tropic of Cancer*. We can sense the anger of a man who feels he has wasted his adult life so far, in trying to conform to rules he doesn't understand or care for. *Tropic of Cancer* is full of passages that through the bitterness and frustration show a man slowly edging towards an acceptance and re-examination of his past and a glimmering hope that his future must be better if only he can remain honest to himself:

Once I thought that to be human was the highest aim a man could have, but I see now that it was meant to destroy me. Today I am proud to say that I am *inhuman*, that I belong not to men or governments, that I have nothing to do with creeds and principles... I can see about me all those cracked forebears of mine dancing around the bed, consoling me, egging me on, lashing me with their serpent tongues... Side by side with the human race there runs another race of beings, the inhuman ones, the race of artists who, goaded by unknown impulses, take the lifeless mass of humanity and by the fever and ferment with which they imbue it turn soggy dough into bread and the bread into wine and the wine into song... A man who belongs to this race must stand up on the high place with gibberish in his mouth and rip out his entrails. It is right and just, because he must. And anything that falls short of this frightening spectacle, anything less shuddering, less terrifying, less mad, less intoxicated, less contaminating, is not art. The rest is counterfeit. (Miller, 1934, pp.255–256)

Miller is employing many of Rank's ideas in the above passage. He sets out clearly that artists are a separate form of humanity; he is separated from the lifeless collective by his refusal to accept the rules and codes of their political masters. He echoes Rank on the suffering that the authentic artist must endure and the artist's acceptance of this trial as a means through which he will produce genuine art. Miller's ideas of suffering and acceptance are in their infancy here, but I would argue that what we are seeing is the beginning of Miller edging his way towards a Buddhist conceptualisation of these key tropes, in both his life and his work. This is again a point where it is difficult to disassociate Miller the writer from Miller the narrator. It is obvious that *Tropic of Cancer*

is not a conventional example of autobiography, it does not have a linear timescale and whole passages are pure fantasy however I would argue that the narrator does represent Miller's sensibilities, if not an actual direct representation of him. There is a sense that for Miller in proclaiming himself an artist that he recognises that he has crossed a line, committing himself irrevocably to his new life. The principal work of the artist, then, his own distinct existence, is to be immortalised in art 'For the creative impulse in the artist, springing from the tendency to immortalize himself, is so powerful that he is always seeking to protect himself against the transient experience, which eats up his ego. The artist takes refuge, with all his own experience only from the life of actuality, which spells for him mortality and decay...' (Rank, 1929, p. 38)

Rank's theory is a little more complex than it would at first appear. He argues that the creation of art removes the artist from life: if the artist becomes marooned purely in the creative, he is in a death-like state. The artist cannot reject life through the artistic medium. Miller and Rank echo each other's thoughts on this matter. When Miller writes that '... the conflict lies in the dual aspect of the artist's creativity – creative impulse seeking to express itself in life and in art' (Miller, 1960, p. 109), he is adopting Rank's ideas regarding the artist's need to find a refuge from the certainty of death and decay, a refuge in which the artist creates and develops in art, merely to discover that he has converted his dynamic and vital living experiences into something that is 'dead' 'For not only does the created work not go on living, it is, in a sense, dead: both as regards the material, which renders it almost inorganic, and also spiritually and psychologically, in that it has no longer has any significance for its creator, once he has produced it.' (Rank, 1929, p.39) Miller reiterates these ideas in *The Wisdom of the Heart* (1941):

But in the attempt to defeat death man has been inevitably obliged to defeat life, for the two are inextricably related... In order to accomplish his purpose, however, the artist is obliged to retire, to withdraw from life... If he chooses to live he defeats his own nature... Sin, guilt, neurosis- they are one and the same, the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The tree of life now becomes the tree of death. But it is always the same tree. And it is from this tree of death that life must spring forth again, that life must be reborn... Through madness and ecstasy the mystery of the Dionysian god is enacted and the drunken revellers acquire the will to die- to die creatively... to save man from the fear of death, so he may be able to die. (Miller, 1941, pp.11-12)

The creative person, upon this becoming apparent to him, quickly and inevitably returns to life and experience, the transient quality of which soon reinforces his need to create and to

externalise once again:

A man with creative power who can give up artistic expression in favour of the formation of personality- since he can no longer use art as an expression of an already developed personality-will remould the self-creative type and will be able to put his creative impulse directly in the service of his own personality... But the condition of this is the conquest of fear of life, for that fear has led to the substitution of artistic production for life, and to the externalization of the all too mortal ego in a work of art. For the artistic individual has lived in art-creation instead of actual life... and has never totally surrendered himself to life... the creative type who can renounce this protection by art and can devote his whole creative force to life and the formation of life will be the first representative of the new human type, and in return for this renunciation will enjoy, in personality-creation and expression, a greater happiness. Rank, 1932, p.413)

Rank had even more to say regarding the dangers that the artist faced. If the artist could overcome the biological collective (sexual propagation) and collective ideology (religion and politics), he still had to face what Rank called a ‘far more fitful emancipation’ (Rank, 1989, p.368). This was the battle the artist must wage against the artistic Zeitgeist, the ‘art-ideology’ (Rank, 1989, p.3) of the time. The path of the artist was one that accepted, but then must reject the ascendant art-ideology of the time. Thus, after capitulating his individualism to some collective ideology, after identifying with what is the accepted fashion and selecting ‘some recognized master as the ideal pattern’ (Rank, 1989, p.371), after (like Rank with Freud) conceivably allowing oneself to be a student and acolyte ‘the representative of an ideology,’ (Rank, 1989, p. 46), the artist must regain and reassert individuality ‘...he must escape from the ruling ideology of the present, which he has strengthened by his own growth and development, if his individuality is not to be smothered by it.’ (Rank, 1932, p.368)

The idea of the artist’s interaction with the art-ideology of his day is something I will look at in relation to the Surrealists in chapter 4. I will argue that Rank had so influenced Miller that he perceived his interaction with the Surrealists directly in terms of an art-ideology to be explored but ultimately rejected. For Miller this was an important step in accepting and developing his own style. During his time in New York Miller wrote at least three novels that we know of: *Clipped Wings* (1922), *Moloch* (1927) and *Crazy Cock* (1928-1930), the latter two published posthumously. Miller thought that to be successful as a writer he had to emulate the style of those writers he thought the best. He would write at his desk with a

copy of Dostoevsky or Hamsun open, shaping his style of writing to theirs. This conscious emulation led to writer's block and one of Miller's numerous breakdowns. It was with his reading of Rank that he began to realise that the only way to write was with his own voice. He could admire other writers whilst continuing to develop his own style; in fact it was crucial that he write honestly to preserve his individuality:

I have made a silent compact with myself not to change a line of what I write. I am not interested in perfecting my thoughts, nor my actions. Besides the perfection of Turgenev I put the perfection of Dostoevski... Here then, in one and the same medium, we have two kinds of perfection. But in Van Gogh's letters there is a perfection beyond either of these. It is the triumph of the individual over art. (Miller, 1934, p.19)

One of the most important chapters in *Art and Artist* is 'The Artist's Fight with Art', and a fundamental feature of this fight is the struggle against the dominant artistic ideal. Artists must 'carve their own individuality out of the collective ideology that prevails' (Rank, 1989, p.368). The artist does not exist in a vacuum: as Rank points out, 'we cannot understand the artist by a purely individual psychology, without taking account of the collective art-ideology' (Rank, 1989, p.369). These are the inherent contradictions in Rank's work. The artist must move beyond his childhood experiences and disregard the social mores of his upbringing, yet Rank acknowledges that he probably cannot do so. Likewise the artist must break with artistic ideologies of his time, yet he cannot hope to be understood without them. There is an inherent struggle in Rank's theories relating to the artist with nothing guaranteed at the end. I want to suggest that this idea of the journey being more important than the destination is something that would only become truly relevant to Miller after his return to America in 1940. Again we can see the beginning of Miller's shift to a more Eastern perspective on life, the concept is one of the many influences that in time would congeal and refocus Miller's vision of writing and life. For Rank there is another feature of the artist's personality that can cause problems and that is a need for absolutes, the intrinsic search for completeness. Rank called this 'an over-strong tendency towards totality of experience' (Rank, 1989, p.373), drawing comparisons between the artist and the neurotic in that both possess this requisite need for absolute certainty; they are what Rank called 'totalists' (Rank, 1989, p.376). The totalist's outlook on the experience of life is absolute, but the reality of life does not fulfil this need. Given his 'totality tendency' (Rank, 1989, p. 376), the friction caused to the artist by living in two worlds (those of art and life) leaves him suspended between both, frustrated and traumatised. Thus, 'the artist ...in spite of the many difficulties and struggles, finds a

constructive, a middle way: he avoids the complete loss of himself in life... by living himself out entirely in his creative work'. (Rank, 1932, p.373)

Miller is a textbook example of Rank's 'totalist', longing for the totality of artistic expression, whilst bemoaning the interruptions of life, yet in turn acknowledging the necessity of the friction:

When I reflect that the task which the artist implicitly sets himself is to overthrow existing values, to make chaos about him order which is his own, to sow strife and ferment so that by the emotional release those who are dead may be restored to life, then it is that I run with joy to the great and imperfect ones, their confusion nourishes me, their stuttering is like divine music to my ears. I see in the beautifully bloated pages that follow the interruptions the erasures of petty intrusions, of dirty footprints, as it were, of cowards, liars, thieves, vandals, calunniators. (Miller, 1934, p.254)

But, if the artist and the neurotic seem to share some very important characteristics, then in what ways then do they differ? Rank stated that the crucial difference was the ability and, most importantly, the individual will to produce, arguing that 'The neurotic is one who thinks life can be governed like a work of art, but this is a misconception art alone is made out of obsession, continuity, absolutism, the desire for complete construction, ending in fulfilment' (Nin, 1969, p.151). According to Rank, the neurotic is someone in whom the creative impulse has become stunted and deformed; he is a latent artist with a misguided individual will. The will of the neurotic is applied to the recognition of absolutes in his life and in this he inevitably fails. Art seems the solution to the driving need for absolutes. However, the artist's 'constructive solution may lead into a condition no less dangerous than that of losing himself entirely in a life of transience' (Nin, 1969, p.152). The 'totality function' of the artist-type 'in the end makes all productivity, whether in itself or in a particular work, as much a danger for the creative ego as was the totality of experience from which he took refuge in his art (Nin, 1969, p.154).

In 'The Artist's Fight with Art', Rank also unpacked a concept that would come to have much importance to Miller later in his life, that is, the idea that the artist must liberate himself from the dominant art ideology of the day, but also free himself from his own art. The explanation is that, as Rank came to understand in the end, the artist senses that 'artistic creation is an unsatisfactory substitute for real life' (Taft, 1958, p.290). Rank pointed out various ways to escape the absolute claims art made on the artist. One of the ways was simply to set art aside for a period of time. In Miller's case this was not simply finding time to write, but also answering his voluminous correspondence from friends and

fans alike, but also his constant publicising of his own work. Miller had to work hard to remind people, especially from the remoteness of Big Sur, that he was still writing and still relevant. Rank also warned the likes of Miller and Nin not to be seduced away from their work by the fashionable study of psychology. The study of psychology permits the artist to pass ‘suddenly from the formative artist into the scientist, who wishes - really he cannot help himself- to establish or, rather, cannot help trying to establish, psychological laws of creation or aesthetic effect’ (Rank, 1932, p.387). Psychoanalysis and the cognitive sciences, as well as, one expects, the worlds of religion and politics, all these are unproductive, sterile refuges for the creative personality. One cannot help, but read this as a reminder from Rank that as much as a healthy interest was welcome, psychoanalysis was best left to the experts rather than curious imposters. Although it was not the case, he could have been writing directly in reference to Miller and Nin with their comic forays into being ‘professional’ analysts.¹²

Rank seems to have been well aware of the poisoned chalice that psychoanalysis offered the artist. By acknowledging contemporary art ideologies, understanding his place within them, using them as a gauge, but eventually disregarding them, the artist was left in a lonely position. The comfort afforded the artist by self-definition and group acceptance of that designation was hard to replace. Psychology should not be seen as a means to escape the collective and discover the individual, only to return to the collective like a missionary. Rank saw this as the potential catastrophe of the rise of psychology in the twentieth century, for in *Art and Artist* he upheld that a psychology could by definition never be collective, insisting that, ‘Psychology is the individual ideology par excellence’ (Rank, 1932, p.389). If, as Rank observed, some artists believed that psychoanalysis was a new religion or ideology to replace the old, discarded ones, they would be sadly let down. Psychology should not be conceived of as a new social ideology and, even allowing for its comprehensive recognition by society, it could not ‘fulfil and justify [the artist’s] personal conflict’ (Rank, 1932, p.391) as previous collective systems had attempted to do. Rank stated quite clearly that, ‘today all collective means fail’ (Rank, 1932, p.391), and because the artist is still searching for some form of ideological framework or system of reference, he is ‘thrown back on to an individual psycho-therapy’ (Rank, 1989, p.391), which leads into a new psychological impasse and neurosis. For Rank, the modern artist’s intense ‘psychological attitude towards himself and his art’ (Rank, 1932, p. 388) could be exceptionally perilous as it may lead the artist to deeper introspection and obsession with

¹² Calonne, D. S. (1996) ‘Anaïs Nin, Henry Miller and Psychoanalysis’. In: Herron, P. (ed.) *Anaïs: A Book of Mirrors* Huntingdon Woods, MI.

himself:

His aim is not to express himself in his work, but to get to know himself by it; in fact, by reason of his purely individualistic ideology, he cannot express himself without confessing, and therefore knowing, himself, because he simply lacks the collective or social ideology which might make the expression of his personality artistic in the sense of earlier epochs. ... The more successful his discovery of truth about himself, the less he can create or even live, since illusions are necessary for both. (Rank, 1932, p.390)

I can think of very few writers for whom Rank's ideas on the artist and self-absorption are more prescient. Miller's key to finding an authentic way to write was to use his own life as material. Admittedly how much we can read his work as autobiographical is debatable, but the fact remains that central characters are real people from Miller's life and that Miller at different stages in his life, did see the narrator in his novels as representing himself.

Leaving these issues aside, it is crucial to examine whether Miller did indeed fall into the trap that Rank describes, and if so, whether it can be argued that he escaped from it.

Firstly, it is unarguable that Miller used his life as material for writing. Not only did he use it, but he used certain episodes repeatedly, over the course of his whole career. We need only consider his meeting and subsequent marriage to June Mansfield and think about how many times Miller writes and re-writes this period over a series of novels to understand why it could be seen that he has fallen into the trap of self-absorption, but I would argue that this is not exactly as it appears. Miller was following the Rankian concept of artistic re-birth, re-writing one's past to seek enlightenment from a present perspective. It may appear that Miller was obsessed with his own life but what he was in fact doing was re-evaluating it through breaking it apart to gain understanding. This is why we can see an evolution within his writing in regards, especially, to traumatic episodes. If we consider Miller's darkest point (the months leading up to June Mansfield's abandonment of him to go to Paris with her female lover), we see Miller contemplate suicide:

When a situation gets so bad that no solution seems possible there is left only murder or suicide... I was no longer a man; I was a creature returned to a wild state.

Perpetual panic, that was my normal state. The more unwanted I was, the closer I stuck. The more I was wounded and humiliated, the more I craved punishment.

(Miller, 1960, p.37)

Nexus (1960) is essentially a novel relating to the descent of its three main characters into mental illness. Miller is wracked by feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness in the face

of his wife's control over him. He is unable to envision his life without her so he accepts her daily cruelty, eventual abandonment and ensuing return. Miller's representation of June Mansfield has been written about extensively and is one of the main reasons that he is accused of misogyny and anti-Semitism, but I think the evolution of Miller's representations of June bear out not only the influence of Rank, but also Miller's growing appreciation of Eastern Philosophy. June directly appears as Mara/ Mona/Hildred in six of Miller's novels, in representations starting with June as his muse and soul mate, moving through her becoming his tormentor and creative succubus, and culminating in Miller's understanding of June as a person in her own right and as an integral component in his career. As contradictory as these representations are and taking into account that June Mansfield has no say in any of them, we see Miller avoid Rank's trap of self-absorption because he is using his past life as a vehicle to propel himself forward into a new understanding of his life and work and the eventual move on to new material. Miller perhaps lingers too long on this subject matter for some readers and critics, but I would argue that this continuous re-working is what grants him his freedom to write on matters other than his own life and from a different perspective, that being one of Buddhism. These are questions that I will look at in depth in chapter 4: for now, it is important fully to map out Rank's primary influence on Miller.

Miller and the Villa Seurat group saw the artist as a transitional being, encapsulating the old world and way of doing things, but also leading the way to the future. Rank shared this perspective, but beyond his outlined role of the artist as a forerunner for a new humanity, he doesn't really offer a concrete outline. In *The Artist*, Rank gives the reader an idea of what this new world might look like and the role the artist might fill. According to Rank every cultural period ended in an atmosphere of collective hysteria due to the restrictive measures taken by civilised societies to control their members. These restrictions on personal, individual freedoms would grow until it became intolerable for the majority to live under at which point there would be a communal breakdown. Psychoanalysis would provide the means by which ordinary citizens would come to understand what had happened and the artist would be the guide and source of knowledge, bringing the general public to consciousness and thus shaping their collective futures. This is perhaps where Rank is at his most obtuse and these are very airy concepts with very little concrete details attached to them. The reader is offered very little analysis or detail as to how this new future will come about other than vague statements regarding inevitable societal breakdowns. Yet, for Miller, the role of the artist in a future society would come to take on real importance. As we already know, Miller saw no political role for the artist:

nevertheless, he acknowledged that the artist did not live in a void of his own making. Miller may have toyed with the idea of the artist as the vanguard of some brave new world, and this was, after all, an idea that would appeal to any artist's vanity, but Miller was never comfortable with any role that felt co-opted into a wider movement. For Miller this 'transitional being' (Taft, 1958, p.288) took the shape of extreme despair at the state of the world followed by a humble belief that truth through art might be the only saving grace of a bankrupt system. This would later become a continuous theme in Miller's work throughout the 1940's and 50's, cataclysmic despair giving forth to an almost innocent belief in the redemptive ability of art to change the future:

When I look down at this fucked-out cunt of a whore I feel the whole world beneath me, a world tottering and crumbling, a world used up and polished like a leper's skull. If there were a man who dared to say all that he thought of the world there would not be left of him a square foot of ground to stand on. When a man appears the world bears down on him and breaks his back...If a man ever dared to translate all that is in his heart, to put down what is really his experience, what is truly his truth, I think then the world would go to smash... (Miller, 1934, pp.249-250)

This concept, undoubtedly attractive to Miller, whose life in New York had been one of suffering and pain. His job at Western Union made him feel like a fraud and he was ashamed to have power over anyone else's life. His relationship and subsequent marriage to June Mansfield had driven him to the edge of his sanity and at least two suicide attempts. In Miller's view he had suffered the unimaginable, only to come out the other side. Rank's idea of the redemptive quality of suffering in order to produce art gave Miller a philosophy with which, in retrospect, to understand what had happened to him in New York. Not only could he understand why it had happened, but he could also see it as a necessary stage of his development as a writer. For Miller, the most important role of art was not to change society but to change the artist. Miller's understanding of these concepts always came back to himself as an individual, and to how he could grow and evolve. The goal was individual knowledge and enlightenment, never societal change. Rank finishes *Art and Artist* with a discussion on the renunciation of art by the artist. If the artist did not consciously turn his creativity and focus it on his own life, he would be trapped by the false creativity of his own art:

A man with creative power who can give up artistic expression in favour of the formation of personality – since he can no longer use art as an expression of an already developed personality - will remould the self-creative type and will be able to

put his creative impulse directly in the service of his own personality. In him the wheel will have turned full circle, from primitive art, which sought to raise the physical ego out of nature, to the voluntaristic art of life, which can accept the psychical ego as part of the universe. But the condition of this is the conquest of the fear of life, for that fear has led to the substitution of artistic production for life, and to the externalization of the all-too-mortal ego in a work of art. For the artistic individual has lived in art-creation instead of actual life ... and has never wholly surrendered to life. In place of his own self the artist puts his objectified ego into his work, but though he does not save his subjective mortal ego from death, he yet withdraws himself from real life. And the creative type who can renounce this protection by art and can devote his whole creative force to life and the formation of life will be the first representative of the new human type and in return for this renunciation will enjoy, in personality-creation and expression, a greater happiness. (Taft, 1958, p.291)

Rank expressed this formula for greater happiness in terms that must have had a certain allure for Miller, outlining ‘a constructive process of acceptance and development of one’s individual personality as a new type of humanity’ (Rank, 1932, p.391). In the later half of the 1930’s, Miller too was preoccupied with the concept of a post-artistic personality, his work overflowing with varying innovations (many of them spiritually oriented) of a new human type, and the search for a new expression of the soul and of shaping one’s life into a work of art by renouncing art. As he had said after the meeting with Rank in 1933, before a brand-new sphere of art could possibly be entered into ‘there had to be that employment of the creative spirit upon oneself’ (Miller, 1976, p.109). A good number of these ideas were deeply influenced by Rank. Indeed, the notion of the artist renouncing art after having found it to be ‘an unsatisfactory substitute for real life (Taft, 1958, p.290) appears again and again in Miller’s letters and essays from the period. In most of these references, renunciation was a first step into ‘a new realm of being’, where one would have, as Miller said in 1938, ‘no need for art or religion because we shall be in ourselves a work of art’. (Miller, 1941, p.92)

Rank helped to give Miller a solid foundation for his experiments in writing and in how to see his life experiences as material. Rank’s concepts mirrored many of the concerns of Miller and the Villa Seurat group and pushed Miller to think more critically regarding how he perceived the past, but also what it meant to be a writer. Rank’s belief in the importance of the artist in society gave Miller a confidence boost at a time when he felt like a failure; suddenly his past failings were necessary tribulations that he had to go through to make his

an authentic writer. Most importantly, Rank provided Miller with the idea of a post-artistic life, where one's own life became the creation. This concept would be crucial in Miller's journey to enlightenment and Buddhism.

Chapter 2 - The Art of Becoming: Henry Miller and Henri Bergson

As I have shown in the previous chapter, Miller's use of Otto Rank's theories on the formation and role of artists, plus the need for the artist to re-evaluate his own personal history repeatedly, were profoundly influential to Miller's evolution as a writer. Likewise the work of Henri Bergson would provide Miller with a model by which to explore his own life history as a means of providing material for his books; most specifically through Bergson's concept of overlapping psychological states and the idea that all experience is happening in the present. For Miller this was especially useful as a philosophical foundation for the mining of his personal life for written material. Miller would, over the course of his life, return to certain specific periods and re-evaluate their influence retrospectively and this had a profound effect upon his evolution as a writer and man. This chapter aims to show the influence of Bergson's theories upon Miller and the specific utilisation of those theories in Miller's work. In no way is Miller a disciple of Bergson; he uses Bergson's theories and his understanding of them, to further his own perception of creativity and the world around him. In particular Miller is concerned with Duration and Intuition, two of Bergson's theories that will combine to alter Miller's concept of time, creativity and memory.

In understanding Bergson it is crucial to understand firstly what he means by 'time'.¹ Bergson differentiates between time as we actually experience it, that is to say lived time, which he calls 'real duration' (*durée réelle*) and the Empiricist/mechanistic time of science. Mechanistic time involves superimposing spatial concepts onto time, thus producing a distorted version of the real thing. Time is perceived via a succession of

¹ Bergson states that the instant one attempts to measure a moment, the moment is gone. Time is not static and thus can never be captured. Time may speed up or slow down for the individual whereas in a mechanistic understanding of time it remains the same. Duration is indescribable and can only be revealed indirectly through images that are unable to connect with the complete picture. In *The Creative Mind* (1946) Bergson visualises Duration as 'instead, let us imagine an infinitely small piece of elastic, contracted, if that were possible, to a mathematical point. Let us draw it out gradually in such a way as to bring out of the point a line which will grow progressively longer. Let us fix our attention not on the line as line, but on the action which traces it. Let us consider that this action, in spite of its duration, is indivisible if one supposes that it goes on without stopping; that, if we intercalate a stop in it, we make two actions of it instead of one and that each of these actions will then be the indivisible of which we speak; that it is not the moving act itself which is never indivisible, but the motionless line it lays down beneath it like a track in space. Let us take our mind off the space subtending the movement and concentrate solely on the movement itself, on the act of tension or extension, in short, on pure mobility. This time we shall have a more exact image of our development in duration'. For a more rounded and wide-ranging analysis of Bergson's theories on time and how they are as critical today as they were in the past, especially in relation to the advances made in the electronic age see: Guerlac, S. (2006) *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

separate, spatial constructs, much like watching a movie. It appears to the individual that they can see the continuous flow of movement yet the reality is a succession of fixed frames or stills. To claim that one can measure real Duration by counting separate spatial constructs is an illusion:

Space is not a ground on which real motion is posited; rather is it real motion that deposits space beneath itself. But our imagination, which is preoccupied above all by the convenience of expression and the exigencies of material life, prefers to invert the natural order of terms. Accustomed to seek its fulcrum in a world of ready-made motionless images, of which the apparent fixity is hardly anything else but the outward reflection of the stability of our lower needs, it cannot help believing that rest is anterior to motion, cannot avoid taking rest as its point of reference and its abiding place, so that it comes to see movement as only a variation of distance, space being thus supposed to precede motion. (Bergson, 1911, pp.289–290)

Our concept of time is not real and lived, but rather secondary and learned. One of the best ways critics have explained Bergson's theory is to conceptualise time into the various positions of the hands of a clock, analogous more or less to the various positions of the sun and moon in the sky. To Bergson this is not the movement of pure time, but the measurement of it, sequences of static juxtapositions in space. We are understanding time as a spatial thing that in essence it is not: for Bergson real time or what he calls Duration is a quality not a quantity, psychological not physical. The very idea that real time is not the spatial juxtaposition we imagine it to be and that life can be perceived differently through Duration were revolutionary in their impact in the early years of the twentieth century.² Bergson's ideas joined a cultural debate that was already altering how we would live in the coming century, debate regarding the nature of free will and individual freedom. Bergson's books and lectures reached a wide audience in the artistic, academic and psychological circles, not least being Henry Miller:

If I never understood a thing that was written in this book, if I had preserved only the memory of one word, creative, it is quite sufficient. This word was my talisman.

² Although Bergson is not necessarily seen as one of the great philosophers today, the influence of his work in the early twentieth century is undeniable see: Pilkington, A.E. (2012) *Bergson and his Influence: A Reassessment*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, for an examination of just how influential Bergson's ideas were in a variety of fields and the impact they had on his contemporaries. For an analysis of Bergson's problematic relationship to Modernism see: Burwick, F. and Douglass, P. (2010) *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

With it I was able to defy the world, especially my friends. This book [*Creative Evolution*] became my friend because it taught me that I had no need of friends. It gave me the courage to stand alone, and it enabled me to appreciate loneliness... with this book in my hands, reading aloud to my friends, questioning them, explaining to them, I was made clearly to see that I had no friends, I was alone in the world. (Miller, 1939, p.199)

Whether or not Miller understood Bergson properly is debatable in fact it would be fair to say that Miller's interest and utilisation of Bergson is limited to his own agenda. What Miller got from Bergson may not have been the whole of his philosophy, or even a true reading of part, but the subject of this chapter is not to ascertain the accuracy of Miller's reading, but to determine how he made use of Bergson's philosophy, how this influenced his concept of creativity and time, and how together these two work on each other, specifically on the formation of *Tropic of Cancer*, but also the long-lasting inspirational effect they had on Miller's work.

For Bergson, psychical states do not merely succeed one another, as in the successive positions of the hands of a clock; rather they pervade each other, overlap, and interpenetrate: 'states of consciousness, even when successive, permeate one another and in the simplest of them the whole soul can be reflected'. (Bergson, 1910, p.98) If we see Duration as psychical rather than spatial it follows that the past should permeate the present:

Pure Duration is the form which the succession of our conscious state assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states ... Nor need it forget its former states: it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (Bergson, 1910, p.100)

From the above quote we can deduce that Duration is not so much a consequence of mechanical time, as a state of timelessness in which there is continual change. Miller tackles the issue head-on from page one of *Tropic of Cancer*:

Boris has just given me a summary of his views. He is a weather prophet. The weather will continue bad, he says. There will be more calamities, more death, more despair. Not the slightest indication of a change anywhere. The cancer of time is eating us away. Our heroes have killed themselves, or are killing themselves. The hero, then, is not Time, but Timelessness. We must get in step, a lock step, toward the prison of death. There is no escape. The weather will not change. (Miller, 1934, p.1)

There is a sensation of stagnation and sickness from the outset of the novel. Miller records how clean and organised the apartment is and juxtapositions it with Boris' bodily infestation of lice. There is a sense of inertia and unproductiveness that prohibits movement and Boris' affliction manifests physically this lethargy. Time is not seen as an essential circumstance of change, but rather on the contrary, time makes things changeless, or in other words static. Time becomes nothing more than a routine, mimicking the successive positions of the hands of a clock. Bergson and Miller see this perception of time as a condition not of movement but of stasis; it is a man-made concept that inhibits individual freedom. Pure Duration is the exact antithesis of this in that states, 'even when successive, permeate one another'. *Tropic of Cancer* begins in the present tense and is continuously altering from past to present, events are related in the present tense are unlikely to be happening as the narrator sits at his typewriter, it is apparent that Miller is talking of what has been done, rather than of what is being done. This combination of past and present is compelling if the attempt is to illustrate something of Pure Duration since:

Any memory-image that is capable of interpreting our actual perception inserts itself so thoroughly into it that we are no longer able to discern what is perception and what is memory. (Bergson, 1911, p.125)

At the very end of the book, the episode by the banks of the Seine is first described in the past tense and then, as insight develops, the image of the river which is past, invades the present:

After everything had quietly sifted through my head a great peace came over me. Here, where the river gently winds through the girdle of hills, lies a soil so saturated with the past that however far back the mind roams one can never detach it from its human background. Christ, before my eyes there shimmered such a golden peace that only a neurotic could dream of turning his head away. So quietly flows the Seine that

one hardly notices its presence. It is always there, quiet and unobtrusive, like a great artery running through the human body. In the wonderful peace that fell over me it seemed as if I had climbed to the top of a high mountain; for a little while I would be able to look around me, to take in the meaning of the landscape. Human beings make a strange fauna and flora. From a distance they appear negligible; close up they are apt to appear ugly and malicious. More than anything they need to be surrounded with sufficient space - space even more than time. That sun is setting. I feel this river flowing through me - its past, its ancient soil, the changing climate. The hills gently girdle it about: its course is fixed. (Miller, 1934, p.318)

We can see Miller experience that interpenetration, the merging of the material world and the individual spirit, a unification made possible only through the application of introspection. As Bergson states, 'whilst introspection reveals to us the distinction between matter and spirit, it also bears witness to their union.' (Bergson, 1911, p.235) The narrator has progressed exponentially from his outlook on page one in abandoning his spatialised concept of time and his sterile routine, he has roused himself to movement, to realise the cancer of time as an illusion. In keeping with Miller's own language, he has changed the climate. Throughout *Tropic of Cancer*, as observed by Katy Masuga in *Henry Miller and How He Got That Way* (2014) the words, rhythms and expressions applied, the episodes described, unite to give the feeling of a state of flux. In this state nothing is taken for granted, nothing is sure or guaranteed. It is a state where everything moves and changes shape, interpenetrating whilst maintaining forward momentum. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson states:

There is not, in man at least, a purely sensory-motor state, any more than there is in him an imaginative life without some slight activity beneath it. Our psychical life, as we have said, oscillates normally 'between these two extremes. On the one hand, the sensory motor states marks out the present direction of memory, being nothing else, in fact, than its actual and acting extremity; on the other hand this memory itself, with the totality of its past, is continually pressing forward, so as to insert the largest possible part of itself into the present action. (Bergson, 1911, p.219)

It is easy to see the influence of Bergson directly in *Tropic of Cancer*. Scraps of real or imagined experience co-exist, complement, jar and interpenetrate to illuminate Miller's concept of time and narrative. Raoul Ibarguen characterises Miller's sense of time in 'Narrative Detours: Henry Miller and the Rise of New Critical Modernism' (1989) as:

Miller's time is the time of writing: neither the time that shadows the year's worth of events recorded in its anecdotes, nor a time of its present telling, nor the timelessness of ecstatic vision, but a time created by writing which opens the possibility of mimesis, retrospection, and dream coexisting without cohesion within the same narrative. (Ibarguen, 1989, p.242)

Images that do not necessarily complement one another and do not seem to further the plot in any comprehensible way are used to give the sensation of movement, the unstoppable flow of rhythm. This is something I will look at in more detail in chapter 3, especially in relation to Miller's experiments with Automatism however in this chapter I would like to explore how Miller uses this form of writing to express Bergsonian principles. We can see Miller in full flow as he describes the narrator's day working as a proof-reader, the powerful rhythm of the language and the ever changing images superimposed upon one another build to a breathtaking speed:

In between the rubber and silk markets and the Winnipeg grains there oozes a little of the fizz and sizzle of the Faubourg Montmartre. When the bonds go weak and spongy and the pivotals balk and the volatiles effervesce, when the grain market slips and slides and the bulls commence to roar, when every fucking calamity, every ad, every sport item and fashion article, every boat arrival, every travelogue, every tag of gossip has been punctuated, checked, revised, pegged and wrung through the silver bracelets, when I hear the front page being hammered into whack and see the frogs dancing around like drunken squibs, I think of Lucienne sailing down the boulevard with her wings outstretched, a huge silver condor suspended over the sluggish tide of traffic, a strange bird from the tips of the Andes with a rose-white belly and a tenacious little knob. (Miller, 1934, p.160)

The reader has little opportunity to absorb each individual image. Instead we are left with the feeling of having been overwhelmed by the onslaught of imagery, to stop and consider is to forgo the power of Miller's writing. The images, in and of themselves, do not seem to belong together or offer much to the individual scene. What they do provide is the impression that the narrator is experiencing Bergson's concept of memory-images, combining in an instant to push the narrator forwards. This breakneck rhythm leads to a sense that this a novel in flux, not a finished, polished work, but a novel in the process of becoming:

It was only this morning that I became conscious again of this physical Paris of which I have been unaware for weeks. Perhaps it is because the book has begun to grow inside me. I am carrying it a- round with me everywhere. If this is read properly, the impression must be that the author wishes us to believe that the book does not yet exist in a conceptualized form, but is being written, so to speak, at this very moment, that it is evolving as if by a process of automatic writing. (Miller, 1934, p.26)

According to Bergson, the creative act becomes enhanced by its application of images taken from the Unconscious, or in other words its connection to pure memory ‘And the operation may go on indefinitely; - memory strengthening and enriching perception, which, in its turn becoming wider, draws into itself a growing number of complementary recollections’. (Bergson, 1911, p.123) Memory becomes almost indistinguishable from present perception and repeated interpenetration occurs:

They have no difficulty in showing that our *complete* perception is filled with images which belong to us personally, with exteriorized (that is to say, recollected) images, but they forget that an impersonal basis remains in which perception coincides with the object perceived... These two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance as by a process of endosmosis. (Bergson, 1911, p.72)

Osmosis is a word that Miller uses frequently in his works and I think within *Tropic of Cancer* it is possible directly to link Miller’s notion of osmosis to Bergson’s concept of interpenetration:

A new ice age is setting in, the transverse sutures are closing up and everywhere throughout the corn belt the fetal world is dying, turning to dead mastoid. Inch by inch the deltas are drying out and the riverbeds are smooth as glass. A new day is dawning, a metallurgical day, when the earth shall clink with showers of bright yellow ore. As the thermometer drops, the form of the world grows blurred; osmosis there still is, and here and these articulation, out at the periphery the veins are all varicose.... (Miller, 1934, pp.164–165)

To Miller, osmosis is a positive phenomenon, something organic and natural, offering a more natural form of progress as opposed to that of technology and mechanisation.

Bergson makes clear the hostility concerning these two principles: on the one hand, the objectifying route of science and of Empiricism, which simply put deems all phenomena as wholly external; on the other, the process of Intuition by which states of consciousness interpenetrate in real Duration, ‘...while all that mechanics retains of time is simultaneity, all that it retains of motion itself - restricted, as it is, to a measurement of motion - is immobility’. (Bergson, 1910, p.119)

In the above passage from *Tropic of Cancer* the world is seen as almost stationary, approaching a halt. This stasis is a form of death for Miller. The mechanistic world has led directly to the deterioration of human elements, a topic Miller covers at length in, *The Air Conditioned Nightmare* (1945). The necessary process of gestation and becoming is arrested by the induction of mechanical, objective thinking that leads to stasis. The river is a familiar vision in Miller’s work as it has the facility to move spontaneously and easily. The moribund and the lifeless are persistently contrasted in Miller’s fiction, moreover he considers the work of science not only as one where the eternal movement is impeded, but also as the work of distortion and artificiality:

The wallpaper with which the men of science have covered the world of reality is falling to tatters. The grand whorehouse which they have made of life requires no deterioration; it is essential only that the drains function adequately. Beauty, that feline beauty which has us by the balls in America, is finished. To fathom the new reality it is first necessary to dismantle the drains, to lay open the gangrened ducts which compose the genito-urinary system that supplies the excreta of art. The odor of the day is permanganate and formaldehyde. The drains are clogged with strangled embryos. (Miller, 1934, p.165)

Miller accepted osmosis as the fundamental principle of life. Thus, it ensued that the scientific practice of representing life as unconnected and distinct entities is an artificial one devised to accommodate the basics of day-to-day existence, resistant to any means by which the actuality of life may be known. As Bergson makes clear:

Pure Intuition, external or internal, is that of an undivided continuity. We break up this continuity into elements laid side by side, which correspond in the one case to distinct words, in the other to independent objects. But, just because we have thus broken the unity of our original intuition, we feel ourselves obliged to establish between the severed terms a bond which can only then be external and superadded.

(Bergson, 1911, p.239)

This ‘bond’ that Bergson writes of is analogous to Miller’s ‘wallpaper’. The following passage occurs in the middle of a panegyric on Matisse:

It is only later, in the afternoon, when I find myself in an art gallery on the Rue de Seze, surrounded by the men and women of Matisse, that I am drawn back again to the proper precincts of the human world. On the threshold of that big hall whose walls are now ablaze, I pause a moment to recover from the shock which one experiences when the habitual gray of the world is rent asunder and the color of life splashes forth in song and poem. I find myself in a world so natural, so complete, that I am lost. I have the sensation of being immersed in the very plexus of life, focal from whatever place, position or attitude I take my stance. Lost as when once I sank into the quick of a budding grove and seated in the dining room of that enormous world of Balbec, I caught for the first time the profound meaning of those interior stills which manifest their presence through the exorcism of sight and touch. (Miller, 1934, p.162)

This passage clearly shows Bergsonian interpenetration at work, written in the present tense, whilst evidently describing incidents from a fictional or actual past. Miller tries to communicate the lived experience of timelessness, sensations of lost time, followed by an acute sense of being centered and aware of all. According to Bergson what remains in the consciousness, or equally the unconscious, is present, and regardless of how consciousness may have altered the ‘facts’ of the past. This recollection of past images is authentic, purely because it is present ‘That which is commonly called a fact is not reality as it appears to immediate intuition, but an adaptation of the Seal to the interests of practice and to the exigencies of social life’. (Bergson, 1911, pp.238–239)

For Miller this is a concept that will change not only how he writes but, more importantly, what he writes about. Miller is often disparaged for the autobiographical nature of his work and for the sheer repetitiveness of the experiences he writes about again and again.

Leaving aside questions of how autobiographical his work really is, I would strongly argue that this so-called repetitiveness is in fact Miller’s employment of Bergson’s idea of the ever present past. Miller is not obsessed by his own life or as lacking in subject matter as some critics have thought; rather he sees his past clearly present in the now, merging with and enabling his understanding of timelessness. Miller is fully aware of the concepts at

play in *Tropic of Cancer* in relation to ‘presentness’. In *The Paris Review* interview with George Wickes of 1961 Miller shows not only his conceptualisation of *Tropic of Cancer* as a work of the ‘immediate present’ but also a Bergsonian understanding of interpenetrating nature of life experiences as material:

I planned everything that I’ve written to date in about forty or fifty typewritten pages. I wrote it in notes, in telegraphic style. But the whole thing is there. My whole work from *Capricorn* on through *The Rosy Crucifixion*—except *Cancer*, which was a thing of the immediate present—is about the seven years that I had lived with this woman, from the time I met her until I left for Europe. I didn’t know then when I was leaving, but I knew I was going sooner or later. That was the crucial period of my life as a writer, the period just before leaving America... (Wickes, 1961, p.147)

This is a very enlightening quote as it captures Miller at his most candid in relation to the both the autobiographical nature of his work, but also the influence of Bergson and Rank. Miller acknowledges *Tropic of Cancer* as a work of the ‘immediate present’, very much in keeping with the idea of it as the primary example of Miller finding his authentic voice. When Miller admits that everything from *Tropic of Capricorn* to *The Rosy Crucifixion*, a period of twenty years was influenced by his seven-year involvement with June Mansfield, we can see this as an example of Bergsonian Duration and Rankian Biological Imperative. Miller gains understanding of his life experiences and their enduring creative influence upon him through the interpenetration of time. He writes continuously of this seven-year period because it is as much a part of his present as his past, re-evaluating it leads to new levels of understanding. From a Rankian perspective, Miller writes of this period because it is through this crucible that Miller accepted and then released himself from the Biological Imperative, allowing himself to become a true artist. The suffering that Miller endured, and the enlightenment that he gained from it, is a continuous spur to his creativity.

Miller continues to expand upon his theory of writing by explaining how he found his own voice. What is most interesting is how Miller combines Rank and Bergson to explain his work; he breaks from his literary heroes in order to find his own voice and language, a key stage in the Rankian evolution of the artist, and adopts the first person narrator to explore the Bergsonian timelessness of his own experiences:

Anyway, it happened for me with *Tropic of Cancer*. Up until that point you might say I was a wholly derivative writer, influenced by everyone, taking on all the tones

and shades of every other writer that I had ever loved. I was a literary man, you might say. And I became a non-literary man: I cut the cord. I said, I will do only what I can do, express what I am—that's why I used the first person, why I wrote about myself. I decided to write from the standpoint of my own experience, what I knew and felt. And that was my salvation. (Wickes, 1961, p.148)

So far I have shown the significant impact that Bergson's theory of Duration had upon Miller's writing, timelessness and interpenetration challenged and in due course altered how and what Miller used as material. Similar in magnitude to Miller was Bergson's theory of Intuition³, and the rest of this chapter will show how both these theories combined to propel forwards not only Miller's artistic ideal, but also stimulated his rapidly changing world view.

Bergson states that knowledge in its day to day form takes the outward appearance of concepts; we identify only that which is beneficial to us. Correspondingly we exclude all else, by doing this we oversimplify and generalise. It is only through artistic creativity that the richness of reality, 'for a few moments at least', can be seen, for the artist 'diverts us from the prejudices of form and colour that come between ourselves and reality'. (Bergson, 1924, p.159) Similarly Miller see it as daily realities in the shape of expedient concepts 'the world of men and women whose last drop of juice has been squeezed out by the machine', and 'this mass of bones and collar buttons' (Miller, 1934, p.162) receding to make way for a sense of the completeness of nature as exemplified by the artist. Miller's narrator experiences the sensation of disorientation and bewilderment even as he is in the 'proper precincts of the human world' or more significantly because he is within these boundaries. The false and contrived world of separate and disconnected objects has a propensity to obscure the reality of Pure Duration, but also the artificial language of

³ Bergson argued that there are two ways in which an object can be recognised, that is absolutely and relatively. The method by which each is known contrasts, the latter method is what Bergson calls analysis, whilst the method of Intuition belongs to the former. Intuition is an experience of sorts, that connects us to the things in themselves. Bergson describes Intuition as a straightforward, inseparable experience of understanding during which it is possible to comprehend the essential spirit or being of an object and realise the uniqueness of it. As Bergson stated in *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1946) 'The absolute that is grasped is always perfect in the sense that it is perfectly what it is, and infinite in the sense that it can be grasped as a whole through a simple, indivisible act of intuition, yet lends itself to boundless enumeration when analysed.' (Bergson, p.159-162) In *The Creative Mind* Bergson provides two images as examples to illustrate what he means by Intuition, analyses, the absolute and the relative. The primary image is a city recreated with adjacent photographs taken from every possible perspective. The reconstruction can never provide us with the dimensional sense of walking through the actual city. The second image that Bergson uses is that of trying to explain reading Homer to someone who does not understand ancient Greek, you may translate it and provide lengthy annotations and explanations, but you cannot reproduce the experience of reading Homer in the original language.

separate and distinct words, symbolising these objects. The foremost struggle with being a writer who is interested in and influenced by Bergson is the notion that language may not be a competent medium through which to project the truth:

We instinctively tend to solidify our impressions in order to express them in language. Hence we confuse the feeling itself, which is in a perpetual state of becoming, with its permanent external object, and especially with the word which expresses this object. In the same way as the fleeting duration of our ego is fixed by its projection in homogeneous space, our constantly changing impressions, wrapping themselves round the external object which is their cause, take on its definite outlines and its immobility. (Bergson, 1910, p.130)

How literature can connect authentically with reality is a question of great importance to Miller and one that I will look at again in chapter 3 in relation to the Surrealists and Automatism. I would argue, however, that it is Bergson's answer to this question that has a lasting effect on Miller and will directly curb his adherence to and interest in Surrealism. Bergson argues that Intuition provides us with an open, instantaneous consciousness of life as we live it at that very moment. If, however, we attempt to comprehend it as a rationalised object we risk losing it altogether. It is reasonably simple for the writer to accept the dichotomy between static and dynamic, but how can this be demonstrated in literature? Miller addresses this crucial point by seeing his work as not a finished, polished novel, but rather as a work demonstratively unfinished. *Tropic of Cancer* purpose is not to present a finished and static work of art; rather it absorbs the Bergsonian problem of language's capacity to connect to reality. It answers this by presenting itself to be an attempt to show the process as opposed to the product:

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 then? This is not a book. This is libel, slander, defamation of character. 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... what you will. (Miller, 1934, pp.1-2)

Miller is mirroring the concerns regarding language expressed by many writers of this period. As Ihab Hassan noted in *The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel*

Beckett (1967), Miller's belief that literary language and conventions that become at best obsolete and at worst suffocating in regards to representing the now were not unique to him alone, and again this is something I will show that Miller shares with the Surrealists (see chapter 3). Miller's understanding and resolution of the issue, however, is distinctly Bergsonian. The considered understatement of mechanical time ('It is the twenty-somethingth of October') followed by the rejection of literature and language, ending with a 'prolonged' insult, show the influence of Bergson. Language in its current manifestation is nothing more than a succession of static symbols. The old must be swept away to make room for the new, in other words, a language that demonstrates the process rather than the product. We can see this need to destroy and then revise language as an artistic device playing out in Miller's novels, especially those written in Paris. Literature will ultimately become redundant: for Miller the important thing is to recognize and embrace our immersion in the impulse of continual becoming. As Bergsonian a reading as we can put on this, I also see it as a signpost to Miller's growing interest in Buddhism. We will see some of these concepts; specifically continual becoming and process over product come to fruition in Miller's later adherence to the Buddhist Four Noble Truths, a topic I will look at in detail in chapter 4. We can see this in a letter to Lawrence Durrell:

How I love the dying words of St. Thomas Aquinas: "All that I have written now seems so much straw! " Finally he saw. At the very last minute. He knew and he was wordless. If it takes ninety-nine years to attain such a moment, fine! We are all bound up with the Creator in the process. The ninety-eight years are so much sticks of wood to kindle the fire. It's the fire that counts... The child is alive with fire, and we the adults, smother it as best we can. When we cease throwing the wood of ignorance on the fire, it burst forth again. We must start from the beginning, not on the backs of dinosaurs-culture- that is, in all its guises. (Miller, 1959, p.36)

We begin to see Miller's infamously egotistical statement in *Tropic of Cancer*—'A year ago, six months ago, I thought that I was an artist. I no longer think about it, I am'—in a different light. Miller is channeling both Bergson and Rank in his conceptualisation of himself as an artist. Miller the artist endures, he evolves and changes. He embodies movement, Duration and Intuition. He is within himself, in true Rankian fashion, a work of art, immersed in creation and more importantly re-creation. As Bergson states '... a being which evolves more or less freely creates something new every moment.' (Bergson, 1911, p.297) The process of creation must consequently include the false starts and flaws as well

as the successes: 'The telephone interrupts this thought which I should never have been able to complete. Someone is coming to rent the apartment...' (Miller, 1934, p.11) Work in the process of becoming is not something to be hidden or concealed from the reader, polished to acceptability by an editor, but rather accepted and welcomed as authentic. In an interview for *Playboy* Miller states that:

I must confess there's a great joy for me, in cutting a thing down, in taking the ax to my words, and destroying what I thought so wonderful in the heat of first writing ... But this editing at least for me, is not aimed at achieving flawlessness. I believe that defects in a writer's work, as in a person's character, are no less important than his virtues. (Miller, 1964, pp.80–81)

Miller admits that his method of writing is perhaps not as unedited as it may at first appear. The basis for his editing seems to be a certain pleasurable destructiveness rather than adding polish. What is clear, however, is that he has no wish to tamper with his initial inspiration. The writer's instantaneous insight, coupled with the free and random interpenetration of memory images, enables the words to be written straight away.

Having examined how Bergson's theories both influenced Miller and echoed many of his own thoughts and feelings, I would like to look in more detail at how these concepts manifest themselves in the characters in *Tropic of Cancer*, paying specific attention to the Milleresque narrator. It is debatable whether the narrator is in fact a representation of Miller himself or not. Miller was contradictory on this matter and veered from stating that he was the narrator to criticising readers and critics for having such a narrow vision to see it as such. I would argue that it does not overly matter whether Miller and the narrator are one in the same or merely share certain biographical details and philosophical outlooks; it does not add or detract from the novel or any study of it. The narrator is the only character in the novel that is described; he is never reduced to a selection of adjectives. The narrator is allowed to grow and develops throughout the novel; he comes to personify Miller's understanding of Bergson. He is not a 'type' like the other characters, and he is not static. The other characters are stereotypes: whether they are seen through the prisms of religion, gender, or sex, they remain un-fleshed out superficialities, which are used as a counterpoint to the narrator's multi-dimensionality. He is the lone instance of a character that endures: his conscious states pervade one another; in other words he lives. After the

narrator, Van Norden⁴ is perhaps the most important character. He appears at various important episodes of the narrator's life and his adventures often lead to the narrator having a moment of clarity, usually couched in Bergsonian terms. Van Norden is, however, barely fleshed out as an independent entity, 'I like Van Norden but I do not share his opinion of himself. I do not agree, for instance that he is a philosopher, or a thinker. He is cunt struck, that's all. And he will never be a writer'. (Miller, 1934, p.4) This is how the reader is introduced to Van Norden on page 4 of the novel. We do not learn much more regarding Van Norden, he talks of writing a book, but never does and spends all his time chasing women for sex. He is constantly reduced by the narrator to a failed writer; addicted to meaningless sexual encounters:

People think I'm a cunt-chaser... That's how shallow they are, these high brows who sit on the terrasse all day chewing the psychological cud... I wish to Christ I could get up enough nerve to visit an analyst... Van Norden's mind has slipped back to the eternal preoccupation: cunt... You get all burned up about nothing, he argues, about a crack with hair on it, or without hair ... All that mystery about sex and then you discover that it's nothing – just a blank. (Miller, 1934, p.138)

On Van Norden's inability to write his long anticipated novel, the narrator is scathing, despite Miller having suffered himself from some of the same creative issues. Miller has written extensively regarding how his first attempts at writing were hampered by his imitation of Hamsun and Dostoevsky, something I have already examined in relation to Rank in chapter 1. *Crazy Cock* (1928–1930) and *Moloch* (1927) both published posthumously and the unpublished *Clipped Wings* (1922) were little more than derivative and banal writing exercises, devoid of originality or value, yet Van Norden is mocked relentlessly for exhibiting the same limitations:

The book must be absolutely original, absolutely perfect. That is why, among other things, it is impossible for him to get started on it. As soon as he gets an idea he begins to question it. He remembers that Dostoevski used it, or Hamsun, or somebody else. "I'm not saying I want to be better than them, I want to be different,"

⁴ Van Norden is based upon the American journalist Wambly Bald, who worked with Miller as a proofreader at the Chicago/Paris Tribune in the early 1930's. He joked in the 1960's about suing Miller for representing him as a sex fiend, but does not seem to have minded the representation too much. Bald, W. (1987) *On the Left Bank: 1929–1933*. Ohio University Press, Athens, provides access to Bald's articles from the period. For a broad overview of the milieu in which both Bald and Miller worked see: Weber, R. (2006) *News of Paris: American Journalists in the City of Light Between the Wars*. Ivan.R. Dee Publishing, Chicago.

he explains. And so, instead of tackling his book, he reads one author after another to make absolutely certain that he is not going to tread on their private property. And the more he reads the more disdainful he becomes. None of them are satisfying; none of them arrive at that degree of perfection which he has imposed on himself. And forgetting completely that he has not written so much as a chapter he talks about them condescendingly, quite as though there existed a shelf of books bearing his name, books which everyone is familiar with and the titles of which it is therefore superfluous to mention. (Miller, 1934, p.132)

Miller often juxtaposes the static existence of other characters to make clear the movement and progression of the narrator. The other characters in the book are partially drawn outlines, objectified shadows yet they represent, at different times, facets of the narrator's own character. These facets are rationalised and rendered static, the narrator must push beyond them, embrace movement. Bergson makes clear how detrimental this state can be:

The feeling itself is a being which lives and develops and is therefore constantly changing ... But it lives because the duration in which it develops is a duration whose moments permeate one another. By separating these moments from each other, by spreading out time in space, we have caused this feeling to lose its life and its colour. Hence we are standing before our own shadow: we believe that we have analyzed our feeling, while we have really replaced it by a juxtaposition of lifeless states which can be translated into words, and each of which constitutes the common element, the impersonal residue, of the impressions felt in a given case by the whole of society. (Bergson, 1910, p.133)

The narrator's opposition to the lifeless and static is illustrated again in the passage where Van Norden attempts to have sex with a prostitute. The influence of Rank is also clear to see in that Van Norden is using mechanistic sex or the Biological Imperative as a substitute for lived experience and the creativity that comes from it. Miller understands Van Norden's failure to write in an appraisal that incorporates both Rank and Bergson. It is reminiscent of the earlier passages relating to Matisse and, in describing a proof reader's day, images of the mechanistic world are evident:

As I watch Van Norden tackle her, it seems to me that I'm looking at a machine whose cogs have slipped. Left to themselves, they could go on this way forever, grinding and slipping, without ever anything happening ... As long as that spark of

passion is missing there is no human significance in the performance. The machine is better to watch. And these two are like a machine which has slipped its cogs. It needs the touch of a human hand to set it right. It needs a mechanic. (Miller, 1934, pp.143-144)

Likewise the character of Papini mirrors the static living that the narrator is striving to escape. Papini's obsession with academic learning is critiqued in distinctly Bergsonian means. Papini is an academic who compiles bibliographies and writes critical essays, he is consumed by his belief that after years of study he still knows nothing. Papini embodies the static state of the intellect: devoid of Intuition and Duration, he conceptualises life through time and quantity, obsessed with the number of books he must read by a certain age. We never get to know anything else about Papini: he serves only to contrast static, rationalised knowledge with the narrator's fluid, intuitive wisdom. Miller had a well-known disdain for academics and Papini serves to illustrate Miller's contempt for those who portray themselves as educated and knowledgeable. Miller saw academics as nothing more than intellectual slaves, told what and how to learn. Moldorf is a character that the narrator claims to have an affinity with; he describes him as his doppelganger:

We have so many points in common that it is like looking at myself in a cracked mirror... I have been looking over my manuscripts, pages scrawled with revisions. Pages of literature. This frightens me a little. It is so much like Moldorf... I can recall distinctly how I enjoyed my suffering. It was like taking a cub to bed with you. (Miller, 1934, p. 9)

This is a fascinating view into the narrator's psyche: what is it he sees in Moldorf that so frightens him? Is it Moldorf's ability to find pleasure in his suffering, surely reminiscent of the narrator's own situation before coming to Paris? There are an abundance of questions that this passage asks, yet, from a Bergsonian perspective, it is interesting in that none of these questions are pursued in the novel. As with the other characters, Moldorf is not allowed to derail the narrator's progress, Moldorf simply becomes the means by which the narrator segues into a rant on Jews;⁵ Moldorf's suffering is seen as a Jewish character trait,

⁵ Anti-Semitism in Miller's work is often accepted as a fact without any real investigation of its roots. There is a complexity to Miller's representation of Jews that requires more study. For a work that places Miller's work within the framework of institutionalised anti-Semitism see: Harap, L. (2003) *Image of the Jew in American Literature: From Early Republic to Mass Immigration*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse. I would argue that Miller's literary anti-Semitism is in fact an example of his rejection of 'human' moral position, see: Manniste, I. (2013) *Henry Miller: The Inhuman Artist* Bloomsbury Press, London. By this I mean that Miller sought to remove himself from the collective, both politically and emotionally. Miller

and the suffocating nature of formal language on society:

They expected blood, bones, gristle, sinews. They chew and chew, but the words are chicle and chicle is indigestible. Chicle is the base over which you sprinkle sugar, pepsin, thyme, licorice. chicle, when it is gathered by chicleros, is O. K. The chicleros came over the ridge of a sunken continent. They brought with them an algebraic language. In the Arizona desert they met the Mongols of the North, glazed like eggplants. Time shortly after the earth had taken its gyroscopic lean when the Gulf Stream was parting ways with the Japanese current. In the heart of the soil they found tufa rock... Their language was lost. Here and there one still finds the remnants of a menagerie, a brain plate covered with figures. (Miller, 1934, p.10)

The progression from one image to the next is seamless; each new image is pre-figured in the sentence immediately before, subjects overlap and interpenetrate, propelling the passage forward. No single image is described to the full: only the changing consciousness of the narrator has any detail; as with other characters Moldorf is forgotten in the unstoppable flow of the narrator's linguistic flow. Miller does this not only by the interpenetration of time and images, but also by using rhythm to realise the impression not of manufacturing a form, but of permitting it to evolve:

Twilight hour. Indian blue, water of glass, trees glistening and liquescent. The rails fall away into the canal at Jaures. The long caterpillar with lacquered sides dips like a roller coaster. It is not Paris. It is not Coney Island. It is a crepuscular melange of all the cities of Europe and Central America. The railroad yards below me, the tracks black, webby, not ordered by the engineer but cataclysmic in design, like those gaunt fissups in the polar ice which the camera registers in degrees of black. (Miller, 1934, p.3)

The narrator's overriding purpose is not to flesh out the other characters in the hope of providing the reader with a more rounded view of himself as seen through the gaze of others, but rather to use them as a means and a prompt to understand his own journey, a journey conceived in Bergsonian terms. The truth of the place is not its position in space or

wanted to curb his propensity to involve himself in other people's suffering, what I have come to see as an early example of Buddhist detachment. For a summary of this interpretation see: Cowe, J. (2016) 'What Are You Going To Do About Max?: Understanding Anti-Semitism in Max'. *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*: Volume 11.

even its geographical position, but rather the effect it has on the Duration of the narrator's consciousness, the narrator's reality of osmosis.

That both Bergson and Miller subscribed to the concept of static as opposed to dynamic, the world of autonomous external objects as divergent to Duration, it does not necessarily follow that they rejected the existence of a material world outside consciousness. They would have simply argued that this external world cannot be truly recognised in any empirical way, by any means that splits it up into detached, distinct units. In short that it cannot be known through conceptualisation. This partially clarifies Miller's regular switches from the ordinary to the extraordinary to the world of dream-like reverie:

There are balmy days in childhood when, perhaps because of the great retardation of the time, one steps outdoors into a world which is dozing. It is not the world of humans, nor is it the world of nature which is drowsing---it is the inanimate world of stones, minerals, objects. The inanimate world in bud.... With the slow-motion eyes of childhood one watches breathlessly as this latent realm of life slowly reveals its pulse beat. One becomes aware of the existence of those invisible rays which emanate perpetually from the most remote parts of the cosmos and which radiate from the microcosm as well as from the macrocosm. "As above, so below." In the twinkle of an eye one is divorced from the illusory world of material reality; which every step one places himself anew at the carrefour of these concentric radiations which are the true substance of an all-encompassing and all-pervading reality. Death has no meaning. All is change, vibration, creation, and re-creation. (Miller, 1953, p.317)

It is worth quoting the rather lengthy passage above from *Plexus* (1953) for two reasons. Firstly, it shows that Miller continued throughout his career to have an understanding of the world and his creativity infused with Bergson's teaching. Secondly, it leads to a discussion of Miller's use of memory in his work. I have examined the ways in which Intuition and Duration combined to change how Miller saw time and timelessness, it is crucial to understand the part that memory played in Miller's creative process. Considering the repetitive nature of the episodes he wrote about throughout his career, what did memory mean to Miller? The narrator in *Plexus* is speaking of the spiritual nature memory; the process of remembrance has stirred an awareness of the existence of the spirit, what Miller calls 'the angelic being'. For Miller paying credence to the existence of matter does not refute the existence of spirit. Miller writes that 'in the twinkle of an eye',

that is, by a process of immediate intuition, ‘one is separated from the illusory world of material reality’. Miller, and for that matter Bergson, would not argue that matter is illusory, but that a concept of reality as essentially material is. Miller acknowledges matter for what it is that is he accepts it as image, and he also subscribes to the belief that spirit can be stirred by the function of memory. According to Bergson ‘If, then, spirit is a reality, it is here, in the phenomenon of memory, that we may come into touch with it experimentally’. (Bergson, 1911, p.81) The implication here is that the brain, an image of matter like any other, cannot be the mind, but only the apparatus by which the mind transmits itself. This is a question that Miller wrestled with in relation to Surrealist Automatism as I shall examine in chapter 3 and his answer remains consistent with Bergson:

Thoughts never cease to stir the brain. Occasionally we perceive a difference between thoughts and thought, between that which thinks and the mind which is all thought. Sometimes, as if through a tiny crevice, we catch a glimpse of our dual self. Brain is not mind, that we may be certain of. If it *were* possible to localize the seat of the mind, then it would be truer to situate it in the heart. But the heart is merely a receptacle, or transformer, by means of which thought becomes recognizable and effective. Thought has to pass through the heart to become active and meaningful. (Miller, 1952, p.281)

For Miller, who entitled one of his books *Remember to Remember* (1947), memory is significant. I would argue that for Miller, memory is not a sealed remembrance of a past incident, but rather a sensation that occurs through Duration and Intuition. In his introduction to Alfred Perles’ *My Friend Henry Miller* (1956), he gives a suggestion of his perspective on this subject, ‘He had an uncanny way of flying ahead into the hereafter and bringing back good reports. It was as if he had discovered the way to connect with the secret processes of memory, make himself one with his "Id"’. (Perles, 1956, p.10) Miller is not describing Perles as some kind of mystic with the ability to see the future, but rather as someone who can embody both Duration and Intuition; he has the capacity to unite his present being with the remembrance of his past, and in Miller’s opinion make himself complete:

I make this slight digression in order to point out that there are two memories (if not more) which can be tapped, and which, if at times they appear conflicting, are meant to yield different results. The one which Perles has relied on in this book is the soul's

memory. It may often be at variance with facts, dates, events. But it is the authentic record ... (Perles, 1956, p.10)

In his description of Perles, Miller could easily be referring to himself. The conflicting representations of lived experience in Miller's work are not examples of misremembering or trying to re-write history, but rather the working of Bergson's theory of interpenetration or what both Miller and Bergson call the memory of the soul. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson argued that there are two different kinds of memory firstly memory that reveals itself in the shape of habits (that is, automatic memory devoid of thought or introspection), and secondly pure memory, which is impossible to differentiate both from the dream and from the spirit, continually enriching the existing situation with a past that is itself ever present. Thus, '... pure memory is a spiritual manifestation. With memory we are indeed in the domain of spirit.' (Bergson, 1911, p.320) Since the present is enhanced by the spirit-memory, it is duly changed by it, and so when we recall a situation from the past as it was then changed, changed again by the act of remembering, this memory, being as it is the memory of the spirit, may not register accurately with the facts of the past. Mechanical time, the measurement of time, is linked with all that is trivial and distasteful. The episode with Mona, the narrator's wife, which brings to an end the first 'chapter', is understood to have occurred a year prior to the writing, and yet it is described in the present tense. This has Bergsonian significance if the assumption that the past is only our memory of it is accepted, or as Bergson wrote: 'there is no essential difference between a past that we remember and a past that we imagine.' (Bergson, 1911, p.310) We know that to Bergson a 'fact' is not reality 'as it appears to immediate intuition' and it is this instantaneous intuition that Perles is tapping into. Hence Henry Miller's statements in *Tropic of Capricorn*, 'It was going on this way all the time, even though every word I say is a lie... But the truth can also be a lie. The truth is not enough. Truth is only the core of a totality which is inexhaustible' (Miller, 1939, p.190) not only answers the questions relating to the autobiographical discrepancies in his novels, the repetitive nature of his subject matter, but also shows the lasting influence of Bergson upon his creativity and novels.

That Bergson provided Miller with the crucial philosophical foundation to experiment with his prose is undeniable, however it cannot be ignored that the influence of Bergson, at least in print, begins to diminish in Miller's later novels. This of course can be put down to Miller's 'magpie' tendencies, but I think there is a change in how Miller wants his life narrative to be perceived. I would argue that as Miller strives to control how his work is

read, he willingly sacrifices the more experimental facets of his writing in return for readability. Throughout *The Rosy Crucifixion* there is a greater sense of the importance of historical detail that in either *Tropic of Cancer* or *Tropic of Capricorn*. In a letter to Emil Schnellock for November 1938, Miller seems to suggest that *Tropic of Capricorn* can be read as the first volume of *The Rosy Crucifixion*:

If it was Turner's water colours in the department store window which ignited the flame, what supplied the fuel and the ground-work was your own valiant labours over the draught-board every day, and the feeling you gave me about painting in general, to say nothing of the conversations in Prospect Park about Europe and her culture! (You'll see a brief reference to this in *Capricorn*, Vol.1. I have said little about you in this first volume; but in No.2 [*The Rosy Crucifixion*] you will loom up more largely. Vol.1 is a long "preface", so to speak. Should be regarded as a pillar or portal to the whole work. (Miller, 1968, p.113)

This is a very interesting admission by Miller in relation to the autobiographical nature of his work, but also in how Bergson's ideas on time will alter after as he writes *The Rosy Crucifixion* trilogy over a period of years. *Tropic of Capricorn* and *The Rosy Crucifixion* have an overlap in material, specifically that of his marriage to Mansfield. She appears as Mara or Mona in both works. If we compare the episode when Miller realised his marriage to Mansfield was over, what is most interesting is the re-introduction of mechanical time into the narrative. In *Tropic of Capricorn* it is missing, 'Passing beneath the dance-hall, thinking again of this book. I realized suddenly that our life had come to an end: I realized that the book I was planning was nothing more than a tomb in which to bury her- and the me which had belonged to her.' (Miller, 1939, p.334) Yet consider the same episode re-told twenty-one years later in *Nexus*, 'About five that afternoon, in a mood of utter despair. I sat down at the typewriter to outline the book I told myself I must write one day. My Doomsday Book. It was like writing my own epitaph... Musing thus, an appalling thought suddenly struck me. It was this- our love is ended'. (Miller, 1960, pp.165-166) This re-introduction of mechanical time may have its roots in Miller's desire for accessibility in his work. As experimental as *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* are, Miller understood that they were difficult to read. The non-linear timescale and the episodes of fantastical automatic writing can have a disorientating effect on the narrative. By the late 1940's Miller, in keeping with his Zen Buddhist beliefs, wanted his work to be read and understood as chronicles of his ongoing spiritual journey. For readers to be instructed and

enlightened they had to be able to understand what they were reading. William A. Gordon likens the differences in *Tropic of Capricorn* to *The Rosy Crucifixion* as analogous to parts one and four of *The Sound and the Fury*:

Tropic of Capricorn is intuitive, symbolic, even manic in structure and style. Its order is by association rather than by the logic of narration. Its texture and tone are dreamlike, almost surrealist. It resembles the timeless world of Benjy Compson. *The Rosy Crucifixion* is straightforward narrative in style, though with interpolated fantasy passages. Overall it feels more like a narrative... *The Rosy Crucifixion* tells us in narrative form what happened during the period; *Tropic of Capricorn* expresses in symbolic form the meaning of the events and ties them into the past, the early life of Henry Miller. (Gordon, 1968, pp.138-139)

In *Form and Image in the Fiction of Henry Miller* (1970) Jane A. Nelson goes so far as to see *The Rosy Crucifixion* as the easier to understand analysis of *Tropic of Capricorn*, ‘His confessions are accounts of his struggle to arrive at the meaning of self. His anatomies appear when he no longer has to integrate his vision, but can turn to an analysis of its meaning and an intellectual dissection of its elements.’ (Nelson, 1970, p.187) We are to understand the Miller’s struggle to find his authentic writing voice and the experimental nature of his prose led to a more fluid form of writing, yet once he has found his ‘self’ there is a calming down of his testing the limits of his own imagination and technique. Miller wrote to Durrell in July 1944 that, ‘This [The Rosy Crucifixion] revives the mantic and the obscene, and how! And will be devilishly long. But readable. Yes, that I can promise - very readable.’ (Miller, 1961, p.195) Miller seems to be acknowledging a conscious decision he has taken to make his work more readable. The Bergsonian timelessness is replaced by a conventional linear narrative sequence. It is around this time, specifically in *Art and Outrage: A Correspondence About Henry Miller Between Lawrence Durrell and Alfred Perles* (1961) that Miller begins to use the term ‘autobiographical romances’ to refer to his fiction. There suddenly appears a notebook from which Miller takes prompts:

And so, on the fateful day, in the Park Department of Queen’s County, N.Y., I mapped out the whole autobiographical romance- in one sitting. And I have stuck to it amazingly well considering the pressures this way and that... Oh, yes, but before I forget- one important thing! 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 break-through. 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. Inevitable. But the attempt is – I am talking only of the auto-novels of course – to be and act the man I was during that seven-year period. (Miller, 1961, p. 29)

What we can see from this letter to Durrell is that Miller has reached a point where he is able to compartmentalise his work and his narrator. He sees the ‘definite period’ his seven years with Mansfield as material only for his ‘auto-novels’ as opposed to what could be called his more spiritual and ideological works. The narrator as an active participant, which is clear to see in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* has been replaced by an omnipotent narrator in *The Rosy Crucifixion*. This narrator is exerting control over his message and is trying to control how it will be received by his readers; he gains this power through choosing to simplify his style and be employing a conventional linear time frame. One could argue that Miller is choosing to sacrifice the more extreme facets of his creativity to reach a wider audience, something to remember in regards to Miller and Surrealism in chapter 3. Miller pilloried the Surrealists for what he saw as the dumbing down of their message to appeal to the masses, yet it would appear that Miller was willing to do the same.

As *The Rosy Crucifixion* progresses, historical references become more apparent. They are few and far between in *Sexus* and are often obscure, ‘In this way it fell about one day that I received an astonishing letter from that Dostoevski of the North, as he was called: Knut Hamsun. It was written by his secretary, in broken English, and for a man who was shortly to receive the Nobel Prize; it was to say the least a puzzling piece of dictation.’ (Miller, 1949, p.367) It is fair to say that not many people reading *Sexus* at the time or since would immediately know that Hamsun won the Nobel Prize in 1920. Miller’s attempts to historically place episodes in *The Rosy Crucifixion* become less intelligent, but more obvious in *Plexus* and *Nexus*. He employs commonplace images and words that are immediately recognisable as from the period. From *Plexus*, “‘Well, Henry”, says Ulric, cornering me at the sink, “how goes it? This is to your success!” He raises his glass and downs it. “Good stuff! You must give me the address of your bootlegger later”. (Miller, 1953, p. 360) By using the word ‘bootlegger’ Miller knows that the reader will

immediately be able to place when the novel is set. Likewise in *Nexus* we have the narrator's own particular version of the Jazz Age:

At Sheridan Square we hopped out. No trouble finding a joint. The whole Square seemed to be belching tobacco smoke; from every window there came the blare of jazz, the screams of hysterical females wading in their own urine; fairies, some in uniform, walked arm in arm, as if along the Promenade des Anglais, and in their wake a trail of perfume strong enough to asphyxiate a cat. Prohibition was a wonderful thing. It made everyone thirsty, rebellious and cantankerous. Especially the female element. Gin brought the harlot out. What filthy tongues they had. Filthier than an English whore's. (Miller, 1960, p.153)

Miller is setting the story within a broad, historical framework, going on to link Mona and Stasia's departure for Paris with Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic. There is the inclusion of real people in *Nexus*, who no longer have aliases as in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*, although it should be noted that the main protagonists still have their true identities hidden. When the narrator and Stasia are discussing the famous people they have met the people are real, unlike Apollinaire in *Tropic of Capricorn* or Matisse in *Tropic of Cancer* 'Thus far in my life I have met only two writers whom I could call artists: John Cowper Powys and Frank Harris. The former I knew through attending his lectures; the latter I knew in my role as merchant tailor, the lad, in other words, who delivered his clothes, who helped him on with his trousers.' (Miller, 1960, p.304) By incorporating the names of literary celebrities into his work Miller is adding a level of historical and biographical authenticity to it. For what it is worth Miller did meet Cowper Powys and Harris exactly as described in the passage. That *The Rosy Crucifixion* took complex material and made it easier to understand is arguable. I agree that Miller wanted to make his life narrative more accessible and I would argue that both Nelson and Gordon's analyses are correct. As Miller became more self-assured and less neurotic about his past, a new confidence in dealing with the material is clear. I would go further and argue that as Miller's Buddhist beliefs grew more influential over time he began to practice a certain detachment from painful episodes; he was able to step outside the tumultuous emotional debris and re-assess that seven-year period with clarity. This re-assessing and re-evaluating arguably did not lead to literature on the scale of *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*, but it does show Miller's progression to a new understanding of his past and an eventual breaking free from it.

What also marks *The Rosy Crucifixion* as very different from *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* is how Miller moves away from a strictly Bergsonian representation of timelessness. Instead of Duration and interpenetration we get flash forwards and the narrator's intrusions. Any impression of 'osmosis' is replaced by stringent divisions of time. Miller is using techniques that are associated with conventional autobiographies; clear timeframes, reminiscences and lessons learned:

The Poles were a race apart and their language clung to me like smoking ruins from a past I had never known. How was I to guess then, that one day I would be riding through their outlandish world in a train filled with Jews who shivered with fear whenever a Pole addressed them? Yes, I would be having a fight in French (me, the little shit from Brooklyn) with a Polish nobleman – because I couldn't bear to see these Jews cowering in fear. I would be travelling to the estate of a Polish count to watch him paint maudlin pictures for the Salon d'Automne. How was I to imagine such an eventuality, riding through the swamplands with my savage, bile-ridden friend Stanley? How could I believe that, weak and lacking ambition, I should one day tear myself away, sever all ties, look back on this which I am riding through as if it was a nightmare told by an idiot in a railway station on a bitter cold night when you change trains in a trance? (Miller, 1949, pp.87-88)

There are several different times being recalled in this passage, the period being recalled, the period in France and 'this day' but they are all distinct. This strict separation of the past from the present shows just how far Miller has moved away from Bergson. It could also be argued that Miller is finally establishing the separation between himself and the narrator. It could be argued that the very Bergsonian timelessness of both *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* allows them to exist apart from the world; their introspection isolates them from the lived reality out with Miller's sphere. *The Rosy Crucifixion* is the opposite; it wants to be located, to be placed within its time. I would argue that this is because Miller is trying to show movement; in both the Bergsonian sense of forward propulsion, but also in a Zen Buddhist sense. Miller wants the reader to engage with his life narrative from a spiritual perspective and as a result the narrator constantly interrupts the story to impart some spiritual wisdom, 'If I had come across this piece of wisdom in the period I am writing of I doubt if it would have had any effect on me' (Miller, 1953, p 490) and later in the novel, 'At my elbow, as I write these lines is a photograph torn from a book, a photograph of an unknown Chinese sage who is living today.' (Miller, 1953, p.562) Miller

is signposting what he wants the reader to understand and a consequence of this is a conscious simplifying of narrative devices. Miller is careful to separate different periods of time clearly, even in the few dream sequences in *The Rosy Crucifixion* it is made clear to the reader that linear time has only been briefly displaced, ‘That night I had a very disturbing nightmare...’ (Miller, 1953, p.228) Whereas the mixing of tenses within one paragraph, sometimes within one sentence in *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn*, added to the discombobulating experience for the reader, Miller is quite deliberate in his usage in *The Rosy Crucifixion*. Gone is the rush of images and interpenetration, replaced by rather orthodox introductions to chapters in *Plexus*, ‘Once again we are living in a sedate neighbourhood, not far from Fort Greene Park.’ (Miller, 1953, p 323) and ‘With the turn of the solstice a new phase of existence has opened for us – not in the sunny South but in Greenwich Village’ (Miller, 1953, p.350) or ‘Back to the old homestead, or to put it another way – back to the street of early sorrows. Mona lives with her family, I with mine.’ (Miller, 1953, p.450)

There is a notable difference in how the same time period is portrayed in *Tropic of Capricorn* and *The Rosy Crucifixion*, with personal history replacing more general impressions. In continuing to replace the experimental with conventional devices, Miller begins to use rather clumsy plot devices regarding time. *Sexus* ends on a time leap, ‘Let us jump a few years – into the pot of horror’ (Miller, 1949, p.489). As *Sexus* ends the narrator has been broken by his wife’s lesbian affair and is openly humiliated by his wife, “Hush, hush!” she said, and sticking her tongue out, she licked my face. “You dear, lovely little creature!” “Woof! Woof! I barked. Woof!, woof, woof! (Miller, 1949, p.506) *Plexus* continues the story chronologically, but rather than the portrait of the broken man we left in *Sexus*, *Plexus* opens with the narrator increasingly irritated by his wife and her antics. We have the same story, told in chronological order, but giving entirely disparate representations of the episode. One could put this down to lazy writing on the part of Miller or just plain bad writing as Durrell did.⁶ However what Miller is actually doing is

⁶ In a letter to Miller dated September 5, 1944, Durrell strongly critiques *Sexus* and Miller’s new style: ‘Received *Sexus* from Paris and am mid-way through volume II. I must confess I’m bitterly disappointed in it... the moral vulgarity of so much of it is *artistically* painful... what a pity, what a terrible pity for a major artist not to have critical sense enough to husband his forces, to keep his talent aimed at the target. What on earth possessed you to leave so much twaddle in? I understand that with your great sweeping flights you occasionally have to plough through an unrewarding tract of prose. But the strange thing is that this book gives very little feeling of real passion... But really this book needs taking apart and regluing... All the wild resonance of *Cancer* and *Black Spring* has gone – and you have failed to develop what is really new in your prose, and what should set a crown on your work – the new mystical outlines are all there; but they are lost, lost damn it in this shower of lavatory filth which no longer seems tonic and bracing, but just excrementitious and sad. One winches and averts the face.’ (MacNiven, 1988, pp.232-233)

trying to bring suspense to his novels. He wants the reader to be left with a sense of drama, to want to know what will happen next. This is fairly common ploy in autobiographical writing, but Miller's use of it is heavy-handed. He uses rather clunky dialogue to signpost what is coming next, 'Wonderful while it lasted. Just ducky. I had lost all interest in my job. All I thought of was to begin writing... Things were definitely riding to a fall.' (Miller, 1953, p.15) By using phrases like 'while it lasted' Miller is making it obvious that the situation will deteriorate and the reader will discover why if they keep reading. Miller continues to employ the present tense, using it to introduce a new stage in the story and to give the impression of the wise narrator who can see all 'It is only for a few brief months that this heavenly period lasts. Soon it will be nothing but frustration. Until I get to Paris only three short scripts will ever be published – the first in a magazine dedicated to the advancement of the coloured people, the second in a magazine sponsored by a friend and which has but one issue, and the third in a magazine revived by good old Frank Harris.' (Miller, 1953, p.79) There is a sense that Miller is containing himself, he uses terms like 'But I am getting ahead of myself...' (Miller, 1953, p. 84) It is an effort for him to keep to a linear time frame, to keep sequence after sequence in order. This is in direct contrast to *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* where the narrative is fluid and open.

In Miller's attempt to record this seven-year period of his life as faithfully as possible, he must consciously choose to move away from not only the experimental nature of his writing, but also away from Bergsonian interpenetration. He sacrifices innovation for accessibility. Many critics, in agreement with Lawrence Durrell, see *The Rosy Crucifixion* as an ebbing in Miller's literary prowess. I do not necessarily disagree with them, but if you look beyond the purely literary merit of the work, you can perhaps see what Miller was attempting to do. *The Rosy Crucifixion* was written from 1949 to 1960 and it reflects the changes that had occurred with Miller. What we can see is Miller working through what he believed to be the crucial seven-year period in his life that shaped him, as he re-evaluated this period his perception of it changes. He sees his life as a spiritual journey and he brings that sensibility to the trilogy. He wants it to be read, so he makes it more readable. He has a clear understanding of his past, so he brings clarity to his representation of it. Miller is not denying the influence of Bergson, but he has incorporated it into his consciousness and moved forward. *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* show how Bergson's philosophy can be expressed in prose, allowing Miller to experiment with time, rhyme and language. By 1949 with the publication of *Sexus*, Miller had found his authentic

voice and had confidence in himself as a writer. He wanted to explore his past from a position of security and frame it as a spiritual journey.

Chapter 3 – Refusing the Automatic Message: Henry Miller and Surrealism

One of the most fruitful fields of Miller study has been to assess his work through the ways in which it was influenced by Surrealism. Major landmark academic studies have included Gay Louise Balliet's *Henry Miller and Surrealist Metaphor: Riding the Ovarian Trolley* (1996), Caroline Blinder's *A Self-Made Surrealist: Ideology and Aesthetics in the Work of Henry Miller* (2000), and most, recently Paul Jashan's *Henry Miller and the Surrealist Discourse of Excess* (2001). In the latest academic work to offer a reappraisal of Miller's work, *Henry Miller: New Perspectives* (2015) an essay by Sarah Garland 'A Surrealist Duet: Word and Image in *Into the Night Life with Henry Miller and Bezalel Schatz*' continues this long tradition. Whilst acknowledging how useful it can be to read Miller through the prism of Surrealism, and how important these works have been in establishing Miller as a writer deserving of in depth research, I would argue that perhaps it is more productive to see Miller's relationship to Surrealism as one of contemplation, engagement but ultimately rejection. Miller began with a romanticised view of Surrealism, drunk on his sense of personal and creative liberation after his move to Paris, perceiving Surrealism as a symbol of a more open and intellectual culture; the product of a country that celebrated and respected the arts in direct contrast to Miller's experiences in America. We can see Miller's joy at his new freedom in a letter he sent home to his friend Emil Schnellock in 1930, only a month after coming to Paris:

A bookstore with some of Raoul Dufy's drawings in the window. Drawings of charwomen with rosebushes between their legs. An album of Cocteau's Dessins. Exhibition inside of Kandinsky's latest. A treatise on the philosophy of Jean Miro. Then my eye falls on something of rare interest: a book by a Frenchman, illustrated by himself. It is called *A Man Cut in Slices*. Each chapter begins "the same in the eyes of his family," "the same in the eyes of his mistress," etc. I read a few lines and my heart leaps with joy. It is another piece of Surrealism. I believe in it with all my heart. It is an emancipation from classicism, realism, naturalism, and all the other outmoded isms of past and present. Why must literature lag behind painting and sculpture and music? Why must we consider always the intelligence of the reader? Is it not for the reader to endeavor to understand us? (Miller, 1991, p28)

Despite the language barrier Miller was determined to reach out and partake in the Surrealist group, going so far as to write what amounted to a fan letter to Bunuel after a

screening of *Un Chien Andalou*. He also wrote a succession of articles on Surrealist films and artists: *The Golden Age* on Bunuel and Dali's *L'Age d'Or*, *Scenario* an attempted script for a Surrealist film based on Anaïs Nin's *House of Incest* (1936), *The Eye of Paris* (1937) on the photographer Brassai, culminating in 'An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere' (1939) a critique upon the ideology of the movement itself. 'Scarcely anything has been as stimulating to me as the theories and the products of the Surrealists' (Miller, 1939, p.188), wrote Miller in 1938, nearing the end of his sojourn in Paris. The key word here is 'stimulating': Miller used Surrealism as an intellectual platform from which to explore particular concerns he already had, specifically the role of the Unconscious in writing and what political role, if any, the writer should have. As I shall show, as much as Miller admired the Surrealists, he disagreed with them more often than not. As interesting as he found Breton's ideas on Automatism, Miller mostly rejected it in the end and he found the political stance of the Surrealist quite frankly incomprehensible. What I think Surrealism really symbolised for Miller is what Rank called the 'art-ideology' of his day. As I have already demonstrated in chapter 1, according to Rank the artist must understand, participate in, but ultimately discard and move beyond the prevalent artistic movement of his period. Rather than being a major influence on Miller's writing or his conceptualisation of himself as an artist, Surrealism was a test that Miller had to complete to progress to the next level of his artistic life in the Rankian model. Likewise I will argue that Miller's resistance to Automatism is deeply rooted in the Bergsonian concept that the writer must engage with, reassess and actively participate in the creative process rather than directly jump to the pure state of creativity promised by Automatism. By looking at Miller's relationship to Surrealism through the scope of Automatism/the Unconscious and political engagement, I will show how Miller was enthralled by, yet ultimately rejected the major tenets of Surrealism as false.

It is important firstly to understand exactly what Andre Breton meant by Automatism and secondly why it was of such interest to Miller.¹ One of the principal means of Surrealist expression was Automatic writing, as defined by Breton in 'The Automatic Message'

¹ Miller and Breton were not friends during Miller's time in Paris, however they did write to each other often in later years see: Branko, A. (2008) 'The Unpublished Correspondence of Henry Miller and Andre Breton, the Steady Rock 1947-1950'. *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*, 5, pp.150-174. Breton participated in Miller's defence during the fight to have Miller's books to be published without threat of prosecution in France in 1946. *Un comite de defense d'Henry Miller* included Breton, Bataille, Satre, Camus and Gide plus other well-known French writers who published over 200 articles in support of Miller's work see chapter 6 of Ladenson, E. (2012) *Dirt for Art's Sake: Books on Trial from Madame Bovary to Lolita*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

(1933). Automatism was primarily founded on the assertion that an uncensored stream of words without any conscious embellishment could in fact indicate profound metaphysical and universal truths. This was essential to Breton as he believed that this was the only way accurately to transcribe the Unconscious, believing that the Unconscious has a language that is distinctive, what he characterised as a '*murmure*', a murmur which contemporaneously exists in the human mind, and which in normal circumstances is obscured by our rationality. Our anti-social and subversive impulses are embedded within the murmur and must be denied and controlled to maintain civilised societal interaction. The Surrealists were happy to portray Automatism as an original perspective on the relationship between creativity and an irrational viewpoint. They were, however, hardly the first to explore this theme and they were also drawing heavily upon Breton's experiences working in military psychiatric hospitals during the First World War. Having a basic medical background, Breton was able to use previous medical research on patients in asylums where insanity was seen to generate particular forms of hysterical flare-ups of an irrational character to further his own hypothesis. Max Ernst had also introduced him to the work of Hans Prinzhorn,² the celebrated German psychiatrist and art historian who analyzed the art work of mental patients for connections between self-expression and illness. As Blinder shows, such medical research, in combination with a nineteenth-century/post First World War attraction to spiritualism, fed into a general interest in the supernatural and for the Surrealists the notion of voices and echoes from other dimensions. This in time gave way to what the Surrealists would call '*le merveilleux*', the marvellous being the essence of self, stripped of rationality and reason. Who better to be our guide to this new land than the artist and writer? By the stripping away of orderliness, structure and technique the artist and writer could discover and access the true creativity of the marvellous through the employment of Automatic writing and drawing.

The difficulty that lay with Automatism was how to frame its value. How to have a framework that supported a system of writing that could fundamentally not be

² Hans Prinzhorn was born in Hemer, Westphalia in 1886. He received his doctorate from the University of Vienna in Art History and Philosophy in 1908. In 1919 he worked at the University of Heidelberg mainly expanding the existing collection of art produced by mental patients, started by Emil Kraepelin. He continued to work in this field after leaving his position and in 1922 completed *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (1972) Springer Publishing, New York, one of the first academic studies of art as a means to understand mental illness. His work was not taken seriously within academic circles and he failed to find another university position. He died of typhus in 1933. His research was, unfortunately, used by the Nazis in their Degenerate Art exhibition of 1937. For an examination of the importance of the collection see: Bussine, L. (1998) *Beyond Reason: Art and Psychosis - Works from the Prinzhorn Collection*. University of California Press, Oakland.

predetermined, yet still had creative significance? Breton himself acknowledged this when he wrote that it is virtually impossible to ‘grasp involuntary verbal representation and fix it on the page without imposing on it any kind of qualitative judgment’ (Breton, 1978, p.97). Breton understood that one of the main issues with Automatism is that it could be seen as a calculated strategy to confer upon the mind capabilities that it is impossible to classify. Breton, anticipating such criticism, went immediately on the defensive:

I will not hesitate to say that the history of automatic writing in surrealism has been one of continuing misfortune. But the sly protests of the critics ...aggressive on this point will not prevent me from acknowledging that for many years I have counted on the torrent of automatic writing to purge, definitively, the literary stables. (Breton, 1978, p.100)

Automatism had to be seen to offer something new, differentiated from the prevailing categorisations of creativity, to both provide a framework of actuality and a discernable objective:

It remains for us to suppress ... both that which oppresses us in the moral order and that which "physically", as they say, deprives us of a clear view. If only, for instance, we could have these celebrated trees cleared out of the way! The secret of surrealism lies in the fact that we are convinced something is hidden behind them. Now one needs but examine the various methods of doing away with trees to perceive that only one of them remains to us, depending in the final analysis, on our power of voluntary hallucination. (Breton, 1978, p.45)

It is not hard to discern the influence of Breton’s ‘voluntary hallucinations’ on Miller during his time in Paris. Certain passages in *Tropic of Cancer* play with hallucination and stream of consciousness writing:

Tania, where now is that warm cunt of yours, those fat, heavy garters, those soft, bulging thighs? There is a bone in my prick six inches long. I will ream out every wrinkle in your cunt, Tania, big with seed. I will send you home to your Sylvester with an ache in your belly and your womb turned inside out. Your Sylvester! Yes, he knows how to build a fire, but I know how to inflame a cunt. I shoot hot bolts into you, Tania, I make your ovaries incandescent. [...] After me you can take on stallions, bulls, rams, drakes, St. Bernards. You can stuff toads, bats, lizards up your

rectum. You can shit arpeggios if you like, or string a zither across your navel. I am fucking you, Tania, so that you'll stay fucked. And if you are afraid of being fucked publicly I will fuck you privately. I will tear off a few hairs from your cunt and paste them on Boris' chin. I will bite into your clitoris and spit out two franc pieces.
(Miller, 1934, p.19)

There is a hallucinatory quality to Miller's writing in this passage. It is not a so-called normal account of a sexual daydream in the sense that it very quickly loses any sense of linear time, he is writing of what he has done and what he will do to Tania, an example of Bergsonian interpenetration. The images seem to overlap and there is a sense of a growing speed to the prose, a building up of tension, both sexual and literary. On top of this we have a variety of images that do not seem appropriate to the subject matter; the animal imagery may just be about comprehensible, if a little bizarre, but the peculiar inclusion of musical instruments and the spitting out of two franc pieces is a prime example of stream of consciousness writing. The overall effect is one of unstoppable movement, a rush of creativity that places the unfamiliar within the identifiable; recognisable sexual reverie is replaced by surreal episodes of image-memory.

All three works produced by Miller during that ten year period, *Tropic of Cancer*, *Black Spring* (1936) and *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) show traces of Miller grappling with Surrealist concepts. The questions Miller is asking, heavily influenced by his readings of Rank and Bergson, are often played out through Surrealist parameters. In *Black Spring* Miller embraces the idea of automatism and the breaking with reality, truly entering into unconscious creativity:

I am in the hands of unseen powers. I put the typewriter away and I commence to record what is being dictated to me. Pages and pages of notes, and for each incident I am reminded of where to find the context... I am exultant and at the same time I am worried. If it continues at this rate I may have a haemorrhage. About three o'clock I decide to obey no longer. Someone is dictating to me constantly- and with no regard for my health. I tell you, the whole day passes this way, I've surrendered long ago. O.K., I say to myself. If it's *ideas* today, then it's *ideas*. *Princesse, a vos ordres*. And I slave away, as though it were exactly what I wanted to do myself. After dinner I am quite worn out. The ideas are still inundating me, but I am so exhausted that I can lie back now and let them play over me like an electric message... The pencil is in my hand again, the margin crammed with notes. It is midnight. The dictation has ceased.

A free man again. (Miller, 1936, pp.60-61)

Within this passage we can see Miller both embrace and reject Automatism and by extension Surrealism itself. Miller at first finds himself 'exultant' as the words pour out of him, a creative floodgate opened, his unconscious unleashed, yet he quickly has misgivings at his literary fruitfulness. He has no control over the words or how they come out, this is the very crux of Automatism and Miller is frightened by it. Miller is intellectually passive, he is purely the vessel through which the words come is he really any different from the typewriter or the paper and pencil? He is left exhausted and unable to continue, when the 'dictation' finally ends he has lost hours, but is finally 'a free man again'. What attracts Miller to Automatism is the idea of a sweeping away of the old, conventional ways of writing. He wants to see literature re-invigorated, language used to reflect the now. The idea of literary convention is as abhorrent to Miller as it is to the Surrealists; however where they differ radically is in the role of the writer in shaping his own work. Miller has no interest in being a conduit to the marvellous, he wants to directly shape this own work. For Breton, passivity or what he calls 'inattention and indifference' must be practiced at all times:

... an inevitable delectation (after the fact) in the very terms of the texts obtained, and in particular in the images and symbolic figurations abounding in them, has had a secondary effect of diverting most of their authors from the inattention and indifference which, at least during the production of such texts, must be maintained. This attitude, instinctive in those who are used to appreciating poetic value, has had the vexing consequence of giving the participant an immediate awareness of each part of the message received. (Breton, 1978, p107)

As soon as the writer seeks to shape his work, the imprecise effect of memory and personality becomes apparent. The disturbance to Automatism caused by the writer's own memory and personality leads to the tainting of writer as a transmitter of the Automatic message. As other critics have noted, taken to its logical conclusion, Automatism turns writers into machines, mediums to creativity rather than architects. Miller cannot comprehend of human art devoid of memory and personality or for that matter, the active role of the writer in his own creativity. Miller's reliance on memory as a creative force returns us to Bergson's definition of thought as a continuous process of becoming and can be seen as an integral part of Miller's own framework in his search for an individual path to enlightenment:

In reading my books, which are purely autobiographical, one should bear in mind that ... I have frequently discarded the chronological sequence in favour of the spiral or circular 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 the starting points along the path of self-discovery. I have endeavoured to plot the inner pattern, following 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. (Miller, 1970, p101)

Within 'An Open Letter to Surrealist Everywhere' (1939) we see Miller tackle the very essence of his problems with Surrealism. 'An Open Letter to Surrealist Everywhere' is a rambling essay that engages with a variety of topics, often appearing to go off at a tangent yet ultimately provides us with Miller's very personal take on the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. Miller's initial area of examination is the relationship between politics and the artist, specifically the role that the artist should play as arbiter of change. Surrealism's relationship with far left politics,³ as complex as they were, left Miller cold. Miller could perhaps find some common ground on concepts like Automatism and enjoy the debate surrounding insanity in art, but he could not comprehend or accept Surrealism's political aspirations. What we see is Miller's deep mistrust of the collective and the toll this inevitably takes of the individual.

Miller's believed that the Surrealists had become so politicised that they had deceived

³ The politics of Surrealism can be characterised as far left, as Communism, Anarchism and Trotskyism were all adhered to by different members of the group at varying times see: Spiteri, R. and Lacoss, D. (2003) *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey, for an analysis of how the Surrealists conceptualised art as a political medium, the role of exhibitions as sites of political struggle and the long term influence of this on the French Intelligentsia. Unsurprisingly considering how fractured the far left was during this period, the Surrealists reflect the internecine splits that were evident in wider left politics. Breton and his comrades supported Leon Trotsky and his International Left Opposition for a while, though Breton became more explicitly anarchist after the Second World War in his support of the Anarchist Federation. Louis Aragon effectively left the group in 1932 to commit himself full time to the Communist Party; likewise Benjamin Péret, Mary Low, and Juan Breá, aligned themselves with the Communists, but later joined the POUM during the Spanish Civil War see: Greeley, R.A. (2006) *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War*. Yale University Press, New Haven, for an examination of the profound effect of the war on Surrealist art but also the split between Spanish and French Surrealists. Wolfgang Paalen believed in a complete split between the group and politics. Dalí supported the capitalist system and the fascist dictatorship of Franco in Spain, however he was quite alone in this and was considered a traitor by Breton.

themselves into thinking that art movements held the potential for real political revolution, when to Miller the only hope for changing society came from self-examination and the individual will to self-progression. Miller's deep political scepticism is born out of a firm conviction that 'There is no feasible scheme for universal liberation' (Miller, 1939, p.153). and, as such, he is diametrically opposed to Breton's socialist framework for Surrealism, as well as blatantly ideological frameworks for literature in general. For Miller, the quest for freedom is seen in Bergsonian terms, he refuses the rationalisation of the creative; the language and conceptualisation of the political artist confound him:

is fundamentally personal and religious. It has nothing to do with liberty and justice, which are idle words signifying nobody knows precisely what. It has to do with making poetry, or, if you will, with making life a poem. It has to do with the adoption of a creative attitude towards life. (Miller, 1939, p.152)

'An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere' goes on to attack the leading Surrealist Paul Eluard in some detail. Miller considered Eluard a personal friend and openly admired his work, however to Miller Eluard was guilty of two great sins, firstly the politicisation of his work and the 'lowering' of the creative process to reach out to the collective:

Below the belt all men are brothers. Man has never known soli-tude except in the upper regions where one is either a poet or a madman—or a criminal. "To-day," writes Paul Eluard, "the soli-tude of poets is breaking down. They are now men among men, they have brothers.' It is unfortunately too true, and that is why the poet is becoming more and more rare. I still prefer the anarchic life; unlike Paul Eluard I cannot say that the word "fraternization" exalts me. Nor does it seem to me that this idea of brotherhood arises from a poetic conception of life... The brotherhood of man is a permanent delusion common to idealists everywhere in all epochs: it is the reduction of the principle of individuation to the least common denominator of intelligibility. It is what leads the masses to identify themselves with movie stars and megalomaniacs like Hitler and Mussolini... That Paul Eluard is desperately lonely, that he strives with might and main to establish communication with his fellow-man, I understand and subscribe to with all my heart. But when Paul Eluard goes down into the street and becomes a man he is not making himself un-derstood and liked for what he is—for the poet that he is, I mean. On the contrary, he is establishing communication with his fellow-men by capitulation, by renunciation of his individuality, his high role. If he is accepted it is only because he is willing to

surrender those qualities which differentiate him from his fellow-men and make him unsympathetic and unintelligible to them. (Miller, 1939, p.151)

For Miller the creative experience is deeply rooted in the individual, he foresees a dumbing down of that process, and by default a lack of authenticity, when it is shackled to political expediency. The role of the artist is to combine the creative and the lived experience to create truth if this then leads others to a similar path then so be it. Actively leading the masses to any kind of position, however, is anathema to Miller. There is purity in the act of creation that is uniquely individual and for Miller it is not, and cannot, be part of a wider political debate. Written in 1938, the essay is full of foreboding for what happens to a society when artists refuse their traditional position and descend to the politics of the masses:

The Surrealists are trying to open a magic chamber of man's being through knowledge. That is where the fatal mistake lies. They are looking backwards instead of forwards. To discredit the world of reality, as they suggest, is an act of will, not of fate. What is really discredited is done silently, unostentatiously, and alone. People band together to proclaim an ideal, or a principle, to establish a movement, to organize a cult. But if they believed, each and every one wholeheartedly, they would have no need of numbers, nor of creeds, nor of principles, etc. The fear of standing alone is the evidence that the faith is weak. Man is happier when he is in a crowd; he feels safe and justified in what he is doing. But crowds have never accomplished anything, except destruction. The man who wants to organize a movement is invoking aid to help tear down something which he is powerless to combat single-handed. When a man is truly creative he works single-handed and he wants no help. A man acting alone, on faith, can accomplish what trained armies are incapable of accomplishing. To believe in one's self, in one's own powers, is apparently the most difficult thing in the world. Unfortunately there is nothing, absolutely nothing, more efficacious than believing in one's self. When a movement dies there is left only the memory of the man who originated the movement, the man who believed in what he was saying, what he was doing. The others are without name; they contributed only their faith in an idea. And that is never enough. (Miller, 1939, p.184)

Miller acknowledges the need within humans to band together in the hopes of achieving political change, but he sees this as a mistake and an illusion nothing can be accomplished by the masses that must not first be realised by the individual. For Miller what the political

collective symbolises is nothing more than the inherent herd mentality within all of us, an inability to envisage authentic individual change rather it is easier to perceive change within the acceptable boundaries, parameters that are socially acceptable to the status quo. In Bergsonian terms, political change has become so conceptualised as to make the very idea obsolete.

The artist must live above the political concerns of the collective, almost on a higher intellectual plane, and when he seeks to enter the political sphere he must account for the true nature of the masses. For Miller the masses were something to be suspicious of, and he saw them as intrinsically stupid, greedy and easily led. For this very reason he openly uses the names of Hitler and Mussolini to illustrate that the masses long for a dictator, not for freedom. As noble as the Surrealists' political beliefs may be, Miller believes that the masses long to be led, right or left makes no difference the institutionalisation of politics is determined in general by 'it is the reduction of the principle of individuation to the least common denominator of intelligibility.' (Miller, 1939, p.152) The appeal of politics requires the debasement of the intellect to appeal to the moronic masses. For Miller the role of the artist is to 'revive the primitive, anarchic instincts which have been sacrificed for the illusion of living in comfort'. (Miller, 1939, p.156) This averaging out of the intellect to appeal to the masses repulsed Miller, whether it came from the dictators of the right or the intellectuals of the left. Miller did not ask for or see the need for a leader:

I am not against leaders per se. On the contrary, I know how necessary they are. They will be necessary as long as men are insufficient unto themselves. As for myself, I need no leader and no god. I am my own leader and my own god. I make my own bibles. I believe in myself- that is my whole credo. (Miller, 1939, p.158)

Miller's attitude to political engagement during this period has received a lot of attention from critics, mostly due to George Orwell's 'Inside the Whale' (1940), a three part essay that mixes a superficial review of Miller's writing to date, along with a more personal anecdotal attack on Miller's political passivity, a general overview of literature at that time, all through the prism of the biblical tale of Jonah and the Whale. Many critics have seen 'Inside the Whale' as a direct attack upon Miller; however I see it as a continuation of the letters that the two writers had been exchanging for a few years previously.⁴ Orwell admired much about Miller and vice versa, however what you have are two writers

⁴ For a more nuanced approach to Orwell and Miller's relationship see: Colls, R. (2013) *George Orwell: English Rebel*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

gravitating towards polar opposites in relation to political action. As Miller moves, or more to the point removes, himself from collective politics and action, Orwell is more convinced than ever that this is a luxury the world can ill afford. Orwell and Miller's very concept of reality is at odds:

I liked *Tropic of Cancer* especially for three things, first of all a peculiar rhythmic quality in your English, secondly the fact that you dealt with facts well known to everybody but never mentioned in print... thirdly the way in which you would wander off into a kind of reverie where the laws of normal reality were slipped just a little but not too much... but I think on the whole in *Black Spring* you have moved too much from the ordinary world into a sort of Mickey Mouse universe where people and things don't have to obey the rules of space and time. I dare say I am wrong and have missed your drift altogether, but I have a sort of belly-to-earth attitude and always feel uneasy when I get away from the ordinary world where grass is green and stones are hard etc. (Colls, 2013, p.45)

As Miller begins to play more with Bergsonian concepts of time and reality in his work and, to a point, Surrealism (especially in *Black Spring*), Orwell fails to make the creative jump with him. What Orwell does is place Miller in contrast to other writers, showing how far out of step Miller's pacifism was, but also how much the passivity, as Orwell saw it, was part of greater whole:

I first met Miller at the end of 1936, when I was passing through Paris on my way to Spain. What most intrigued me about him was to find that he felt no interest in the Spanish war whatever. He merely told me in forcible terms that to go to Spain at that moment was the act of an idiot. He could understand anyone going there from purely selfish motives, out of curiosity, for instance, but to mix oneself up in such things from a sense obligation was sheer stupidity. In any case my ideas about combating Fascism, defending democracy, etc., etc., were all baloney. Our civilization was destined to be swept away and replaced by something so different that we should scarcely regard it as human — a prospect that did not bother him, he said. And some such outlook is implicit throughout his work. Everywhere there is the sense of the approaching cataclysm, and almost everywhere the implied belief that it doesn't matter. The only political declaration which, so far as I know, he has ever made in print is a purely negative one. A year or so ago an American magazine, the Marxist Quarterly, sent out a questionnaire to various American writers asking them to define

their attitude on the subject of war. Miller replied in terms of extreme pacifism, an individual refusal to fight, with no apparent wish to convert others to the same opinion — practically, in fact, a declaration of irresponsibility. (Orwell, 1961, p.149)

I would argue that what Miller is practicing here is Buddhist non-attachment. If someone wants to go to war for the experience, that is their choice, but to go out of a naive belief in a cause or because of duty is senseless. Orwell acknowledges that Miller espouses his position with no attempt to convert others to his beliefs, seeing it through incredulity as an avowal of irresponsibility. I think this is again shows just how far apart Miller and Orwell are, not only politically, but also in regards to how they envisage political action. Orwell cannot conceive that one can hold a deeply held belief and not try to convert others to your way of thinking, whilst Miller takes a very Buddhist view of action and sees that it is meaningless if the individual does not come to the realisation personally. Miller sees no difference between Fascism, Communism and Democracy because they are all variations on a theme, rigged to force the individual into the collective, to maintain the stultifying status quo:

I am against revolutions because they always involve a return to status quo. I am against the status quo both before and *after* revolutions. I don't want to wear a black shirt or a red shirt. I want to wear the shirt that suits my taste. And I don't want to salute like an automaton either. I prefer to shake hands when I meet someone I like. The fact is, to put it simply, I am positively against all this crap which is carried on first in the name of this thing, then in the name of that. I believe only in what is active, immediate and personal. (Miller, 1961, p.160)

Miller denies political distinctions, believing that one side is not any better or worse than the other, because they all seek to preserve a collective way of living that Miller sees as a fundamental rejection of individuality. Revolution is a meaningless, hollow word within what is nothing more than political rhetoric. Primarily Miller's position is that of a simple individualist who acknowledges no obligations to anyone else, in any event, no obligation to society as a whole, an expressly individualistically Buddhist way of seeing the coming war and how to function within it. Orwell identifies Miller's complete fidelity to the belief in individualism, but rather than acknowledge the importance in Miller's reservations concerning the aestheticisation of politics inside the avant-garde, Orwell perceives Miller's individualism as signifying a passive stance. Orwell is correct in perceiving Miller's passivity, but I do not think he understands it for what it truly is. Orwell is so intensely

political that it is very hard for him to see that Miller's stance is not one of denial or that of an intrinsically selfish man incapable of thinking of others, but the stance of a man who has taken a different route, who refuses to participate in a situation he sees as little more than societal pantomime. Miller's views on warfare were heavily inspired by his reading of British psychotherapist E. Graham Howe I will look at Howe's influence on Miller in more detail in relation to Buddhism in chapter 4 however in short, Howe saw warfare as a controlled playing out of outdated notions of good versus evil/ right versus wrong, staged and orchestrated by the arbiters of the political status quo. Miller and Orwell could not be coming from more diametrically opposed positions, both sincerely held and unyielding. Orwell belittles Miller, ridiculing him for his literary life in Paris, insulated from the political realities surrounding him:

When *Tropic of Cancer* was published the Italians were marching into Abyssinia and Hitler's concentration camps were already bulging. The intellectual foci of the world were Rome, Moscow, and Berlin. It did not seem to be a moment at which a novel of outstanding value was likely to be written about American dead-beats cadging drinks in the Latin Quarter. Of course a novelist is not obliged to write directly about contemporary history, but a novelist who simply disregards the major public events of the moment is generally either a fool or a plain idiot. From a mere account of the subject matter of *Tropic of Cancer* most people would probably assume it to be no more than a bit of naughty-naughty left over from the twenties. (Orwell, 1957, p.10)

Critics have observed that the problem with 'An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere' is that Miller does not make a clear case for himself as an a-political writer, whilst disparaging those who see their responsibility to act and write in support of a sincerely held belief. Miller's critique of political writers and specifically the Surrealists is again cloaked in Rankian ideals. The writer must face his life as is and then make it art to fall back on politics is to deny life as a work of art within itself:

In every age, just as in every life worthy of the name, there is the effort to re-establish that equilibrium which is disturbed by the power and tyranny which a few great individuals exercise over us. This struggle is fundamentally personal and religious... One of the most effective ways in which it expresses itself is in killing off the tyrannical influences wielded over us by those who are already dead. It consists not in denying these exemplars, but in absorbing them, assimilating them, and

eventually surpassing them. Each man has to do this for himself. There is no feasible scheme for universal liberation. (Miller, 1939, p.152)

Miller's judgement of the Surrealists is clearly Rankian in the sense that he accuses the Surrealists of not having lived. They have allowed their art to become divorced from their lives and the result is that they have ceased to live consequently their lives are no longer art within themselves and this disconnect has led them to the sterility of politics:

It seems to me that this struggle for liberty and justice is a confession or admission on the part of all those engaging in such a struggle that they have failed to live their own lives. Let us not deceive ourselves about 'humanitarian impulses' on the part of the great brotherhood. (Miller, 1939, p.157)

Miller ignores the complexities of politics in the Surrealist movement and also the divergences between individual Surrealists and their level of political commitment. Likewise he does not acknowledge the bulwark that Surrealism offered to the left wing intelligentsia in the era of Soviet Socialist Realism. Miller would have been well aware of these distinctions, but would have thought them unimportant in regards to his own unwavering vision of the individual role of the artist and the toxic effect of artists and writers positioning themselves within the political sphere however it does at times lead to Miller oversimplifying the political nature of the Surrealists and open himself up to charges of misrepresenting the group to fit his own agenda admittedly not something that Miller had not been guilty of before and would be again after 1939.

Miller's antipathy to artists becoming politically involved was a position he came to quite easily and it would have been impossible to sway him. The other main question he addressed in 'An Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere', however, was one that was not so easily answered. In examining Miller's views on Automatism, I have touched on the divergence between Miller and the Surrealists' views on the nature of creativity and how that creativity is expressed. The Surrealists based much of their concept on the role of the Unconscious in creativity. Although it is out with the scope of this chapter to provide a thorough analysis of the influence of Freud on the Surrealists, I will be using Freud's theory of the Unconscious as utilised by Breton.⁵ Miller linked the Surrealists need for

⁵ The influence of Freud upon the Surrealists is rich, complex and varied. For an analysis of how Surrealists absorbed these ideas into both their art but also their fundamental concept of self, see: Lomas, D. (2000) *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity*. Yale University

political action to a wider societal malaise, the failure of belief in the potential of the individual, and the accompanying propensity to look towards the Unconscious for resolution:

Our world is suffering from mental disorders—from the insanities and neuroses of one form and another. Just as literature swings at times from the poetic to the prosodic, so nowadays we have the swing from the physical disorders to the mental, with the inevitable emergence of new types of genius cropping out among the mental healers. All that the creative personality demands is a new field for the exercise of its powers; out of the dark, inchoate forces, these personalities will, by the exercise of their creative faculties, impose upon the world a new ideology, a new and vital set of symbols. What the collective mass desires is the concrete, visible, tangible substance... This they can pore over, chew, masticate, tear to pieces or prostrate themselves before. Tyranny always works best under the guise of liberating ideas. The tyranny of ideas is merely another way of saying the tyranny of a few great personalities. (Miller, 1939, p.157)

Obviously much wider questions are at play here, but Miller is directly concerned with what he sees as ‘The exploration of the Unconscious which is now under way is a confession of the bankruptcy of the spirit’ (Miller, 1939, p.170) or, as Breton puts it in ‘The Automatic Message’, ‘the determination of the precise constitution of the subliminal’ (Breton, 1934, p.100). Both are coming at the role of the Unconscious from vastly different places Miller’s is one of suspicion, Breton’s one of revelation. Miller does not deny the influence that the Unconscious has upon creativity, yet the more Breton attempts to determine its precise terms the more uncomfortable Miller becomes, beginning to see the creative process as stunted by it rather than invigorated. Adding to this concern is the fact that it appears to Miller that the Surrealists do not seem to think that the Unconscious requires further examination within itself as a concept:

The stress on the Unconscious forces of man does not necessarily imply the elimination of consciousness. On the contrary, it implies the expansion of consciousness. There can be no return to an instinctive life, and in fact, even among primitive men I see no evidence of purely instinctive life. (Miller, 1939, p.189)

Press, New Haven. For a discussion of how Freudian concepts influenced female Surrealists but also how their male counterparts replicated certain innate ambiguities in Freud’s work relating to gender, see: Lusty, N. (2007) *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey.

Miller is beginning to home in on what his real issue with the Surrealism is and it will again lead us back to Miller's concept of the artist as influenced by his readings of Bergson and Rank. The relationship between the primitive and the instinctual is at the very root of creativity for both Miller and the Surrealists. Simply put, the Surrealists define the Unconscious in terms of an instinctive, comprehensive power within humanity, consequently suggesting that a reversion to the primitive will liberate humanity from the suffocating taint of rationality. For Miller the Unconscious is not seen in these terms it is not the means or the destination of true creativity. Rather, in Rankian terms, it is the failure to engage with the friction of life. The friction between the Unconscious and Conscious is essential to Miller's vision of creativity; the Surrealists seek assimilation into the Unconscious, whereas Miller requires dissidence and discord. Both Miller and the Surrealists employ the word 'primitive' in the positive sense of a breaking free from convention, what they disagree on is how this breaking away occurs. It is clear that the Surrealists tweaked Freud's theory of the Unconscious to fit their wider argument, and likewise Miller's critique is based on his rather antagonistic assessment of Freudianism however what their opposing views on the Unconscious does is again lead us back to Automatism and the individuality of the artist.

The Surrealist romanticisation of the primitive as a creative promised land accessed through the Unconscious is deeply suspect to Miller in that it denies the rational as an integral part of the creative process, but also that, followed to its natural conclusion, it refutes the rightful place of the artist by equating the artistic instinct with something that can be cured. As the Surrealist embraced the idea of mental disturbance as a key facet of the Unconscious, Miller sees it as detrimental to the artist's quest to communicate to society. The artist requires respect for his medium if he is to be able to connect out with his own small group of like-minded individuals a designation of insanity, whether worn as a mark of pride or not, makes this impossible. Automatism based as it is on emanations of the Unconscious becomes the great democratising agent of the creative process. In theory everyone can channel their Unconscious into invention thus the formally elitist position of the artist becomes obsolete or at the very least reduced. Caroline Blinder shows Breton's understanding of the roots of Automatism in language would lead to the side-lining of the writer from his own work:

Breton classifies as visual images are liable to be actions or pictures of an external reality which by nature are already laden with significance, and which we as a result

have a propensity to sentimentalise or understand according to our own psychological make-up. In Breton's rationale, Automatism's deference to words in themselves must be seen in the light of a complete stress on the impersonality of the manifestations. Breton, by concentrating exclusively on the legitimacy of the words rather than the artist from whom they come, looks to de-sentimentalise and de-personalise language. In order for Breton to do this he has to de-emphasise the writer's capacity to reason. Reason, as Breton understands it, is instrumental in "subjecting the works of the spirit to its irrevocable dogmas" and thus deprives us "of the mode of expression which harms us the least". (Blinder, 1999, p. 24)

Breton connects Consciousness and inhibitions with reason, reiterating the case for the writer to give over control to the Unconscious, to liberate himself from another form of oppression. As Blinder shows, 'If the instinctual and desire-driven in Freudian terms negatively impacts our potential as social beings, it confirms for the Surrealists that it is in actuality a radical way of subverting conventional social structures.' (Blinder, 1999, p.24) Miller's more visionary approach is somewhat at odds with Breton as he sees the conventional and familiar as strange and spectacular in and of itself and thus justifies his own focus on recounting the ordinary as extraordinary. For example in *Black Spring* he combines the names of famous people, ordinary people, objects and businesses for almost three pages non-stop, absorbing the everyday into the novel by way of lists. A short excerpt looks like this:

... And then suddenly, like Jacob when he mounted the golden ladder, suddenly all the voices of heaven break loose. Like a geyser spurting forth from the bare earth the whole American scene gushes up- American Can, American Tel&Tel, Atlantic and Pacific, Standard Oil, United Cigars, Father John, Sacco&Vazetti, Uneeds Biscuit, Seaboard Air Line, Sapolio, Nick Carter, Trixie Friganza, Foxy Grandpa... (Miller, 1936, p.203)

Miller uses lists as a form of Automatism to set a sense of place, time or mood. He had also used it to great effect in *Tropic of Cancer*:

Tania is a fever, too- *les voies urinaires*, Café de la Liberte, Place des Vosges, bright neckties on the Boulevard Montparnasse, dark bathrooms, Porto Sec, Abdullah cigarettes, the adagio sonata Pathetique, aural amplifications, anecdotal séances, burnt sienna breasts, heavy garters, what time is it, golden pheasants stuffed with

chestnuts, taffeta fingers, vaporish twilights turning to ilex, acromegaly, cancer and delirium, warm veils, poker chips, carpets of blood and soft thighs. (Miller, 1934, p.18)

For Miller, the writer's visionary faculty functions to bring a novel view of the immediate world, something that objects within themselves, however peculiar and unusual they may seem, cannot provide:

The Surrealists themselves have demonstrated the possibilities of the marvelous which lie concealed in the commonplace. They have done it by juxtaposition. But the effect of these strange transpositions and juxtapositions of the most unlike things has been to freshen the vision... The vision precedes the arrangement, or rearrangement. The world doesn't grow stale. Every great artist by his work re-affirms this fact. The artist is the opposite of the politically-minded individual, the opposite of the reformer, the opposite of the idealist. The artist does not tinker with the universe: he recreates it out of his own experience and understanding of life. He knows that the transformation must proceed from within outward, not vice versa. The world problem becomes the problem of the Self. The World problem is the projection of the inner problem. It is a process of expropriating the world, of becoming God. The striving toward this limit, the expansion of the Self, in other words, is what truly brings about the condition of the marvelous. Knowledge is not involved, nor power. But vision. (Miller, 1939, p.157)

Miller acknowledges the Surrealist concept of the marvellous, but he feels they have forgotten its importance in their quest for the political and their reliance upon the Unconscious to explain all. Miller is reiterating once again that there can be no authentic creativity that does not originate from the self. It is here that Miller makes a differentiation that in his mind invalidates what the Surrealists are trying to do as opposed to what he sees himself doing. Both are interested in the marvellous, but to Miller the Surrealists are reacting 'against the crippling, dwarfing harmony imposed by French culture' (Miller, 1939, p.194) whereas his interaction with the marvellous is directly linked to his creativity. Miller emphasises that the recreation of individual experience does not allow for political rhetoric or action if the aim is to create communication, then said communication must be instinctual and individual, and it is this very need to communicate that is the mark of the true artist. The individual's artistic independence is not the uppermost priority of Automatism whereas for Miller, one could almost say the exact reverse:

Will analysis, or revolution, or anything else dissolve this picture? Is understanding a goal in itself, or is understanding a by-product? Do we want a closer rapport between artist and collectivity, or do we want an increasing tension? Do we want art to become more communicative, or do we want it to be more fecundating? Do we want every man to become an artist and thus eliminate art? (Miller, 1939, p.158)

Miller comes full circle in his critique of the Surrealists to Miller the role of the artist is to create and live authentically, as one is not possible without the other the artist is not a normal member of society. It is not feasible for everyone to become an artist for Miller artist is a designation acquired through suffering and estrangement from the comforts and securities of everyday life. There is no quick way to tap into one's creativity, no special trap door in the mind that can be opened on demand.

In *A Self-Made Surrealist: Ideology and Aesthetics in the works of Henry Miller*, Caroline Blinder explores one of Miller unpublished short stories 'Last Will and Testament' published sometime in the 1930's, as an example of a pastiche by Miller. It uses the Surrealist tropes of random sentence structuring juxtaposed with the unconventionally erotic to poke fun at how seriously the Surrealists took themselves:

The thing to know is if you are crazy or only making literature. To know si l'affaire est dans le sac! That when you turn around there is no shadow behind you or if you're asked for your carte d'identité you don't have to take off your gloves first. When I open the door I see a pair of socks lying on the floor of the closet; not to bend down and touch them with your hands but to quickly kick them about three inches to the left and rear. The post man wakes up at five thirty punkt; to know when to write without disturbing him. Everybody is alone, and it is worse to be alone when you are with people. If you lived on the same street all your life and there was no time, except at the end, several years later, when it is too late. Because it snows does not prove that time elapses. (Blinder, 1999, p.26)

Blinder compares Miller's pastiche to Breton's *The Immaculate Conception* (1930), providing another example of Miller's waning patience with the Surrealists. Breton was well aware of the incredulity that some of his claims were being met with. In his introduction to *The Immaculate Conception*, he could be speaking to Miller directly although obviously that is not the case:

Finally, it must be pointed out that numerous pastiches have been recently put into circulation, texts not always easy to distinguish from authentic ones, since all criteria of origin are objectively absent. These few obscurities, these failures, these flounderings, these imitations, now more than ever require, in the interest of the activity we wish to conduct, a complete return to principles. (Breton, 1930, p.92)

If Automatism is a genuine attempt at creating literature that in effect removes itself from conventional parables in a non-rational and de-intellectualised way, then the very foundation of *The Immaculate Conception*, with its structure and openly religious symbolism, must be seen as a complicated instance of "pure" Automatism. Breton falls short of how to deal with the probability that the intellectual range and careful structuring of the Automatic process in itself queries the clarity of it in terms of an unconscious process. What Miller saw as an evident paradox was the employment of extremely sophisticated discourse to characterise something universal as well as anti-rational. It is apparent that Miller does not engage with this issue as frankly as he did some time later in his *Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere*, but while Miller's approach is intentionally vague in 'Last Will and Testament', since there is no detectable argument in the text itself, it nonetheless must be understood in relation to what it imitates, specifically the chapter 'The Original Judgement'. One of the main ways in which I disagree with Blinder is in how she views what Miller is trying to do with 'Last Will and Testament' she sees it as an example of Miller experimenting with Automatism, pastiche yes, but sincere. We will never know the exact month and year on which Miller wrote it, however as I have stated the jocular tone is a best mocking and at worst contemptuous. In examining the ways in which both texts interrelate and yet differ I think shows Miller's growing sense of the limitations of Surrealism for himself.

The Immaculate Conception is an experimental work which seeks to reproduce mimetically assorted mental disorders, in order to reveal the absurdity in society's formation of barriers between the normal and abnormal, a recurring theme in Surrealist work in Breton's *Nadja*⁶ (1928), Nadia, the woman whose insanity is poeticised, is

⁶ The similarities between the heroine of Breton's *Nadja* (1928) and Miller's representation of June Mansfield in *Tropic of Cancer* are clear to see. The protagonist Andre meets Nadja by chance in the street and falls madly in love with her. Nadja is uninhibited and unique; she appears to be Andre's intellectual equal and possible muse. As Nadja reveals more about her past life it quickly becomes apparent that she is insane and as her reality is revealed Andre feels his attraction wane. Nadja's absence from his life allows him to cast her as his perpetual muse; she is once again mysterious and compelling, forever available in his memories. Miller cited Nadja as one of the

compulsorily hospitalised. The Surrealist concentration on insanity is also apparent in a succession of photographs of hysterical women largely taken from medical journals. In these photographs the hysterical subjects were characterised as being on the verge of orgasm, laying emphasis on the erotic as well as subversive role which the Surrealists sought to link to hysteria. This is significant, in so far as it illustrates how the Surrealists intentionally shun the distasteful and agonising features of being in the throes of hysteria. By doing this the hysterical subject, usually a woman, became depersonalised to the point that her symptoms became her function as well. In other words, the hysterical and unstable subject was seen first and foremost in terms of a new surreal icon; representative of the desired association between the irrational, the erotic, and the insane, as the photographs attest by seldom naming the subjects themselves thus centring on the thematic significance of hysteria. The employment of hysteria as a means to signify the ecstatic as well as erotic aspects of the surreal manifests itself in *The Immaculate Conception* through unflinching attempts to combine the scientific, the simulation of a clinical complaint, with the fictional, the poetic technique of Eluard and Breton. At the same time, the Surrealists were fully aware of the traditional connections between religious manifestations of complete devotion and what could be seen as hysterical forms of representation. In this sense, *The Immaculate Conception* also stands out as a religious parable of the creative process itself. The explicit allegorical context and structuring of the text adds to the difficulty of determining how much it excels as a representation of an Automatic text or not. Predictably, Breton tries to assuage potential confusion by situating the work securely within the experimental field of Automatism:

The authors particularly wish to stress the sincerity of the present undertaking which consists of submitting the five essays that follow to the consideration of both laymen and specialists. The slightest suggestion of any borrowing from clinical texts or of pastiche, skilful or otherwise, of such texts, would of course be enough to make these pieces both pointless and wholly ineffective. (Breton, 1930, p.47)

What is, above all, peculiar about this introduction to the second part of the book ‘The Possessions’, is that Breton leaves the possibility exposed as to precisely what laymen and specialists he is referring to. Does he mean to say that the text can stand up to close

most influential books of his life and the similarities between June and Nadja are obvious. Likewise the parallels between the representations of women in *Nadja* and *Quiet Days in Clichy* see Sazama-Moreau, S.T. (1999) *Women and Paris in Andre Breton's Nadja and Henry Miller's Quiet Days in Clichy*. University of Maryland Press, Bethesda.

examination by experts on mental illness or does he mean experts on Automatism? Breton and Eluard evidently want to portray the texts as their own, and certainly seem to think that the efficacy of the texts lies in their authenticity. The quandary is that any investigation of authenticity in itself is challenging if not unfeasible as far as Automatism is concerned.

The title *The Immaculate Conception* can on the one hand be seen to be a sign of the birth of Surrealism as a sacred occurrence and on the other as a signal of a new age of creativity. In this sense, as pointed out at length by Caroline Blinder, the semantic framework for the deification of the creative process can be read simultaneously as religious and anti-religious; a vagueness which Eluard and Breton calculatingly play on throughout the text. To a certain extent written in defence of the disarray and anarchy inherent in the minds of allegedly disturbed people, the text nonetheless functions in a ritualistic way, with the assorted chapters as recreations of chaos as well as stations on the road to salvation. The difficulty of *The Immaculate Conception* thus resided both in its construction and in the way its agenda is manifested in religious terminology all the way through the book.

The first part of *The Immaculate Conception* entitled 'Man' comprises five texts that record the development from conception and birth to death. What is manifest, however, is the way in which three of the five texts deal with pre-natal phases; 'Conception', 'Intra-Uterine life', and 'Birth' are all concerned with the fulfilment of the libido in the womb, and the subsequent sections 'Life' and 'Death' demonstrates the expected nostalgia for this vanished harmonious pre-natal state. In the second section: 'The Possessions', psychotic fevers are written down by Breton and Eluard in an Automatic state. The word 'Possessions' also suggests demonology which in this instance is secularised as the authors allow themselves to be occupied by deliriums of a psychotic rather than religious nature.

More than numerous other so-called Automatic texts, *The Immaculate Conception* epitomises the unfeasibility of making unadulterated Automatism dictation by the unconscious. The brief overview provided above shows the enormous planning both structurally and thematically which must have gone into the making of *The Immaculate Conception*. Once again, the title itself adds an ironic twist to the concept of pure Automatism, for the text can be seen as the product of the collaborative effort of Breton and Eluard, rather than paradisiacal illumination. In this sense Blinder suggests that Miller's own rendition and pastiche of parts of *The Immaculate Conception* could, in theory, be seen, not as a subversion of Automatism, but just as an alternative version, just

as *The Immaculate Conception* can be understood as the Surrealist version of the birth of Christianity with a secular twist.

As far as Automatism is concerned, Miller's 'Last Will and Testament' at any rate succeeds in circumventing the clear constraints of religious as well as mental signifiers, which are so evident in the title and the chapter headings of Breton and Eluard's piece. In spite of the clear religious references in *The Immaculate Conception*, Breton maintained that it was written through Automatism. He explicated that the sizeable movements of continuous prose were written in uninhibited instants of Automatism and then assembled into chapters secondarily.

The subject remains then of how to create and represent the arbitrariness and authenticity of the Automatic process within something which ultimately point a predetermined sphere. Miller's 'Last Will and Testament' marks in many respects one of his most lucid reassessments of the Surrealist principle of Automatism. What Miller does is pry open the blocked cyclical character of the Surrealist argument, as he queries the Surrealist capacity to truly imitate the insanity that is such a fundamental part of the Surrealist aesthetic. As Miller succinctly puts it midway in 'Last Will and Testament', 'None of this is sufficiently crazy.' (Blinder, 1999, p.30) It may be possible that Miller is speaking to himself and his incapability to go into a delirious state, but if one considers the first line of 'Last Will and Testament', 'The thing to know is if you are crazy or only making literature', (Blinder, 1999, p.30) it would seem as though Miller deems insanity a crucial part of any creative process in itself. In this sense, Miller's craziness, rather than a delirious state of a thoroughly different nature, is an accepted condition for the author to find himself in. While both Miller and the Surrealists attempt to write sentences which could parallel discontinuities, Miller's observation nevertheless emphasises the necessity for the writer to know from the beginning what his strategy is. What Miller comments on, is on the one hand the Surrealist project in *The Immaculate Conception*, founded as it is on an endeavour to mimic the thought processes of the insane, and concurrently the inherent unfeasibility of doing this cogently through a piece of literature. What Miller appears to point out is that any attempt at replicating insanity through Automatism can only be an exercise in intellectual simulation and therein lies the rub for Miller. Automatism becomes nothing more than an intellectual indulgence once in Miller's view it refuses to acknowledge its limitations. There is something pathetically comical in Breton's claim that *The Immaculate Conception* came out of Automatism, perfectly edited and in chapter form. In the end as

much as Miller admires Breton and shares some of the Surrealists positions, the suspension of disbelief required is just a step too far for Miller.

I would argue that Miller's relationship with the Surrealists is very clearly influenced by his readings of Rank and Bergson. Miller fully participates in Rank's concept of 'art-ideology' in that he is drawn to the prevailing artistic movement of his day, artistically, intellectually and politically. In Rankian theory it is essential that Miller incorporates the Surrealists into his thinking and writing: to move on to a fully realised art based on life, Miller must not isolate himself in the hope of keeping his art pure, but must embrace the crucible through which his authentic art will be produced. Surrealism is a barrier through which Miller must break. Miller utilises Surrealist tropes to explore and refine his own vision, but ultimately moves beyond them, coming to see them as restrictive and intransigent:

When I was living in Paris ... we used to say, 'let's take the lead.' That meant going off the deep end, diving into the unconscious, just obeying your instincts, following your impulses, of the heart, or the guts, or whatever you want to call it. But that's my way of putting it, that isn't really surrealist doctrine; that wouldn't hold water, I'm afraid, with an Andre Breton. However the French standpoint, the doctrinaire standpoint, didn't mean too much to me. All I cared about was that I found in it another means of expression, an added one, a heightened one, but one to be used very judiciously... (Brooks, 1963, p.148)

In his uses of Automatism, Miller is constantly employing a Bergsonian perspective, centred on the idea of creativity as something that springs from the writer's ability to see the interrelated nature of their own life experiences in relation to time. For Bergson there is no pure spring of creativity located in the Unconscious, but rather a complex palimpsest of experiences and the timelessness of understanding, which the writer must accept and embrace to be truly creative. Miller may use Automatism as a literary technique, but he remains true to Bergsonian principles; he surmises the idea of the artist and his universe in Bergsonian terms, the artist has no need to 'rearrange the objects and conditions of this world' (Miller, 1962, p.157) because they are, but conceptualisations, based on a rational and scientific model that the artist has already refuted. Likewise, Miller sees the role of the marvellous through Rank in that the artist must progress beyond the political world, whilst acknowledging it, to a deeper sense of self; internalising collective problems and distilling them into the purity of internal, individual awareness. I would argue that Miller is also

showing a Buddhist understanding of his creativity, combining the two main philosophical influences of his life, using them as a tool to engage with the leading artistic and ideological movement of his day, but ultimately coming to a conclusion that is intrinsically Buddhist.

Chapter 4 - Killing the Buddha: Miller and Zen Buddhism

Miller's relationship with Zen Buddhism is at once complex and simple, mostly due to the nature of Miller's writing style and lifelong habit of approaching influential philosophies and doctrines in a piecemeal fashion rather than as a whole. As I have shown in previous chapters, Miller's writing style is one of being in the process of becoming, what the reader sees is a work in progress not a polished, finished product. We see Miller explore, embrace and jettison philosophical positions throughout his novels, often contradicting earlier positions taken or simplifying complicated theories to make them fit his purpose. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his relationship with Zen Buddhism, yet I would argue that in grasping this we approach an understanding of the very essence of Miller the man and the writer. If we look for Zen Buddhist influences in individual novels we can certainly find them, *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) is full of the Zen Buddhist symbols of fluidity and re-birth, we need only consider the final paragraph set by the Seine to see this, or consider *The Rosy Crucifixion Trilogy* (1949, 1953, 1960), three novels that explore Miller's suffering as a means to his eventual spiritual awakening. Yet to examine only select works is to fail to see the bigger picture of Miller's complete spiritual journey. Many critics have acknowledged Miller's Zen Buddhism, especially in his later, less critically acclaimed works, but have failed to appreciate that all Miller's work is an expression of his journey to Zen Buddhist enlightenment. This in part is due to the varying quality of Miller's later output, the constant rehashing of the same material, although integral to Miller's Zen Buddhist influenced idea of his own creativity, didn't always produce well written, innovative work. Ironically when Miller's reputation and commerciality were at their peak in the 1960's, he was producing sub-standard work to pay the bills or esoteric novellas that read more like Zen Buddhist treatise than works of fiction. Arguably this fall in the quality of output has led to Miller's later work being ignored by critics or glossed over as Miller's uninteresting Zen Buddhist phase. The aim of this chapter is to show that Miller didn't have a Zen Buddhist phase, but that rather his complete works can be read as his complicated path to Zen Buddhist enlightenment, a journey that was problematic and convoluted, but a course that nevertheless can be detected from his earliest works right through the overt Zen Buddhism of his final years.

The eclectic nature of Miller's religious influences can be traced back to his formative years in New York. The relationship between religion and the avant-garde in America during the final decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth

century is in many ways unique and offers us a fruitful insight into Miller's lifelong interest in different religions. Although in later life Miller would become associated, at least in the public's mind, with the Zen Buddhism of the West Coast, an association compounded by his writing of the preface for Jack Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* (1959), I would argue that Miller's religious antecedents are grounded in a much earlier American tradition. In *Henry Miller and Religion* (2007),¹ Robert Nesbit outlines three main factors that differentiate the religious and artistic climate of the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century from that of the later West Coast esotericism of the 1950's and 1960's.² First, the earlier religious communities sought a link between religion and science; I would argue that they sought to provide a spiritual dimension to the discombobulating onslaught of modernity. Second, they tried to encompass Christianity, to varying degrees, within their teachings rather than exclude or replace it. Third, the cultural elite accepted and was significantly involved in the promulgation of new forms of spiritual thought and practices.³

The move away from institutional religion amongst the cultural elite has its roots in the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century, with its marrying of Eastern philosophy, self-reliance and the natural world. Likewise, New Thought, Baha'i, Christian Science and the Rosicrucian faith flourished during this period. Arguably the most influential of all these sects was The Theosophical Society, established in New York in 1875. Founded by Madame Blavatsky, its popularity grew throughout the intervening years until it could boast of over 9000 adherents by the 1920's. Under the leadership of the charismatic Annie Besant, it attracted the interest of many well-known artists and writers including T.S. Eliot, Wassily Kandinsky, L. Frank Baum and Thornton Wilder.⁴ The

¹ Nesbit's book on the whole aims to place Miller within a Christian religious framework, although he acknowledges Eastern influences, his premise is one of Christian influences and imagery and Miller's novels as an example of confessional writing akin to Saint Augustine.

² Although Miller's interest in Zen intersected with that of the wider West Coast movement, it is important to acknowledge that Miller's was in no way, however peripheral, a part of the group. Tonkinson, C. (1996) *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation*. Thorsons Publishing, London, offers a well-rounded analysis of the influence of the various strands of Buddhism and their impact on the Beats.

³ The geographical epicenter of these events was Greenwich Village. An area of New York long associated with mixed demographics; from around 1880 onwards it was the intellectual capital of the country. Although much of the social and religious experimentation was a purely middle/upper class experience, the role of immigrant groups in the intellectual shaping of Greenwich Village shouldn't be underestimated see: Beard, R. and Berlowitz, L. (2003) *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture*. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey. Miller was greatly indebted to the Eastern European Jewish community for his early exposure to philosophy and spirituality.

⁴ One of the most interesting ways to approach this period of religious upheaval is to see it as a part of a wider phenomenon in American culture, that is the search for a utopia. In his book *The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth Century America 1900-1960* (1998) Syracuse University Press, New York, Timothy Miller argues that communitarianism is essential to how Americans conceive of political and social change and that at no time in their history has America been without communes committed to alternative models of living. The search for a utopia is a distinctly American

Gurdjieff movement, promoting a combination of self-development, spirituality and dancing, enjoyed great success in America thanks to the efforts of A.R. Orage, the editor of the literary journal, *The New Age*. Thanks to Orage many writers and publishers discovered Gurdjieff's teachings, including Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson, publishers of *The Little Review* respectively, with Anderson going so far as to publish a book called *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* in 1956, Katherine Mansfield, Hart Crane and Jean Toomer.

Yet it is perhaps the Vedanta movement which offers the best example of what Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) called 'the formation of a reverse discourse' (Foucault, 1978, p.101) the appropriation and re-fashioning of Eastern religions and philosophies by Asians themselves to appeal to the Western mindsets. The World Parliament of Religions that opened in Chicago in 1893 and introduced Americans to the Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda and the teachings of Ramakrishna⁵. In, *Orientalism and Religion: Post Colonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (1999) Richard King examines how Vivekananda took what was a relatively conventional form of Hinduism and tweaked it to satisfy Western sensibilities⁶. By presenting the central tenets of Hinduism through the philosophy of the eight century Indian theologian Shankara Vivekananda at one stroke conceived a model of what was thought of previously as a decadent and idolatrous pagan religion and made it palatable to Americans and Europeans a model that would in time bounce back to Asia itself, making Asians adherents and 'actors' in their own religions. Shankara's philosophy of Advaita Vedanta consolidated the concepts of *Atman*; the authentic self, and *Nirguna Brahman*; the supreme soul or God. By

experience beginning with the Pilgrims. In many ways Miller's life in Big Sur epitomises this model, the disillusionment with contemporary society, the search for an alternative community, the initial romanticising of a new life and the inevitable dissatisfaction of reality.

⁵ Vedanta can be said to have existed before Shankara however he was the first major proponent of its teachings. In short, Vedanta follows the three main texts of Hinduism: The Upanishads (the departure point for revelation), The Brahma Sutras (the logical texts) and The Bhagavad Gita (the practical text). In many ways Vivekananda is really a Neo-Vedantaist as he resists Shankara's emphasis on 'universal illusionism' that all the world is illusion and refocuses Vedanta on his own concept of 'universal realism' the European idea of metaphysical realism. For an understanding of the Vedanta practiced by Shankara see: Satchidanandendra, S. S. (1997) *The Method of the Vedanta: A Critical Account of the Advaita Tradition: A Critical Account of the Vedanta Tradition*. Motilal Banarsidass, Dehli. It is interesting to contrast this with: Swahananda, S. (2012) *Vedanta and Vivekananda*. Ramakrishna Mission, Kolkata, an evaluation that places Vivekananda front and center philosophically.

⁶ Swami Vivekananda was born Narendra Nath Datta in 1863 in Calcutta and died in 1902. Deeply influenced by the teaching of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda is credited with revitalising Hinduism in India and was a major intellectual influence in the burgeoning Nationalist cause. He is a deeply divisive character that to some introduced the doctrine of inter-faith tolerance to the West and to others was a charlatan who bastardized Eastern religions to make them palatable to western audiences and by default to secure both money and fame. For a critical re-examination of Vivekananda and his legacy see: Chattopadhyay, R. (1999) *Swami Vivekananda in India: A Corrective Biography*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.

placing the focus squarely on the individual's unique spiritual experience and the recognisable trope of the supreme entity or reality, Vivekananda fashioned a religion freed from its geographical roots and more unpalatable facets, modified and styled to Western tastes. He upped the ante yet again when he attempted to incorporate Buddhism into Vedanta, buying into the concept of a universal religion. As King explains in great detail, Vedanta and Buddhism in no way historically or theologically belong together, Vivekananda's endeavour to show Buddhism as an ancient component in Vedanta was somewhat cynically done. If nothing else Vivekananda understood exactly what Western audiences wanted and, as opportunistically as it may appear, he understood the appetite for inclusiveness and overarching philosophies. He was able to comprehend very quickly what would come to be called later in the twentieth century Perennial Philosophy; the belief that all religions share a universal basic truth however diverse their teachings and practises may be. Vivekananda was knowingly or unknowingly tapping into an already well trodden path for his American audience: the Transcendentalists had in the preceding decades integrated such ideas into their works and The Theosophical Society likewise included 'Wisdom-Religion' or 'Ancient Wisdom' within their doctrine. Aldous Huxley, an adherent of Vedanta perfectly illustrates the Westerner's understanding of these key concepts in his book, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945); showing how by the mid-twentieth century Vivekananda's hybrid vision was accepted as the ascendant representation of authentic Hinduism/Buddhism by the Western intelligentsia:

... the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical to, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being... the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the perennial philosophy may be found among the traditional lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions... The Buddha declined to make any statement in regard to the ultimate divine Reality. All he would talk about was Nirvana, which is the name of the experience that comes to the totally selfless and one-pointed... Maintaining, in this matter, the attitude of a strict operationalist, the Buddha would speak only of the spiritual experience, not of the metaphysical entity presumed by the theologians of other religions, as also of later Buddhism, to be the object and (since in contemplation the knower, the known and the knowledge are all one) at the same time the subject and substance of that experience... The Perennial Philosophy is expressed most succinctly in the Sanskrit

formula, *tat tvam asi* ('That thou art'); the Atman, or immanent eternal Self, is one with Brahman, the Absolute Principle of all existence; and the last end of every human being, is to discover the fact for himself, to find out who he really is. (Huxley, 1945, p.7)

Increasingly artists, writers and thinkers were looking for religious ideas that embraced modernity; the active role of the individual within their own spiritual journey, science and psychoanalysis, and the idea of the creative process as divine. In *Children of Fantasy: The First Rebels of Greenwich Village* (1978), Robert Humphrey perfectly captures the spirit of the time: 'Although Greenwich Villagers held diverse views on art and politics, they agreed that the individual should be liberated. To this end, they encouraged artistic freedom, violated conventional mores, and supported a radical reorganisation of society' (Humphrey, 1978, p.251). This obsession with personal liberation could never be satisfied within the strict confines of organised, institutional religion. As new models for living were experimented with, it is only natural that religion would also evolve to reflect the zeitgeist.

As noted by Robert Nesbit, Miller was hardly a part of the cultural elite of this period. As a working class college dropout, living in Brooklyn, Miller was not mixing in such intellectual circles as those of Greenwich Village. We know from Miller's reminiscences, however, that he attended many public lectures during the 1910's and 1920's, including those by The Theosophical Society and Benjamin Fay Mills, an evangelical preacher who incorporated the teaching of Swami Vivekananda into his sermons. Miller often recounted the story of his first meeting with Mills, when he was so affected by the sermon that he offered to do menial tasks in return for private lessons, a story that Nesbit suggests exemplifies both Miller's enthusiasm and his relatively low social standing. These were the pinnacle years of the public lecture circuit as a means by which to affect societal change and Miller wrote at length throughout his life of the education afforded to him by attending such lectures. If hearing Emma Goldman speak turned him on to European literature/theatre and Anarchist philosophy, then The Theosophical Society undoubtedly introduced him to Eastern Philosophy⁷. Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* (1888) and

⁷ Miller's introduction to key Buddhist texts came through his interaction with The Theosophical Society. Founded by Madame Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott in 1875 it married the comparative study of different religions with self-transformation through the quest for latent, unexplained human powers. To see how Buddhism played a key role within the society see: Prothero, S. R. (2010) *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. For a more nuanced analysis of Olcott's Buddhism see: Obeyesekere, G. (1995) 'The

The Voice of the Silence: Chosen Fragments from the “Book of Golden Precepts” for the Daily Use of Lanoos (1889) had a profound impact of Miller’s religious awareness; as did A.P. Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883).

The first and most influential form of Buddhism that Miller would have been familiar with is Zen, brought to the West by the Japanese delegation to The Parliament of World Religions in 1893. Vivekananda was not alone in discerning the Western appetite for ‘new’ religious beliefs.⁸ Soen Shaku and his acolyte D.T. Suzuki sought to reimagine Buddhism in such a way as to appeal to Western concerns. In ‘Publishing Eastern Buddhism: D.T. Suzuki’s Journey to the West’ (2009), Judith Snodgrass demonstrates how Shaku sought to present Japanese Mahayana Buddhism as attuned with ‘the latest developments in Western philosophy and science’ (Snodgrass, 2009, p.49). In time Suzuki would promote Zen as the supreme form of Buddhism or the ‘essence of Buddhism’ (Snodgrass, 2009, p.65). This process of selection and omission is reminiscent of Vivekananda, with Suzuki’s *Outlines of the Mahayana* (1907) presenting ‘the familiar deinstitutionalized, deritualized, philosophical expression of *Shin Bukkyo* (the ‘new Buddhism’ of Japan) as a universal religion’ (Snodgrass, 2009, p.61–62). As Judith Snodgrass makes clear, the Japanese delegations were well aware of what would resonant with American audiences:

Mahayana Buddhism was designed to appeal to Americans as positive, self-reliant, and life affirming... the Mahayana is the teaching of the Buddha; Eastern Buddhism is not pessimistic or nihilistic; although it is a religion of self-reliance, people are not left unaided; Mahayana offers a non-interventionist system of moral retribution, is rational, is compatible with science, and... “philosophical thought in this twentieth century runs parallel to Mahayana Buddhism” (Snodgrass, 2009, p.61)

Zen Buddhism would be the representation of Buddhism that most Westerners would become acquainted with in the twentieth century. Its teachings were in marked contrast to the earlier humanist/rational European tradition of the nineteenth century, as exemplified

Two Faces of Colonel Olcott: Buddhism and Euro-Rationality in the Late 19th Century’. In: Everding, U. (ed) *Buddhism and Christianity: Interactions between East and West*. The Goethe Institute, Colombo, pp.32-71.

⁸ Zen is a school of Mahayana Buddhism that flourished in Japan from the 12th century onwards, after its introduction from China. There are two main branches of Zen, Rinzai and Soto. In short, Rinzai values the study of Koens (scriptures) whereas Soto emphasises meditation as a means to enlightenment. Although other differences exist, likewise there are just as many similarities. Westernised Zen encompasses both traditions. From a societal perspective the influence of the two schools of Zen were far-reaching within Japan. See: Sharf, R.H. (1993) ‘The Zen of Japanese Nationalism’. *History of Religion*, 33, pp.1-43 for an analysis of the roles played by Zen in both politics and the modern Japanese military tradition.

by Edwin Arnold's narrative poem *The Light of Asia* (1879), which portrayed a Buddha who resembled Christ, personified the muscular Christianity of the Victorian era and had a distinctly 'Protestant' slant⁹. Zen would recreate the religion as a personal and essentially private event, devoid of restrictive doctrine and fluid enough to welcome disparate individuals in search of a unique, individual religious experience.

It is important to understand why Buddhism, and specifically Zen Buddhism, so appealed to the Western intelligentsia during the twentieth century. In *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (1997), J.J. Clarke outlines how what he calls 'modernist' Buddhism had entered into the cultural discourse; by modernist he of course means Zen and Vedanta practices. According to Clarke, Buddhism had 'helped give expression and substance to a sense of deep cultural crisis and to loss of faith in the West's idea of progress in scientific rationalism, and to a need for new modes of representation' (Clarke, 1997, p.101). Buddhism took root as a result of a need to re-evaluate what progress had really meant in the last century, a way to understand the deep spiritual malaise that plagued many within the cultural elite. In *Encountering Buddhism in Twentieth-Century British and American Literature* (2013) Lawrence Normand states that 'Buddhism in twentieth-century Western culture has been registered, enacted, imagined and tested; and literary form and language have changed in response to Buddhist ideas and practices' (Normand, 2013, p.7). How to explain in more detail how and why Zen Buddhism captured the imaginations of the cultural elite where other religions and nineteenth-century 'Protestant' Buddhism had failed? It cannot be stated enough that Zen was 'shaped by and defined to satisfy contemporary social needs' (Normand, 2013, p.15). The mistranslations, reimagining and wilful distortion of Buddhism to create a new, fit for purpose model allowed Western concerns to manipulate the very central tenets of Zen. One of the ways in which we can most clearly see this manipulation is in the concept of self. In traditional Buddhism, that is to say the Theravada school that originates in India and is the

⁹ It is difficult to understand the Victorian attitude to Buddhism without taking Orientalism into account. The Victorians, on the whole, seemed to only be able to comprehend Buddhism by likening it to forms of Christianity, for example seeing Buddhism in terms of the Reformation; Theravada as Catholicism and Mahayana as Protestantism, with all the prejudices that such a comparison comes with. For an analysis of these issues see: Almond, P. C. (1988) *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. The American experience is similar to the British in the sense that Buddhism was absorbed through the filter of Protestant faith however the argument can also be made for an early counter-culturalism in that many of the early American adherents were already dissenters from organized religion and living on the edges of society, looking for an alternative mode of living see: Tweed, T. A. (2009) *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

oldest school of Buddhist thought there are two main differences from Zen.¹⁰ Firstly, the self does not exist in Theravada; in fact such a belief would be seen as an insurmountable hurdle to further enlightenment, and secondly the study of key scriptures should be undertaken with the insight of a monk or master, as such it places great importance of the monastic life. According to traditional Buddhism one of the greatest mistakes is ‘that a permanent, eternal, immutable, independent self exists’ (Lusthaus, 2002, p.538). Zen and traditional Buddhism are diametrically opposed on the notion of self and this reshaping can be attributed directly to D.T. Suzuki who understood the primary import of the self as a concept to Westerners and also understood the cultural relevance of the self as a psychological touchstone that Western audiences were aware of through the widely circulated work of Freud and Jung and their theories regarding the unconscious. This marrying of cultural, religious and intellectual thinking that on the surface did not necessarily go together was Suzuki’s masterstroke. The idea of a religion without scriptures, although it is debatable how true this is in reference to Zen, that allowed the individual to progress without years of study and strict adherence to a rigid framework of practice, may also in some way have contributed to Zen’s appeal. As noted by Martin Baumann in his essay ‘Modern Interpretations of Buddhism in Europe’ (2012) the effort has been made to ‘mold, reshape and indigenise Buddhist teaching and practices to the needs of the autonomous individual’ (Baumann, 2012, p.127). Traditional Buddhism rejects the self and instead teaches the principles of *anatta* (no-self) and *sunyata* (emptiness), ‘The terms ‘non-self’ and ‘emptiness’ do not signify ‘void’ or ‘vacancy’ but rather that there is no thing, including a person, that has ‘self-nature’ or ‘metaphysical essence’ (Normand, 2013, p.16). As Steven Collins explains in his article ‘Buddhism in Recent British Philosophy and Theology’ (1985) there is an enormous difference between the Western tradition of self and that of traditional Buddhism:

The western tradition, in its religion, philosophy, politics, and many other areas, has given a specific and privileged status to the concept of the person, both descriptively

¹⁰ The differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism are as much geographical as spiritual. Theravada Buddhism is often known as Southern Buddhism as most of its adherents are from India, Sri Lanka, Laos and Burma, whereas Mahayana flourished in China, Korea and Japan. They share the same core beliefs in the teaching of the Buddha, but they diverge on certain key areas. Firstly, Theravada relies heavily on the Pali Canon, scriptures believed to be the direct recording of the Buddha’s words, Mahayana de-emphasises the importance of scripture. The main doctrinal difference is the concept of self (*anatta*) the teaching that there is no soul or self. Mahayana takes this further and introduces the concept of emptiness (*sunyata*). This concept invariably leads to differing understandings of other doctrines. Many of the studies of the history of Buddhism start by placing it geographically and thus follow a certain ideological path, one of the few works that offers a solid exploration of the differences between the two schools and the historical implications of the split is Kalupahana, D. (1984) *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*. University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

and normatively. There really are such entities, individuated and continuous; and are worthy of a kind of respect and moral evaluation qualitatively different to that accorded to any other part or inhabitant of the natural world... Buddhism, on the other hand, denies that the words person or self denote anything ultimately real. They are only of use in picking out certain aspects of the conventional world of human experience (Collins, 1985, pp.475-476)

Zen Buddhism's focalising of the self was a fundamental break with traditional Buddhism, both theologically, but also geographically, in that it severed the connection with the East, although in time Zen practices would bounce back to Asia, and place Zen as a uniquely Western inspired doctrine; reflective of but also anticipatory of Western needs.

Whilst Buddhism was unarguably a massive influence on many writers it is important to acknowledge that not everyone engaged with Buddhist concepts easily or in fact at all.

D.H. Lawrence, a writer who integrated many Buddhist principles into his work, nevertheless struggled to 'rationalize nirvana and anatman (non-self) to his conceptions of individualism and desire' (Franklin, 2008, p.196). W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood parodied the fashionable Western belief in Buddhism as a cure for all modern ills in their play *The Ascent of F6* (1958). At the other extreme was George Orwell, who as Normand points out, was openly antagonistic to Buddhism and the Westerners who adhered to its principles, condemning the attraction of 'a touch of Oriental mysticism' as an intellectual affectation that carried no cost, and denounced 'the mythos of the peaceful, religious and patriarchal East...' (Normand, 2013, p.10).¹¹ Normand uses Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* (1922) to show how Buddhism was represented in literature of the time, but also how Buddhism had morphed to create the means through which a Westerner embarks on a journey of self-enlightenment; the traditional Western *Bildungsroman* enacted through Buddhist concepts. Hesse 'effects a cultural misrepresentation of Asian beliefs into

¹¹ It is hard to characterise the relationship between Buddhism and the British Intelligentsia in this period. For some it was a passing phase or an affectation, however for others it provided the stimulus for a deeper questioning of how they lived, whilst for others it was the beginning of a lifelong commitment to Buddhism. For example Christopher Isherwood may have mocked the new fashion of Eastern spirituality but he was committed to Vedanta throughout his life, serving as managing editor of the Vedanta Society Press from 1945-47 and as a board member from 1951-62. He published 40 articles within Vedanta and the West (the official Vedanta Society publication) between 1943-69 and translated select key Buddhist texts with Swami Prabhavananda. Franklin, J.J. (2008) *The Lotus and the Lion*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, provides an excellent overview of the cultural history of the period and examines the continuing role of empire in shaping the evolving image of Buddhism in Britain. McMahan, D.L. (2008) *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, examines the many factors that went into the re-packaging of the Buddha for modern, Western consumption and also scrutinises the role of Western Buddhist theorists and writers in the 'purification' of Eastern philosophy.

dominant Western terms, to convert the complex religious traditions of Buddhism into a mystical, romantic Protestantism' (Normand, 2013, p.14). Hesse's Pietist Protestantism is something that evidently lay very deeply within him and thus it is perhaps not surprising that whilst revolting against his puritanical culture and upbringing and comparing and contrasting Buddhism with the discredited religion of his birth, he nevertheless cannot, but comprehend it through those same questionable means. In *Veneration and Revolt: Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism* (2009) Barry Stephenson explores the lasting influence of Hesse's strict Pietist upbringing on his lifelong political and moral views and finds that Hesse did not exactly shake off the religious piety and regional conservatism of this early life. Normand states that we should perhaps read the novel as a dialogue regarding Buddhism, and for that matter Taoism and Hinduism. It is arguable how 'Buddhist' the novel really is and Hesse himself had a complex relationship to Eastern religions; however the fact remains that it is still read as a Buddhist work; albeit at times through an Orientalist lens. In a diary entry from 1920 Hesse shows a distasteful homogenisation of both India and Buddhism:

My preoccupation with India, which has been going on for almost twenty years and has passed through many stages, now seems to me to have reached a new point of development... now Buddhism appears to me more and more as a kind of very pure, highly bred reformation—a purification and spiritualization that has no flaw but its great zealousness, with which it destroys image-worlds for which it can offer no replacement. (Otten, 1977, p.74)

Hesse seems to be arguing that Buddhism strips away old beliefs whilst offering no substantive replacement. There is a deep cynicism at the roots of *Siddhartha*, which speaks to Hesse's own failure to find fulfilment within Buddhism. When Siddhartha speaks these words to the Buddha, they reflect Hesse's inability to reach a state of enlightenment:

You have learned nothing through teachings, and so I think, O Illustrious One, that nobody finds salvation through teachings. To nobody, O Illustrious One, can you communicate in words and teachings what happened to you in the hour of your enlightenment... That is why I am going on my own way—not to seek another and better doctrine, for I know there is none, but to leave all doctrines and all teachers and to reach my goal alone—or die. (Hesse, 1922, p.27)

Siddhartha continues in his musings, mainly reflecting Hesse's Westernised concepts of what Buddhism actually is and how it might be utilised in his search for self. Hesse is uninterested in the different schools of Buddhism and their vastly contrasting ideas on the self and instead conflates all in his need to place himself at the centre of the narrative:

What is it that you wanted to learn from teachings and teachers, and although they taught you much, what was it they could not teach you? And he thought: It was the Self, the character and nature of which I wished to learn. I wanted to rid myself of the Self, to conquer it, but I could not conquer it, I could only deceive it, could only fly from it, could only hide from it. . . . The reason why I do not know anything about myself, the reason why Siddhartha has remained alien and unknown to myself is due to one thing, to one single thing—I was afraid of myself, I was fleeing from myself. I was seeking Brahman, Atman, I wished to destroy myself, to get away from myself, in order to find in the unknown innermost, the nucleus of all things, Atman, Life, the Divine, the Absolute. But by doing so, I lost myself on the way... I will no longer study Yoga-Veda [sic], Atharva-Veda, or asceticism, or any other teachings. I will learn from myself, be my own pupil; I will learn from myself the secret of Siddhartha. (Hesse, 1922, pp.31-32)

Siddhartha perfectly illustrates the depths to which Buddhism had penetrated the Western literary psyche; that a conventional coming of age novel would manifest itself through a Buddhist framework and that it would be recognisable to its readers as such, but also that the Buddhist concepts explored within the novel would be framed in such a transparent Mahayana Buddhist tradition, surely demonstrates the totality of the union between the West and Mahayana Buddhism.

Miller wrote extensively about the influence of *Siddhartha* upon his understanding of Buddhism and listed it as one of the hundred most important books to him in *The Books in My Life* (1969), it is interesting in the sense that we can see some lack of clarity in Miller's utilisation of Buddhist concepts as in much the same way as Hesse. In a letter to Irving Stettler featured in *From Your Capricorn Friend* (1978), Miller makes clear his ambiguous relationship to Zen Buddhism:

I know who I am, which is another way of saying 'Fuck you Jack, I'm not going your bandwagon. Not even if you are a Zen Buddhist.' Hesse gave me Siddhartha, for which I am eternally grateful. And because of that wonderful book, I not only

killed in me the Jesus, the Buddha, the Mahomet, but the guy I once thought I was who was in fact just another horse's ass. In short, I became myself. (Miller, 1984, p.81)

As influential as Hesse may have been to Miller¹², it is important yet again to stress that Miller is not a disciple of any movement or school of thought. In the previous chapters I have shown how Miller adopted and absorbed certain concepts only in so far as it suited his forward propulsion to an understanding of himself. Miller takes what is of use to him from Zen Buddhism; he is in no way an adherent of the religion. Miller's statements regarding his personal relationship to Zen Buddhism are utterly contradictory. For example he can write to Lawrence Durrell quite seriously that:

Zen is my idea of life absolutely, the closest thing to what I am able to formulate in words. I am a Zen addict through and through. Except for the 'monastic regime', which I don't believe in at all and see no necessity for. But if you want to penetrate Buddhism, read Zen. No intelligent person, no sensitive person, can help but be Buddhist. It's clear as a bell to me. (Macniven, 1988, p.481)

Yet he could also include Buddhism in what he saw as dead religions:

Fundamentally I am a religious man without a religion. I believe in a Supreme Intelligence... call it God if you like... I have no need of 'texts'. The churches, even Buddhism, are only a travesty of religion, in my opinion. Often, one is right in calling oneself, more religious, more of a believer in that sense, than many who claim they are. (Miller, 1972, p.36)

Thus it is impossible to pigeonhole Miller as a Zen Buddhist in the strictest sense of the word, yet Zen Buddhism offered him a means by which to exist in a world that he despised and that he believed he did not belong in. In 'Zen Buddhism as Radical Conviviality in the Works of Henry Miller, Kenneth Rexroth and Thomas Merton' (2013), Manuel Yang argues that one of the ways in which to understand Miller's Zen Buddhism is to see it through the prism of conviviality. As I have pointed out, Miller was not dealing with Zen Buddhism as a historical institution, with the accompanying oppressiveness that comes

¹² Miller repaid Hesse by introducing his work to James Laughlin at New Directions Publishing and encouraging Laughlin to publish *Siddhartha* in America in English in 1951. *Siddhartha* would become New Directions best seller in the 1960's with sales of 1,300,000 copies.

with any institutional religion, but as a conduit to finding a means by which he could live and most importantly accept the world as it was. Yang uses Ivan Illich's theory of conviviality¹³ to explain the ways in which Zen Buddhist teachings spoke to the counter-cultural current of the times:

I choose the term 'conviviality' to designate the opposite of industrial productivity. I intend it to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and a man-made environment. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value. (Illich, 1973, p.11)

Zen Buddhism represented for Miller a means through which he could access a like-minded community of thinkers, people who saw through the so-called progress of modern industrial capitalism, sought spiritual awakening and experimented with different models of living. Miller's deep antagonism to 'soulless, tasteless twentieth century America' played a large part in his conception of Zen Buddhism. How Miller viewed life in America was in direct opposition to how he thought life should be lived. In 'Children of the Earth' one of the essays which makes up *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* (1962) arguably Miller's most Zen Buddhist work, he starts by comparing life in France with that of America. He is writing of his return to France after twenty years living in America, he produces a romanticised stereotype of the French as a population content with very little and deeply connected to the land and a national sense of *terroir*:

The visitor to France cannot help but be impressed by the smiling look of the land. Love of the soil is an expression which still means something here. Everywhere there is evident the touch of the human hand; it is a constant, patient, loving attention

¹³ Ivan Illich (1926-2002) was an Austrian born philosopher and Roman Catholic priest. His interest in the causes of poverty and alienation in modern American society put him at odds with the Vatican as did his stance on birth control and nuclear disarmament during his time as a priest in Washington Heights. After being fired from his job at the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, he founded CIDOC in 1961, a research centre ostensibly offering language courses to missionaries, but in reality a think tank concerned with the adverse results of industrial development in the Third World. *Tools for Conviviality*. (1973) Harper and Row, New York, was the second of four philosophical works published by Illich. Following on from the themes he studies in his first book *Deschooling Society*. (2000) Marion Boyers Publishing, London, in relation to the education system; Illich examines the institutional nature of knowledge and the elites it produces. These elites control the tools of knowledge, both in the practical sense and as a societal currency; mechanisation has impoverished the majority of workers leaving them reliant upon constantly out dated machinery or tools. Workers are controlled by the machinery rather than freed by it. Illich argues that the tools must be returned to the worker to allow multiple and autonomous uses of the tools.

which the French give their soil... As for France, what has she is the way of comforts - which is about all we have to offer of value? To me it is as is nothing has changed since I left in 1939. I see no radical change in the French way of life. All the so-called comforts and improvements which Americans are endlessly striving to create - and in the process making themselves wretched and uncomfortable - are missing here. Everything is still antiquated and complicated. Nothing gets done with dispatch and efficiency. (Miller, 1962, p.11–12)

As trite and complacent as Miller's view of France in the 1950's is, it is little more than a jumping off point to attack what he sees at the infantilised nature of America. In a bizarre tirade that attacks the role of American mothers in producing and perpetuating a system in which men are nothing 'but a worker and provider' (Miller, 1962, p.11). He further states that to American women the male, whatever his relation to her 'is a creature to be bullied, exploited and traduced.' (Miller, 1962, p.11) This oversimplified comparison between the French and American ways of life leads Miller directly into an attack on modern living using Zen Buddhist principles as a way to a different model of living. He begins by questioning the ideas of contentment and happiness and what these actually mean in a modern, capitalist society. He states that he has rarely met an individual who is 'content in his mode of life' (Miller, 1962, p.13) and that those who have gained a level of contentment are 'already living in the world of the future' (Miller, 1962, p.13) by which he means certain saints, holy men and sages. According to Miller these sages would argue 'Accept the world as it is! Only through complete acceptance, they would insist, does one arrive at emancipation.' (Miller, 1962, p.13) Miller is critiquing modern life through the Buddhist Four Noble Truths; he is showing that our inability to accept suffering as a part of life and our striving for happiness leads only to misery, discontent and violence.¹⁴ The consumerism and industrial productivity of advanced capitalism, as upheld by American values, produces the exact opposite of what it promises:

¹⁴ The Four Noble Truths are the path that must be followed to be released from suffering (*dukkha*):

1. *Dukkha*: all temporary things and states are unsatisfying;
2. The start of *dukkha*: yet we crave and cling to these things and states; thereby, we're continuously reborn.
3. The end of *dukkha*: if we stop craving and clinging, we won't be reborn.
4. How to end *dukkha*: by following the Buddhist path, namely behaving decently, not acting on impulses, and practicing mindfulness and meditation, leading to self control.

The Four Noble Truths are the very foundation of Buddhist thought and living, as such they are indisputable, however differences in practice do exist between Theravada and Mahayana sects; the uses and efficacy of yoga would be one such difference. For an overview of the subject see: Tesering, G. T. (2005) *The Four Noble Truths: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought*. Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA.

But it is not emancipation that the great majority seeks. When pressed, most men will admit that it takes but little to be happy. (Not that they practice this wisdom!) Man craves happiness here on earth, not fulfilment, not emancipation. Are they utterly deluded, then, in seeking happiness? No, happiness *is* desirable, but it is a by-product, the result of a way of life, not a goal which is forever beyond one's grasp. Happiness is achieved en route. And if it be ephemeral, as most men believe, it can also give way, not to anxiety or despair, but to joyousness which is serene and lasting. To make happiness the goal is to kill it in advance. If one must have a goal, which is questionable, why not self-realization? The unique and healing quality in this attitude toward life is that in the process goal and seeker become one. (Miller, 1962, p.13)

In Zen Buddhism, desire (*lobha*) is one of the three poisons, desire for anything that offers the individual gratification can only lead to evil (*akusala*) and suffering (*dukkha*). Miller places both the cause and the solution squarely on the shoulders of the individual. He argues that man does not live in a 'vacuum of historical facts' (Miller, 1962, p.15) but rather that time has no place in matters of the spirit 'the gate is ever open. Today is like all other days. There is only today.' (Miller, 1962, p.15) Miller is arguing that we do not live in a unique time; history only provides us with a false sense of knowledge and perhaps a sense of weakness in relation to change:

Again and again it has been pointed out that there is no issue on the historical level. No genuine solutions are possible through political, social or economic changes, or even through moral transformations. The only level on which vital, meaningful change may take place is the level of spirit. To be regenerate means that one must travel back to the source, recover the creative powers with which to meet all problems. (Miller, 1962, p.15)

What Miller is doing here is describing *Satori*, the fourth step of The Four Noble Truths. *Satori* is often explained as a state of oneness; a harmony of mind and body achieved by letting go of ego, desire etc. It is also about living in the present, accepting what cannot be changed and practicing non-attachment; that is to accept suffering and thus free ourselves from it. By doing this the individual can lead a balanced, harmonious life. In 'Samahdi All The Time: Henry Miller and Buddhism', David Calonne argues that Miller's Zen Buddhist principles of non-attachment and individualism existed alongside a deeply felt empathy for the suffering of others and a wish to act in their defence. This basic contradiction between

Zen Buddhist acceptance and the wish to act is one that Miller struggled to resolve in his daily life. In 'Children of the Earth' Miller confronts the difficulty of non-attachment throughout his life:

Confronted with the naked horror of the world as one knows it today, I relive the anguish, the melancholy, the despair which I knew as a young man... Viewing the world as would a visitor from another planet, I have become involved once again in the throes of universal torment. As a young man, brash, impulsive, ridden with ideals, I came close to being annihilated by the sorrow and misery which surrounded me on all sides. To do something for my fellow man, to help deliver him, became my personal affair. Like every fanatical idealist, I ended up making my own life so miserable and complicated that soon all my time, all my efforts, all my ingenuity, were consumed in the mere struggle to survive. Though speedily disillusioned as to my own powers, I never became indifferent to the plight of those about me. It did appear to me, however, that something like a stubborn refusal to be aided was inherent in man's nature. In the process of saving my own skin I gained a little wisdom, a greater sense of reality, and a compassion which stilled the senseless conflicts that had ravaged me. (Miller, 1962, p.17)

Miller only gains a sense of harmony when he ceases to fight against the suffering he experiences personally and sees around him. He lets go of the illusion that he can make any difference, and with this refusal of ego he finds peace. He labels those who would act as 'fanatical idealists' (Miller, 1962, p.17) and sees only the perpetuation of suffering in action. 'Children of the Earth' can be seen as a series of experiences and observations from Miller's life that serves to illustrate his journey through The Four Noble Truths.

He goes on to explain how his life in Big Sur has given him a stronger sense of living a Zen Buddhist life. There, Miller had finally found a community in which he felt at home and accepted. Despite his strong sense of individualism, Miller was a deeply sociable person who had always sought out like-minded individuals. From his Brooklyn fraternity Xerxes, to the misfits of the Western Union Company, to the inhabitants of the Villa Seurat in Paris, Miller needed to be surrounded by the stimulation afforded by human contact. As much as he complained about the cost to his work of dealing with other people, in both time and energy spent, he sought out a sense of community wherever he lived. In 'Children of the Earth' he finishes the essay by describing how he lives a Zen Buddhist life in the midst of the Big Sur community 'I found myself living the life I had always desired to live,

a member of a small community, seemingly isolated and apart from the world.’ (Miller, 1962, p.18) He acknowledges that he has experienced at Big Sur ‘the full bitterness of Hell and the delights of Paradise’ (Miller, 1962, p.18) but he is quick to return to a Zen Buddhist understanding of his life and in particular the practice of non-attachment practiced within a community:

Living apart and at peace with myself, I came to realize more vividly the meaning of the doctrine of acceptance. To refrain from giving advice, to refrain from meddling in the affairs of others, to refrain, even though the motives be of the highest, from tampering with another’s way of life- so simple, yet so difficult for an active spirit! Hands off! Yet not to grow indifferent, or refuse aid when it is sincerely demanded. Living thus, practicing this simple way of life, strange things occurred; some might call them miraculous. (Miller, 1962, p.18)

We can see that for Miller it is an effort to live the Zen Buddhist lifestyle, he must resist the urge to become involved in other’s lives. There is still a part of the young man in him that he had described earlier in the essay, the man who sought to fix and change what surrounded him. Miller acknowledges the apparent selfishness of this lifestyle, but again returns to Zen Buddhist concepts to explain his choices: ‘To come back to Big Sur, to my new-found freedom, my inner peace, my sense of at-homeness and at-oneness... Is it selfish of me to try to preserve it?... Can it be shared? And to whom would it have meaning, the meaning which it has assumed for me?’. (Miller, 1962, p.18) Miller’s answer to this is to see even the question as a form of ego. The urge to explain or share his enlightenment negates the very essence of it:

And all the while an obsessive desire was shaping itself, namely, to lead the anonymous life. The significance of this urge I can explain simply- to eradicate the zealot and the preacher in myself. “Kill the Buddha!” the Zen master is known to say occasionally. Kill the futile striving, is the thought. Do not put the Buddha (or the Christ) beyond, outside yourself. Recognize him in yourself. Be that which you are, completely. Naturally, when one attains to this state of awareness, there is no need, no urge, to convert the other to one’s way of thinking. (Miller, 1962, p.18)

What we have here in many ways is the confident voice of Miller, a man who has found his path and has a comprehensive framework through which to understand all facets of his life. It is important however to show Miller’s progression to this point, how he came to

such coherency in regards to Zen Buddhism. If we look at some of his earlier works, we can see Miller grappling with basic notions of Zen Buddhism, without the knowledge to see them within that framework. In ‘Reflections On Writing’ one of the essays that comprises *The Wisdom of the Heart* (1941) Miller struggles to reconcile the role of the artist with Zen Buddhist non-attachment. At times one can sense the anger in his words, this is not the non-attachment practiced in his later years, but rather the rage of the disillusioned and under-valued writer. Miller begins by examining how long it took for him to find his authentic voice in his writing. He explains how he copied the writing styles of writers he admired including Dostoyevsky, Hamsun and Mann and how this imitation led to him being unable to write or function ‘Finally I came to a dead end, to a despair and desperation which few men have known, because there was no divorce between myself as a writer and myself as a man: to fail as a writer meant to fail as a man. And I failed’ (Miller, 1941, p.243) He continues by describing himself as ‘less than nothing’ (Miller, 1941, p.243) and we really do begin to sense a certain revelling in misery. No one seems to have suffered more than Miller; very few could even begin to comprehend such misery. We can also sense a certain disdain for the literary community as a whole. Miller is yet to move beyond his anger towards a community he feels he has been slighted by:

We are dealing with crystalline elements of the dispensed and shattered soul... It was quite impossible for me, therefore, to think of writing novels, quite equally unthinkable to follow the various blind alleys represented by the various literary movements in England, France and America. I felt compelled, in all honesty, to take the disparate and dispersed elements of our life- the *soul* life, not the cultured life- and manipulate them through my own personal mode... (Miller, 1941, p.250)

Miller is setting himself apart from his contemporaries, especially those involved in literary movements and signalling that he is on a different, somehow more authentic journey. Part of Miller’s bitterness during this period was undoubtedly related to the reviews of *Tropic of Cancer*. He had allowed himself to believe that his novel would be much more favourably received than it was or more to the point publicly so. T.S. Eliot deemed the novel ‘A very remarkable book, with passages of writing as good as I have seen in a long time... a rather magnificent piece of work’ (Potter, 2001, p.86), yet refused Miller the use of his words in the way of advertising. Eliot alluded to the possibility of publishing some of Miller’s work for Faber and Faber yet that seems somewhat unlikely as Eliot used Miller’s name as a byword for ‘unprintable’. Eliot reported to the Faber board that Lawrence Durrell’s *The Black Book* (1938) had issues with obscenity by simply

mentioning Miller's name in the same sentence (Potter, 2011, p.86). Edmund Wilson's on the whole positive review is interesting in that Miller replied directly to it in a letter to *The New Republic* in 1938 and criticised what he saw as Wilson's fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the narrator "He gives us the genuine American bum come to lead the beautiful life in Paris; and he lays him away forever in his dope of Pernod and dreams' (Baxter, 1961, p.166). Miller's anger seems to be aimed at the fact that Wilson sees *Tropic of Cancer* as a work of fiction, or as Wayne Booth sees the exchange in *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), an exercise in the modern critic's search for irony at all costs. Miller at this point is still having difficulty separating himself personally from the narrator and thus imagines slights everywhere, 'The theme of the book is myself, and the narrator or the hero, as your reviewer puts it, is also myself... it is me, because I have painstakingly indicated throughout the book that the hero is myself.' (Cohn, 2000, p.35) How positive Wilson's review is remains debatable, after all he does write that:

The tone of the book is undoubtedly low; *The Tropic of Cancer*, in fact, from the point of view both of its happenings and of the language in which they are conveyed, is the lowest book of any real literary merit that I ever remember to have read... there is a strange amenity of temper and style which bathes the whole composition even when it is disgusting or tiresome. (Aschenbrenner, 1974, p.485)

Miller's inability to accept that the sexual nature of *Tropic of Cancer* made it almost impossible to publish in its complete form in the UK and America led him to feel aggrieved at the wider literary community¹⁵. Miller must have known that by allowing Obelisk Press to publish the book in France that this was tantamount to labelling his work pornographic and that mainstream publishers would balk at being associated with his name, despite positive reviews by the likes of Orwell, Pound, Eliot and Cendrars. This is not to say that Miller took things lying down or that he accepted that *Tropic of Cancer* was not an immediate success. Miller's torturous relationship with the owner of Obelisk Press, Jack Kahane may have contributed to his feelings of being an outsider. Kahane had agreed

¹⁵ Miller was far from being the only writer to suffer under strict censorship laws at this time see: Potter, R. (2013) *Obscene Modernism: Literary Censorship and Experiment 1900-1940*. Oxford University Press, Oxford what perhaps differentiates Miller from other censored writers is that he seems to see it as a personal attack rather than as part of a larger issue. The subsequent battle to have *Tropic of Cancer* published in America strangely enough had little to do with Miller personally. The fight began in 1950 and was concluded in 1964 by the Supreme Court in *Grove Press, Inc. v Gerstein*. Many writers and publishers fought for Miller's books to be published, but Miller himself took a back seat mostly due to his fear of the government punishing him for his pacifist views on the ongoing Vietnam War. For a description of the trial and the debates leading up to it see: Hutchison, E.R. (1968) *Tropic of Cancer on Trial: A Case History of Censorship*. Grove Press, New York.

at considerable personal risk to publish Miller. He had earlier passed on the French rights to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) through the fear of being prosecuted and shut down, yet despite not wanting to lose out again he offered Miller a miserly contract; no advance and 10 percent royalty on sales.¹⁶ In *Obelisk: A History of Jack Kahane and the Obelisk Press* (2007), Neil Pearson examines Kahane and Miller tempestuous working relationship and I think this goes some way to explaining Miller's antagonism to the literary community during this period. Although Miller would always be grateful to Kahane for taking the chance on publishing him, over time he came to see Kahane as at best an amateur and at worst a saboteur. Kahane dragged his feet over a set publication date, in the end only publishing a third of the completed manuscript, and was eventually outmanoeuvred by Anaïs Nin who agreed to offer to loan him the money to cover printing costs; next Kahane argued that Miller had to establish a reputation for himself before publication. Kahane insisted that Miller produce a treatise on D.H Lawrence to establish his intellectual credentials, a request that Miller found both insulting and unforgivable:

It is humiliating to me to sit in your office and be requested to write a little brochure about this man or that man in order to introduce myself. I don't want any introduction. I wanted simply to stand up and let go- be knocked over for it or lauded for it. But not apologize, not *explain* myself. I can't tell you how ignominious that felt to me. (Pearson, 2007, p.438)

Although the Lawrence brochure came to nothing, Miller spent an inordinate amount of time on the research for it; time he felt could have been used more productively. The publication of *Tropic of Cancer* was not the end of Miller's tribulations; he felt that Kahane was not promoting the book and set about doing the publicity himself. Miller sent off copies to every fellow writer or critic that he thought might be useful to him. Most famously he sent a copy to Ezra Pound in Rapallo, despite never having met him. Pound exclaimed 'At last, an unprintable book that is fit to read' (Pearson, 2007, p.443) and promptly passed it on to his visitor James McLaughlin, who would in time publish Miller in America through his publishing house New Directions. Miller was enjoying great luck, if somewhat serendipitously, but Miller could only see that he was having to do what Kahane should have been doing. Miller, in his own mind, had suffered so much to get to this point and felt he was not getting his just rewards; Kahane came to personify the causes

¹⁶ The Black Manikin Press eventually bought the French rights to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; by 1930 three editions had been published equaling 11,000 copies and made the Lawrence estate 90,000 French Francs.

of Miller's distress. Even as Miller was realising his dreams, he was still the outsider having to work harder than others for a place at the table.

Miller would continue to feel that he was living outwith the literary community, and perhaps society as a whole, especially during the Second World War. Miller's Zen Buddhism had led him to a pacifism that many contemporaries found unfathomable, and in this stance we can see the influence of E. Graham Howe in Miller's conceptualisation of non-violence. In 'The Wisdom of the Heart' we also see Miller continue with his ability to incorporate other people's philosophies into his own journey. For many years the work of E. Graham Howe was mainly known through Miller's championing of it in *The Wisdom of the Heart*. Howe was a British psychologist from the first half of the twentieth century, one of the first publishers of articles relating to psychoanalysis and founding member of the famous Tavistock Clinic in London. The recent publication of a selection of his essays in *The Druid of Harley Street: The Spiritual Psychology of E. Graham Howe* (2012) will hopefully lead to a reappraisal of his work separated from his connection to Miller.¹⁷ The work of Howe's that most appealed to Miller and of which he writes exhaustively of in 'The Wisdom of the Heart' is *War Dance: A Study in the Psychology of War* (1937). Unsurprisingly given the date of publication, this is a work that tackles the subject of good and evil and how to understand these concepts through Eastern Philosophy. The length to which Miller discusses *War Dance*, I think shows that he is still struggling with his commitment to non-action in a period of history in which action seemed not only desirable, but also necessary. In short, Howe argues that the causes of war are due to mankind's belief that there is a choice between good and evil; one must be embraced and the other resisted, 'eliminate that opposite our adversary, calling him Satan the evil one, thereby reducing everything to a seemingly single unity.' (Howe, 1937, p.132) When we see life within these parameters, we see life as a series of alternatives, alternatives that perpetuate a sense of discord and fracture. The physical manifestation of this polarity is war. For Howe the only solution is acceptance:

Life is the law of our acceptance, but who can stand the strain of life and love it?

This acceptance of the reality of things as they are, actively passive, co-operative and

¹⁷ Eric Graham Howe was born in England in 1896 and died in 1975. He was at the forefront of the psychoanalytical community in England during the early twentieth century. He mentored both Alan.W. Watts and R. D. Laing. Watts, A.W. (1936) *The Spirit of Zen*. Grove Press, New York, owes much to Howe's pioneering work of Eastern Philosophy and individual consciousness, whilst Laing wrote the preface for Howe's (1965) *Cure or Heal?: A Study of Therapeutic Experience*. George Allen&Unwin Publishing, London, calling him a 'master psychologist'. Howe's other key works included: *The Open Way: A Study of Acceptance*. (1942) Methuen Publishing, London, and *The Triumphant Spirit: A Study of Depression*. (1951) Faber &Faber, London.

reciprocating, as a seed planted in darkness, operating in the unseen, unconditionally accepting the full measure of experience... Seeking only to be a servant of that creation of which it is the living image, acting as a reflecting mirror of a deeper light, our single task is faithfully to tend that light within the intellect which, through its illumination, is prepared to see all things and live among them. (Howe, 1937, p.147)

Miller echoes Howe when he writes:

By acceptance of *all* the aspects of life, good and bad, right and wrong, yours and mine, the static, defensive life, which is what most people are cursed with, is converted into a dance, “the dance of life” as Havelock Ellis called it... the dance is an end in itself, just like life. The acceptance of the situation, *any* situation, brings about a flow, a rhythmic impulse towards self-expression. (Miller, 1941, p.253)

Miller sees the key to acceptance as surrender. Surrender to pain, misery, and defeat becomes the positive acceptance of life as is. Again we see Miller grasping at The Four Noble Truths, using the concepts of suffering, acceptance and awakening to explain the world around him. In a time of war, Miller denies its importance and seeks enlightenment through Zen Buddhism:

It is the long way round, which always proved to be the shortest way after all. It means the assimilation of experience, fulfilment through obedience and discipline: the curved span of time through natural growth rather than the speedy, disastrous, short-cut. This is the path of wisdom, and the one that must be taken eventually, because all the others only lead to it. (Miller, 1941, p.254)

It is easy to see why Miller’s writing immediately before the Second World War and during it elicited such negativity. I have already looked at George Orwell’s attack on Miller’s pacifism and lack of political commitment in ‘Inside The Whale’ (1940) in chapter 3, however it is important to acknowledge how out of step Miller was with his close friends; both Lawrence Durrell and Alfred Perles joined the British Army and found Miller’s Zen Buddhist beliefs incomprehensible at such a time¹⁸. In 1941, Miller’s view of

¹⁸ Although Miller was undoubtedly out of step with both his friends and public opinion, other writers supported pacifism throughout the war for a variety of reasons. Huxley and Isherwood refused to fight and in doing so stuck to their Buddhist/Vendata beliefs, likewise Vera Brittain, John Middleton Murry and W.H.Auden adhered to their Christian pacifist beliefs, with the former two remaining committed members of the Peace Pledge Union. Other notable pacifists, Leonard

the war was deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism and likewise profoundly influenced by Howe's ideas of alternatives:

... evading our real problems from day to day we have produced a schism, on the one side of which is the illusory life of comfortable security and painlessness, and on the other disease, catastrophe, war and so forth. We are going through Hell now, but it would be excellent if it really was hell, and if we really went through with it... Those who are trying to put the onus of responsibility for the dangers which threaten on the shoulders of the "dictators" might well examine their own hearts and see whether their allegiance is really "free" or a mere attachment to some other form of authority... (Miller, 1941, p. 263)

What Miller is arguing here is that war is a man-made reality based upon humanity's inability to accept suffering as a part of life. Our need to deny suffering leads to a binary vision of life; simplistic decisions which refuse the whole. When Miller discusses hell and his wish that we were really going through it, he is employing both Howe's view of war as manufactured outcome of artificial choices, but also the Zen Buddhist idea of a return to nothingness. Miller wants to start over again with a clean slate and only the complete destruction of civilisation can achieve this. Miller realises that the Second World War is not going to lead to any fundamental change or evolution for humanity, but sees it rather as the playing out of Howe's war dance and a capitalist rite of passage.

This idea of starting over with a clean slate is something Miller played with in his concept of *China*. For Miller, *China* is not a country or geographical location, but rather a state of mind, or more precisely, a state of being. Miller scholars have long disagreed on how *China* should be understood within his work, but what is agreed upon is how useful it is to unpack what Miller was trying to get at in some of his most philosophical and convoluted passages. *China* is often interpreted as a means by which to advance an existing hypothesis, rather than as a philosophical, and I will argue spiritual destination in its own right. In Caroline Blinder's *A Self-Made Surrealist: Ideology and Aesthetics in the Work of Henry Miller* (2000), *China* is seen through the prism of an overarching Surrealist narrative; as a tool that Miller uses to play with forms of reality. For Katy Masuga in her article 'Henry Miller, Deleuze and the Metaphor of China' (2009) *China* can be seen as rhizomatic in that it is based on 'connection and heterogeneity' thus 'any point of a rhizome

Woolf, Bertrand Russell and A. A. Milne, felt that the only realistic response to Nazism was war. See: Piette, A. and Rowlinson, M. (2012) *The Edinburgh Companion to British and American War Literature*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

can be connected to anything other, and must be' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003, p.7), in keeping with Miller's inclusion in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). James M. Decker sees elements of *China* as a destination, although he stops short by seeing it as a destination purely in relation to artistic freedom in *Henry Miller and the Narrative Form: Constructing the Self, Rejecting Modernity* (2005). He is more interested in co-opting it into his theory of spiral form; a theory that understands Miller's radical narrative style in relation to time development. Perhaps the most thorough examination of *China* appears in Indrek Manniste's *Henry Miller: The Inhuman Artist* (2013) a book that considers Miller's philosophical basis mostly through contextualising his work via the key thematic Modernist tropes of decaying Western civilisation, technology and the role of the artist; understood mainly by means of the influence of Nietzsche and Spengler, whilst framing him as a Modernist writer in the grand tradition. Manniste's hypothesis revolves around the concepts of the traditional present and the full present. These are concepts that we have already considered in chapter 2 with Bergson, as they relate to time and the artist. In short, the traditional present is linear, historical time; time which is packaged and conceptualised for us. The full present is reminiscent of Bergson's Duration and Intuition in that it requires the artist to break with conventional notions of time and understand the difference between time and temporality, to embrace the now. For Manniste *China* is the intellectual manifestation of Miller's will to create a space for artists. Yes, it acknowledges Miller as a committed Sinophile, but it is foremost Miller's rejection of Western civilisation in all its manifestations and his realisation of *China* 'as the ultimate realm to which art or artistic activities should lead...' (Manniste, 2013, p.95). He then goes on to acknowledge that art and *China* are not the end within themselves as the creation of art is only the means through which the artist sheds the past and touches authenticity, a theory very reminiscent of Rank's artistic re-birth, the goal is life:

Art... is only a preparation, an initiation into the way of life. The goal is liberation, freedom... To continue writing beyond the point of self-realization seems futile and arresting. The mastery of any form of expression should lead inevitably to the final expression- mastery of life. (Miller, 1941, p.209)

I feel as if Manniste is hinting at Miller's Zen Buddhism, but is unwilling to go to *China*'s logical conclusion. *China* is clearly Miller's conceptualisation of *Anatman* (no-self or no-being) not as a writer but as a human. Incorporating his earlier influences of Bergson and Rank, Miller sees time and timelessness and artistic stillbirth and rebirth as the means by

which to proceed to *Samhadi* (self-awareness) and *Prajna* (sudden insight). *China* is something Miller can only achieve through Buddhism; it is a way of life, a journey that requires adherence to The Four Noble Truths and the practice of The Noble Eightfold Path¹⁹. The mastery that Miller writes of is the mastery of life that can only be achieved through the Buddhist concept of right living; that is the daily employment of The Noble Eightfold Path. In one of Miller's final publications *Mother, China and the World Beyond* (1977) he outlines both his final views on his mother and how he envisions China. There is a sense that Miller is returning to the beginning of his life, that he wishes to explore his relationship with his mother, but from an intrinsically Zen Buddhist perspective. In 'China' he likewise returns to well-trodden ground with an attack on America and a clear positioning of himself as a Zen Buddhist:

Even as a boy the name China evoked strange sensations in me. It spelled everything that was vast, marvellous, magical, *and* incomprehensible. To say China was to stand things upside down. How marvellous that this same China should stir in the old man who is writing these words the same strange, unbelievable thoughts and feelings... We of the Western world are so very, very young, mere babes compared to the Hindus, the Chinese, the Egyptians, to mention only a few peoples. And, with our youth goes ignorance, stupidity and arrogance. Worse, our intolerance, our failure to even try to understand other peoples' ways. We in America are perhaps the worst sinners. (Miller, 1977, pp.27-28)

Miller continues with a rambling account of his own identification with the Chinese, not in an ideological or political sense because, as he states, such things are not important to him. He identifies with them in the spiritual sense and as the antithesis of Americans. Much as he earlier lionised the French, the reality of being Chinese is of little interest to Miller. It is the essence of what he sees as worthwhile in both these cultures, the French as connected to their land and the Chinese as deeply spiritual, which is what Miller makes the whole.

¹⁹ The Noble Eightfold Path can be summed up neatly as right living. By following these teachings on a daily basis Nirvana can be reached: 1. Right Understanding: Through The Four Noble Truths understanding who you are. 2. Right Thoughts: Kind and caring thoughts as opposed to ill will and individual pleasure. 3. Right Speech: Refraining from gossip, falsehood and cruel language. 4. Right Action: Refraining from promiscuity, killing or stealing. Being aware of the rights of others. 5. Right Livelihood: Not practicing a trade that is contrary to Buddhist beliefs, e.g. slavery or working in an abattoir. 6. Right Effort: taking responsibility to make an effort to live as a Buddhist. 7. Right Mindfulness: Being aware of the consequences of one's actions, thoughts and words. 8. Right Meditation: The constant practice of meditation leads to a clear and calm mind and is essential to the ultimate attainment of wisdom and enlightenment. For an examination of how all these factors must work in unison for true enlightenment see: Bodhi, B. (1994) *The Noble Eightfold Path*. Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka.

Miller's view of America shows no obvious signs of change; he still finds the culture abhorrent and awaits its demise:

America tries to give the world an image of a unified nation, "one and indivisible." Nothing could be further from the truth. We are a people torn with strife, divided in many ways, not only regionally. Our population contains some of the poorest and most neglected people in the world. It probably also contains the most rich people of any country in the world. There is race prejudice to a great degree and inhumanity to man even among the dominant Caucasians. As I hinted earlier, America is rapidly going down the drain. The old countries, poor for the most part, I expect will take over in a very few years. And the people who invented the firecracker will outlive those who invented the deadly atom bomb. (Miller, 1977, p.31)

Miller's message may not have changed but his delivery has. Gone is the apoplectic anger of his earlier years, replaced by a calm acceptance of what will be. Miller finishes 'China' with a call to those who will continue not to look to leaders to free them, but to look within:

As long as the rich rule there will be chaos, wars, revolutions. The leaders to look to are not in evidence. One has to hunt them out. One should remember, as Swami Vivekananda once put it, that "before Gautama there were twenty-four other Buddhas." Today we can no longer look for saviours. Every man must look to himself. As some great sage once said: "Don't look for miracles, *you* are the miracle." (Miller, 1977, pp.32-32)

In 'Mother' Miller tackles his original *bête noir* in the shape of his mother. It is not difficult to see that Miller's traumatic relationship with his mother shaped not only his future relationships with women, but also his feelings of self-loathing. Miller always felt that he had somehow let his mother down by not being able to conform to what she expected of a son. This sense of failure came to be mingled with a deep loathing over time; Louise Miller appears to have been a brutal, controlling individual. In 'Mother' Miller confront their reconciliation after death, an afterlife conceived of in Zen Buddhist spirituality. Miller and his mother are both awaiting reincarnation, but they must first face up to and accept their past mistakes. Louise Miller accepts her past stupidity and tells Miller, "You see, son, all we have to do here is to learn from our past mistakes, so when we are ready to be incarnated again, we will have learned our lesson. We have all time on

our hands here. Some learn faster than others and are gone before one really knows them.”” (Miller, 1977, p.8) She informs Miller that there is no government because there is no need for one, all the hatred and prejudice is gone from their hearts and minds. Miller questions his mother on a variety of subjects only to be pleased and astounded by her Zen Buddhist answers. He asks her everything he perhaps wanted to in life, why she did not support him being a writer and why she violently opposed his relationship to Pauline Chouteau, his first much older mistress? Miller receives all the answers he needs; he is at peace with his mother. The fact that the only way Miller can find resolution with his mother is by making her into something she was not is interesting, but surely one for the psychoanalyst’s sofa. His Zen Buddhism allows him to conceive of a way in which his forgiveness and acceptance of his mother’s behaviour is possible. Miller final message is one of self-awareness, acceptance and hope. He interacts with what could be argued are his two great themes, the lack of maternal love and alienation from one’s country, through his utilization of the Zen Buddhist Four Noble Truths.

Conclusion

Choosing Henry Miller as a subject matter for a thesis offers scope that is both constricting and wide open. As I was to discover, contradictions are an integral component in studying Miller. Research on Miller has very much revolved around fitting his work into another movement or linking it to the work of another, more illustrious writer. This has usually been done to add a certain intellectual or literary gravitas it was felt Miller lacked.

Landmark research on Miller has understood his work through the lens of or in connection to Surrealism, Anglo-European Modernism, Ezra Pound and Georges Bataille to name but a few. There is a sense that Miller cannot stand alone. In arguing that Miller is worthy of long overdue academic research, there still seems to be the need to enhance Miller through the reflection of another's accepted value. I suspect that there is still a suspicion that Miller is not quite top drawer. This is understandable when one considers how damaged Miller's reputation was by Kate Millett's infamous appraisal in *Sexual Politics* and how resistant to change this opinion has been. By using Jeanette Winterson's recent review of Frederick Turner's *Renegade: The Making of Tropic of Cancer* in my introduction, I was able to show just how powerful Millett's representation of Miller remains, although admittedly the question of gender in Miller's work is more complex than the scope of this thesis allows. I believe that in part the necessity to connect Miller to established figures and movement is due to a need to rehabilitate his reputation, to show that he is worthy of research. He is not simply a misogynist pornographer of dubious literary merit, but a writer who deserves his rightful position within the Surrealist or Modernist canon. This has led to a cutting of the cloth to fit the suit, so much of the research on Miller deals either exclusively with *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* or deals with *The Rosy Crucifixion* in a piecemeal fashion only to then stop abruptly. As I have acknowledged, the quality of Miller's work does indeed decline from about 1950 onwards. The revolutionary and experimental nature of his writing ends in 1939 with *Tropic of Capricorn* however to ignore his prodigious output in the final thirty years of his life is to give a false impression of his life and work. Miller scholars are remiss if they only concentrate on his landmark publications in the misplaced hope of securing more respect for his work. The framework through which Miller has been studied is narrow, however that leaves a lot yet to be done.

As I began to think of Miller as a possible subject for my thesis, I noted from my reading that there did not seem to be any research that looked at Miller's literary output as a whole and that although it was generally acknowledged that Miller was a Zen Buddhist, I had no

idea how this occurred or how it influenced his work. For the first year of my research I was convinced that Miller was in fact an Anarchist, perhaps not the most politically committed, but nevertheless an Anarchist. It was only as I read in a more in depth fashion, and crucially read his later essays, personal correspondence and pamphlets, that I realised that it was not Anarchism that underpinned his work, but a growing adherence to Zen Buddhist principles.

It is hard to see the connection between works as different as *Tropic of Cancer*, 'As Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere' and *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird*. At times the violence, cruelty, indifference and anger in Miller's early works are overwhelming; how do we get from that to the self-awareness and acceptance of his later works? To simply argue that Miller was always a Zen Buddhist is inconsistent with his work. In the introduction to this study I showed how Miller had always been interested in Eastern Philosophy and his personal reading continually included books on various forms of spirituality, however this is not always discernible in his early work. There are without doubt certain images that can be ascribed to Zen Buddhism in *Tropic of Cancer* for example, the motif of the river that appears repeatedly throughout the text. I would argue that indeed a Zen Buddhist interpretation can be placed on it, but equally so can one of Bergsonian fluidity and movement. As I have shown one does not preclude the other, in fact it is the exact opposite, it is an example of Miller's interpretation of Bergson combining with a latent sense of Zen Buddhist imagery. To state that the motif of the river is proof of Miller's Zen Buddhism in *Tropic of Cancer* is somewhat disingenuous the process by which Miller reaches Zen Buddhism must be allowed to unfold, rather than retrospectively assumed. The question I aimed to answer with this thesis is how Miller arrives at the Zen Buddhism of his later life and work, what influences can we see in action as Miller strives to find his authentic voice in his early career and how these influences continue to manifest themselves and help propel forward Miller's journey as a writer and towards Zen Buddhism. I especially appreciate Sarah Garland's characterisation of Miller as a 'magpie' picking up, digesting and discarding ideas and theories, and I would argue moulding them to fit his own agenda at that specific time. Miller's journey and I would strongly argue that this is how his life and literary output should be seen, is one of complete individuality. Miller is not a disciple or a follower; he does not seek inclusion but rather the discovery of self. In this pursuit he co-opts theories and concepts that often enhance or help propel his already half-formed convictions onwards.

Before his move to Paris in 1930 Miller saw himself as a writer who could not write. His inability to find an authentic way to express himself and the chaos of his personal life led to a nervous breakdown, the key point, however, is that Miller always saw himself as a writer. This directly leads into the influence that the work of Otto Rank upon Miller's conception of himself as a writer, how this impacted his life and in turn how his life was material to be utilised. In chapter 1 I showed how Rank's theories enabled Miller to rationalise the suffering that he had endured. The idea that Miller's creativity marked him out from the collective and that his self-designation as an artist constituted an irrevocable break from society gave Miller the foundations on which to re-build his sense of self, but also challenge his pre-conceived notions of failure and success. These ideas came directly from Rank. Likewise Rank's theory of the Biological Imperative allowed Miller to re-evaluate his relationship to his wife and muse June Mansfield, ultimately freeing him from the actual relationship and allowing him to use it as material through which to explore his own evolution as a writer and man. Miller's re-writing of that crucial seven year period in his life as a means through which to achieve clarity and acceptance starts with his reading of Rank. There is a sense of movement and flux in Miller's early work, something I looked at specifically in relation to the philosophy of Henri Bergson in chapter 2. Along with Rank, Bergson provided Miller with the means to comprehend his life experiences as material by challenging his notions of time and reality. Miller's preoccupation with the same seven year period in his life, and I would argue almost seeing his life before meeting Mansfield purely as preparation for their meeting, could be seen as obsoletely repetitive if it is not recognised as an exercise in Bergsonian Duration and Intuition. The interpenetration of the past and present coupled with the inability of static concepts to render reality presented Miller with the freedom to re-evaluate and re-write his life experiences because as his conceptualisations of the past change they become as 'real' as the originals. This in part explains Miller's rather lax attitude to biographical truth and why his representations of certain episodes change over time. Crucial to Bergson's influence on Miller is his idea of 'becoming'. As I showed in chapter 2, *Tropic of Cancer* is a novel in which Miller tries to mirror Bergson's theories in prose. It is a work in the process of becoming; it is not a finished, polished novel. Miller aims through language and rhythm to embody Bergson's ideas on movement, constant flux and the interpenetration of time. Although he would in time revert to a more chronological sense of time in his autobiographical novels, Bergson provided Miller with the impetus to create his most experimental and perhaps best writing. In chapter 3 I examined how Miller was influenced by Surrealism. Unlike many other Miller scholars, I have argued that rather than a seminal intellectual moment in Miller's life that had a lasting influence, Surrealism can be read as an example of Rank's Art

Ideology and something that Miller ultimately rejected to continue on his individual path. I believe I have shown that as much as Miller may have experimented with Automatism and agreed with the Surrealists upon the need to find a new language, freed from the old constraints, through which to communicate, he ultimately rejected their politics and their relegation of the artist from the creative process through Automatism. In keeping with a Rankian analysis, Miller interacted with the leading Art-Ideology of the day, as he was compelled to do, but in due course re-discovered his own creativity, re-invigorated and as individual as ever.

What became clear to me is that Miller required each of these influences to provide the foundations of him as a writer and a man. Rank influenced his notions of himself as an artist and for the need to constantly re-evaluate his past to gain understanding. Bergson's challenged his ideas of time and reality, allowing him to break free of chronological concepts of time and envision overlapping senses of awareness. Surrealism solidified his turn away from politics and the need for him to be present and active in his own narrative. I would argue that each of these laid the foundations to Miller's Zen Buddhism. Each incrementally added to Miller's incorporation of Zen Buddhism into his life and work, without any one of these influences the trajectory would have changed. In chapter 4 I demonstrated how the influence of Zen Buddhism over Miller's work was gradual but in the end complete. Miller did not just become a Zen Buddhist it was an evolution over years, and I have tried to show this evolution through his publications. From the struggle to reconcile his nature with Zen Buddhist principles in 'Children of the Earth' to his inability to practice non-attachment in 'Reflections on Writing' yet finding ultimate peace and forgiveness through Zen Buddhism in *Mother, China and the World Beyond*. Miller's journey to *Satori* was not quick, easy or without obstacles.

What I believe this thesis offers is a new, comprehensive way to read Miller's entire output, not just his most famous works. Rather than analysing Miller's work through the prism of another movement or writer, I have sought to show how he was influenced, but ultimately pursued a unique and individual path. I have been influenced by David Stephen Calonne's articles and his recent biography in seeing the importance of Eastern Philosophy in Miller's life, but I would argue that I have shown how this influence can be read in all his works rather than just his life. There is a strong argument to be made that Miller's complete works can be read as a chronicle of his journey to Zen Buddhism, encompassing different phases of his incorporating various philosophical positions, yet steadily moving towards an epiphany framed within Zen Buddhism. In a period of renewed academic

interest in Miller, I hope the ideas explored in this thesis offers an alternative approach to how we engage with Miller's collected works and counters the need to shoehorn him into academically acceptable pigeonholes. There is without doubt more research to be done on the influence of Zen Buddhism upon Miller, specifically in relation to his artworks and his personal correspondence. Hubristic is the researcher who believes that they have provided the Rosetta stone to any author's works, however I do believe that envisioning Miller's work as a progression to Zen Buddhism offers an opportunity to re-examine all his texts from a fresh perspective.

List of References

- Almond, P. C. (1988) *The British discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Anderson, M. (1991) *The unknowable Gurdjieff*. Arkana Publishing, New York. [1962]
- Arnold, E. (2013) *The light of Asia*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Seattle.
- Aschenbrenner, L. (1974) *The concepts of criticism*. Springer Publishing, New York.
- Bair, D. (1996) *Anais Nin: A biography*. Penguin Books, London.
- Bald, W. (1987) *On the Left Bank: 1929–1933*. Ohio University Press, Athens
- Balliet, G. L. (1996) *Henry Miller and surrealist metaphor: Riding the ovarian trolley*. Peter Lang Publishing, Oxford.
- Baxter, A. (1961) *Henry Miller: Expatriate*. University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.
- Baumann, M. (2012) 'Modern Interpretations of Buddhism in Europe.' *In*: McMahan, D. L. (ed.) *Buddhism in the modern world*. Routledge, London.
- Beard, R. and Berlowitz, L. (2003) *Greenwich Village: culture and counterculture*. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey.
- Bergson, H. (2000) *Time and free will*. Adamant Media Corporation, Boston.
- Bergson, H. (2007) *Matter and memory*. Cosimo Classics, New York.
- Bergson, H. (2011) *Creative evolution*. Digireads.com, New York.
- Bergson, H. (2014) *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Seattle.
- Bodhi, B. (1994) *The noble eightfold path*. Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka.

- Blavatsky, H.P. (2009) *The secret doctrine*. Jeremy P. Tarcher Publishing, Los Angeles.
- Blavatsky, H.P. (1971) *The voice of the silence: chosen fragments from the "Book of Golden Precepts" for the daily use of Lanoos*. Verbatim Publishing, Lagos. [1889]
- Blinder, C. (2000) *A self-made surrealist: ideology and aesthetics in the work of Henry Miller*. Camden House, Rochester.
- Bloshteyn, M.R. (2007) *The making of a countercultural icon: Henry Miller's Dostoevsky*. University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Branko, A. (2008) The unpublished correspondence of Henry Miller and Andre Breton, the steady rock 1947-1950. *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*, 5.
- Brassai. (1993) *The eye of Paris*. Houk Friedman Gallery, New York.
- Breton, A. (1969) *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor Paperbacks, Belford. [1924/1929]
- Breton, A. (1994) *Nadja*. Grove Press, New York. [1928]
- Breton, A. (1998) *The automatic message*. Atlas Anti-Classics, London. [1933]
- Booth, W. (1983) *Rhetoric of fiction*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Brown, J.D. (1986) *Henry Miller: Literature in life*. Bookpoint Publishing, Abingdon.
- Bucke, R.M. (2007) *Cosmic consciousness: A study of the evolution of the human mind*. Book Jungle, Melbourne. [1901]
- Burwick, F. and Douglass, P. (2010) *The crisis in modernism: Bergson and the vitalist controversy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bussine, L. (1998) *Beyond reason: art and psychosis - works from the Prinzhorn Collection*. University of California Press, Oakland
- Calonne, D. S. (1996) Anaïs Nin, Henry Miller and psychoanalysis. In: Herron, P. (ed.) *Anaïs Nin: A book of mirrors* Huntingdon Woods, MI.

- Calonne, D.S. (2000) Samhadi All the Time: Henry Miller and Buddhism. *Stoker*. 67
- Calonne, D.S. (2014) *Henry Miller*. Reaktion Books, London.
- Celine, L.F. (2006) *Journey to the end of night*. New Directions, New York. [1932]
- Chattopadhyay, R. (1999) *Swami Vivekananda in India: A corrective biography*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.
- Clarke, J.J. (1997) *Oriental enlightenment: The encounter between Asian and Western thought*. Routledge, London.
- Cohn, D. (2000) *The distinction of fiction*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Coleman, G. (2006) *The Tibetan book of the dead*. Penguin, London.
- Colls, R. (2013) *George Orwell: English rebel*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Collins, S. (1985) Buddhism in recent British philosophy and Theology. *Religious Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4.
- Cowe, J. (2013) Frederick Turner, Renegade: Henry Miller and the Making of Tropic of Cancer. *Journal of American Studies*, 47, 3, p.215.
- Cowe, J. (2014) Indrek Manniste, *Henry Miller: The Inhuman Artist*. *Journal of American Studies*, 48, p.148.
- Cowe, J. (2015) What Are You Going To Do About Max?: Understanding Anti-Semitism in Max. *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal*, Vol. 13.
- Dearborn, M.V. (1991) *The happiest man alive: A biography of Henry Miller*. Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Decker, J.M. (2005) *Henry Miller: Constructing the self, rejecting modernity*. Routledge, London.

- Deleuze, G and Guattari, F. (1987) *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota, Duluth.
- Durrell, L. (2012) *The black book*. Faber and Faber, London. [1938]
- Foucault, M. (1978) *The history of sexuality*. Vintage Publishing, New York. [1976]
- Franklin, J. J. (2008) *The lotus and the lion*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Fowlie, W. (1975) *Letters of Henry Miller and Wallace Fowlie 1943-72*. Grove Press, New York.
- Garland, S. (2005) *Rhetoric and excess: style, authority, and the reader in Henry Miller's 'Tropic of Cancer', Samuel Beckett's 'Murphy', William Burroughs' 'Naked Lunch', and Vladimir Nabokov's 'Ada or Ardor'*. PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia.
- Glicksberg, C. (1970) *The sexual revolution in modern American literature*. Springer Publishing, Cham.
- Gordon, W.A. (1968) *The mind and art of Henry Miller*. Jonathan Cape, London.
- Gottesman, R. (1992) *Critical essays on Henry Miller*. G.K. Hall, New York.
- Grana, C and Grana, M. (1990) *On bohemia: The code of the self-exiled*. Transaction Publishers, New Jersey.
- Greeley, R.A. (2006) *Surrealism and the Spanish civil war*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Guerlac, S. (2006) *Thinking in time: An introduction to Henri Bergson*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Gutkind, E. (1937) *The absolute collective: A philosophical attempt to overcome our broken state*. C.W. Daniel Co, London.
- Hall, M.P. (1975) *The phoenix: An illustrated review of occultism and philosophy*. Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles. [1932]

- Harap, L. (2003) *Image of the Jew in American literature: From early republic to mass immigration*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse.
- Hassan, I. (1967) *The literature of silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett*. Knopf Publishing, New York.
- Hesse, H. (2013) *Siddhartha*. Simon & Brown Publishing, Hollywood, Fl. [1951]
- Howe, E.G. (1972) *War dance: A study of the psychology of war*. Garland Publishing, New York. [1937]
- Howe, E.G. (1965) *Cure or heal?: A study of therapeutic experience*. George Allen & Unwin Publishing, London
- Howe, E.G. (1942) *The open way: A study of acceptance*. Methuen Publishing, London.
- Howe, E.G. (1951) *The triumphant spirit: A study of depression*. Faber & Faber, London.
- Humphrey, R. (1978) *Children of fantasy: The first rebels of Greenwich Village*. John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey.
- Hutchison, E.R. (1968) *Tropic of cancer on trial: A case history of censorship*. Grove Press, New York.
- Huxley, A. (2009) *The perennial philosophy: An interpretation of the great mystics, east and west*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, London.
- Ibarguen, R. (1989) *Narrative detours: Henry Miller and the rise of new critical modernism*. PhD Thesis, University of Yale.
- Illich, I. (2000) *Deschooling society*. Marion Boyars Publishers, London. [1971]
- Illich, I. (2001) *Tools for conviviality*. Marion Boyars Publishers, London. [1973]
- Jashan, P. (2001) *Henry Miller and the Surrealist Discourse of Excess*. Peter Lang Publishers, Chem.

- Jason, P.K. (1974) *Anais Nin reader*. Avon Books, New York.
- Johnson, W.J. (2008) *The bhagavad gita*. Oxford World Classics, Oxford.
- Kalupahana, D. (1984) *Buddhist philosophy: A historical analysis*. University of Hawaii, Honolulu.
- King, R. (1999) Orientalism and Religion: Post Colonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East.' In: Bloch, E. (ed.) *Rethinking religion in India: The colonial construction of Hinduism*. Routledge, London.
- Ladenson, E. (2012) *Dirt for art's sake: Books on trial from Madame Bovary to Lolita*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Lee, A. (1952) *Henry Miller: The pathology of isolation in new world writing*. Mentor Publishing, Dublin.
- Lomas, D. (2000) *The haunted self: Surrealism, psychoanalysis, subjectivity*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Lusthaus, D. (2003) *Buddhist phenomenology: A philosophical investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*. Routledge, London.
- Lusty, N. (2007) *Surrealism, feminism, psychoanalysis*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey.
- Lieberman J. E. (2011) *The letters of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank: Inside psychoanalysis*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- MacNiven, I. (2008) *The Durrell-Miller letters 1935-80*. New Directions, New York.
- Mailer, N. (1976) *Genius and lust: A journey through the major writings of Henry Miller*. Grove Press, New York.
- McCrum. R. (2015) *100 Best Novels in English*. *The Guardian*, [online]. August 17. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/17/the-100-best-novels-written-in-english-the-full-list>

- McMahan, D.L. (2008) *The making of Buddhist modernism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Manniste, I. (2014) *Henry Miller: The inhuman artist*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.
- Masuga, K. (2011) *The secret violence of Henry Miller*. Camden House, Rochester.
- Masuga, K. (2014) *Henry Miller and how he got that way*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Micale, M. S. (ed.) (2003) *The mind of modernism: Medicine, psychology and the creative arts in Europe and America 1880-1940* Stanford University Press, Redwood City.
- Miller, H. (2005) *Tropic of cancer*. Harper Perennial, London. [1934]
- Miller, H. (2012) *Black spring*. Alma Classics, Richmond. [1936]
- Miller, H. (2005) *Tropic of capricorn*. Harper Perennial, London. [1939]
- Miller, H. (1988) *Henry Miller's hamlet letters*. Capra Press, CA. [1939/1941]
- Miller, H. (1961) *The cosmological eye*. New Directions, New York. [1941]
- Miller, H. (1942) *The wisdom of the heart*. New Directions, Norfolk.
- Miller, H. (1970) *The air-conditioned nightmare*. New Directions, New York. [1945]
- Miller, H. (1952) *Remember to remember*. Grey Walls Press, London. [1947]
- Miller, H. (1974) *The smile at the foot of the ladder*. New Directions, New York. [1948]
- Miller, H. (2006) *Sexus*. Harper Perennial, London. [1949]
- Miller, H. (1969) *The books in my life*. New Directions, New York. [1952]
- Miller, H. (2011) *Plexus*. Harper Perennial, London. [1953]
- Miller, H. (2013) *Quiet days in Clichy*. Alma Classics, Richmond. [1956]

- Miller, H. (1957) *Big Sur and the oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*. New Directions, New York.
- Miller, H. (1959) *The Henry Miller reader*. New Directions, New York.
- Miller, H. (2011) *Nexus*. Harper Perennial, London. [1960]
- Miller, H. (1961) *Art and outrage: A correspondence about Henry Miller between Lawrence Durrell and Alfred Perles*. E.P. Dutton & Company, Boston.
- Miller, H. (1962) *Stand still like the hummingbird*. New Directions, New York.
- Miller, H. (1972) *Henry Miller in conversation*. Quadrangle Press, San Antonio.
- Miller, H. (1977) *Mother, China and the world beyond*. Capra Press, Santa Barbara.
- Miller, H. (1989) *Letters to Emil*. New Directions, New York.
- Miller, T. (1998) *The quest for utopia in twentieth century America 1900-1960*. Syracuse University Press, New York.
- Millett, K. (2000) *Sexual politics*. University of Illinois, Champaign. [1970]
- Morrison, M. (2000) *The public face of modernism: Little magazines, audiences and reception, 1905-1920*. University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.
- Nelson, J. (1970) *Form and image in the fiction of Henry Miller*. Wayne State University Press, Detroit.
- Nesbit, R. (2007) *Henry Miller and religion*. Routledge, London.
- Nin, A. (1958) *House of incest*. Swallow Press, Ohio.
- Nin, A. (1966) *The diary of Anaïs Nin: 1931-1934*, vol. 1. Swallow Press, New York.
- Normand, L. (2013) *Encountering Buddhism in twentieth-Century British and American literature*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

- Obeyesekere, G. (1995) *The Two Faces of Colonel Olcott: Buddhism and Euro-Rationality in the Late 19th Century*. In: Everding, U. (ed.) *Buddhism and Christianity: Interactions between east and west*. The Goethe Institute, Colombo.
- Orwell, G. (1962) *Inside the whale: and other essays*. Penguin, London. [1940]
- Pearson, N. (2007) *Obelisk: A history of Jack Kahane and the Obelisk Press*. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.
- Piette, A. and Rowlinson, M. (2012) *The Edinburgh companion to British and American war literature*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Pilkington, A.E. (2012) *Bergson and his influence: A reassessment*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Potter, R. (2013) *Obscene modernism: Literary censorship and experiment 1900-1940*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Prinzhorn, H. (1972) *Artistry of the mentally ill*. Springer Publishing, New York.
- Rank, O. (2010) *The myth of the birth of the hero: A psychological interpretation of mythology*. Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish. [1914]
- Rank, O. (1991) *The incest theme in literature and legend: Fundamentals of a psychology of literary creation*. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. [1912]
- Rank, O. (2010) *The trauma of birth*. Martino Fine Books, Eastford. [1929]
- Rank, O. (2011) *The double: A psychoanalytic study*. The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. [1971]
- Rank, O. (1978) *Truth and reality*. W.W. Norton Co, New York. [1936]
- Rank, O. (1978) *Will therapy*. W.W. Norton Co, New York. [1935]
- Rank, O. (1989) *Art and artist: Creative urge and personality Development*. W.W. Norton Co, New York. [1932]

- Otten, A. (1977) *Hesse companion*. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.
- Perles, A. (1956) *My friend Henry Miller: An intimate biography*. John Day Co, New York.
- Prothero, S. R. (2010) *The white Buddhist: The Asian odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Rexroth, K. (1959) *Bird in the bush*. Ayer Co Publishing, New Haven.
- Rood, K.L. (1980) *American writers in Paris 1920-39*. Cengage Gale Publishing, Detroit.
- Rudhyar, D. (1987) The astrology of personality: A re-formulation of astrological concepts and ideals, in terms of contemporary psychology and philosophy. Aurora Press, Santa Fe. [1936]
- Sazama-Moreau, S.T. (1999) *Women and Paris in Andre Breton's Nadja and Henry Miller's Quiet Days in Clichy*. University of Maryland Press, Bethesda.
- Seigfried, C.H. (1993) Introduction to Jessie Taft, "The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness". *Hypatia*, 8, Spring.
- Sharf, R.H. (1993) The Zen of Japanese nationalism. *History of Religion*, 33.
- Singer, L. (1988) Ideology and Ethics: The Perversion of German Psychiatrists. Ethics by the Ideology of National Socialism. *European Psychiatry*, 13.
- Sinnott, A.P. (2012) *Esoteric Buddhism*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Seattle. [orig. ed.: Trubner and Company, London, 1883.
- Snodgrass, J. (2009) Publishing Eastern Buddhism: D. T. Suzuki's Journey to the West. In: DuBois, T. D. (ed.) *Casting faiths: Imperialism and the transformation of religion in east and Southeast Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Standish, C.P. (1994) *Henry Miller: A book of tributes*. Standish Books, Orlando.

- Stephenson, B. (2009) *Veneration and revolt: Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo.
- Stranger, W. (2012) *The druid of Harley Street: The spiritual psychology of E. Graham Howe*. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.
- Satchidanandendra, S.S. (1997) *The method of the Vedanta: A critical account of the Advaita tradition: A critical account of the Vedanta tradition*. Motilal Banarsidass, Dehli.
- Swahananda, S. (2012) *Vedanta and Vivekananda*. Ramakrishna Mission, Kolkata.
- Taft, J. (1933) *The dynamics of therapy in a controlled relationship*. Macmillan Co, New York.
- Taft, J. (1958) *Otto Rank, A biographical study based on notebooks, letters, collected writings, therapeutic achievements and personal associations*. The Julian Press, New York.
- Tesering, G.T. (2005) *The four noble truths: The foundation of Buddhist thought*. Wisdom Publications, MA.
- Tonkinson, C. (1996) *Big sky mind: Buddhism and the Beat generation*. Thorsons Publishing, London.
- Turner, F. (2012) *Renegade: Henry Miller and the making of Tropic of Cancer*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Tweed, T.A. (2009) *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- Tzu-Chuang. (2008) *Musings of a Chinese mystic*. Wildside Press, Rockville.
- Tzu, L. (2013) *Tao Te Ching*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Seattle.
- Watts, A. (1994) *The spirit of Zen*. Grove Press, New York. [1936]

- Weber, R. (2006) *News of Paris: American journalists in the city of light between the wars*. Ivan.R. Dee Publishing, Chicago.
- Winterson, J. (2012) *The Male Mystique of Henry Miller* *The New York Times* [online] January 3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/books/review/renegade-henry-miller-and-the-making-of-tropic-of-cancer-by-frederick-turner-book-review>.
- Yang, M. (2013) Zen Buddhism as Radical Conviviality in the Works of Henry Miller, Kenneth Rexroth and Thomas Merton. In: Normand, L. *Encountering Buddhism in twentieth-century British and American literature*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

Bibliography

- Barlett, L. (ed.) (1991) *Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin: Selected letters*. W.W. Norton & Co., New York.
- Blinder, C. (2000) *A self-made surrealist: ideology and aesthetics in the work of Henry Miller*. Camden House, New York.
- Blyth, R.H. (2001) *Zen in English literature and oriental classics*. Hokuseido Press, Tokyo.
- Brassai. (2011) *Henry Miller: The Paris years*. Arcade Publishing, New York.
- Brooks, V.W. (1963) *Writers at work: The Paris Review interviews*. Viking Books, New York.
- Brown, J. D. (1986) *Henry Miller*. Ungar, New York.
- Bürger, P. (1984) *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Shaw, M. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Carr, W.H. (2015) *Henri Bergson: The philosophy of change*. Leopold Library, Kiev.
- Caws, M. A. (2001) *Manifesto: A century of isms*. University of Nebraska Press, London.
- Conn, P. (2009) *The American 1930s*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Cowley, M. (1934) *Exile's return: A narrative of ideas*. W.W Norton & Co., New York.
- Dabney, L. M. (ed.) (2007) *Edmund Wilson: Literary essays and reviews of the 1920s & 30s*. Library of America, New York.
- Decker, J. (2006) *Henry Miller and narrative form: constructing the self, rejecting modernity*. Routledge, New York.
- Deleuze, G. (1990) *Bergsonism*. Zone Books, New York.

Finch, N.R. (1993) *Anais: The erotic life of Anais Nin*. Little Brown & Co, New York.

Finkelstein, S. (1971) Alienation and Rebellion to Nowhere: Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.

Fowlie, W. (1971) Shadow of Doom: An Essay on Henry Miller. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.

Fraenkel, M. (1992) The Genesis of Tropic of Cancer. In: Gottesman, R. (ed.) *Critical essays on Henry Miller*. G.K. Hall & Co., New York, pp. 51-70.

Friedman, A. (1971) The Pitching of Love's Mansion in the Tropics of Henry Miller. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.

Fromm, E. (1974) *Zen Buddhism and psychoanalysis*. Condor Books, Kincardine.

Garland, S. (2005) *Rhetoric and excess: Style, authority, and the reader in Henry Miller's 'Tropic of Cancer', Samuel Beckett's 'Murphy', William Burroughs' 'The Naked Lunch', and Vladimir Nabokov's 'Ada or Ardor'*. Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia.

Garland, S. (2011) The Dearest of Cemeteries. *European Journal of American Culture*, 29(3), pp.197-215.

Gifford, J. (2014) *Personal modernisms: Anarchist networks and the later avant-gardes*. University of Alberta Press, Edmonton.

Glicksberg, C. I. (1971) *The sexual revolution in modern American literature*, 2nd edn. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague.

Gordon, W. (1971) The Art of Miller: The Mind and Art of Henry Miller. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.

- Griffin, R. (2007) *Modernism and fascism: The sense of a beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Hartch, T. (2015) *The prophet of Cuernavaca: Ivan Illich and the crisis of the west*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Hassan, I. H. (1968) *The literature of silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett*, vol. 19. Knopf, New York.
- Hoffman, F. J. (1971) Further Interpretations. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.
- Hoyle, A. (2014) *The unknown Henry Miller: A seeker in Big Sur*. Arcade Publishing, New York.
- Hynes, S. (1976) *The Auden generation: Literature and politics in England in the 1930s*. The Bodley Head Ltd, London.
- Jahshan, P. (2001) *Henry Miller and the surrealist discourse of excess: A post-structuralist reading*. Peter Lang Publishing, New York.
- Jong, E. (1993) *The devil at large: Erica Jong on Henry Miller*. Chatto and Windus, London.
- Kahane, J. (1939) *Memoirs of a booklegger*. Michael Joseph Ltd, London.
- Karpf, F.B. (1953) *The psychology and psychotherapy of Otto Rank*. Philosophical Society, New York.
- Kazia, A. (1962) Psychoanalysis and Literary Culture Today. In: Rahv, P. & Phillips, W. (eds.) *The partisan review anthology*. McMillan & Co., London.
- Kermode, F. (1967) The Modern Apocalypse. *The sense of an ending: Studies in the theory of fiction*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Kermode, F. (1971) Henry Miller and John Betjeman. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.

- Ladenson, E. (2007) *Dirt for art's sake: Books on trial from 'Madame Bovary' to 'Lolita'*. Cornell University Press, New York.
- Lee, A. (1971) Henry Miller: The Pathology of Isolation. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.
- Lepetit, P. (2014) *The esoteric secrets of Surrealism: Origins, magic, and secret societies*. Inner Traditions Press, Rochester.
- Lewis, H. (1988) *The politics of Surrealism*. Paragon House, St. Paul.
- Lewis, L. (1986) *Henry Miller: The major writings*. Schocken Books, New York.
- Lieberman, E.J. (1985) *Acts of will: The life and work of Otto Rank*. Free Press, Houston.
- Littlejohn, D. (1971) The Tropics of Miller. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.
- Macniven, I. S. (ed.) (1988) *Durrell-Miller letters, 1935-1980*. New Directions Publishing, New York.
- Mailer, N. (1971) *The prisoner of sex*. Little, Brown & Co., Boston.
- Mailer, N. (1976) *Genius and lust: A journey through the major writings of Henry Miller*. Grove Press, New York.
- Malt, J. (2004) *Obscure objects of desire: Surrealism, fetishism, and politics*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Manniste, I. (2013) *Henry Miller: The inhuman artist - A philosophical inquiry*. Bloomsbury Academic, London.
- Martin, J. (1978) *Always merry and bright: The life of Henry Miller - An unauthorized biography*. Capra Press, Santa Barbara.
- Masuga, K. (2011) *The secret violence of Henry Miller*. Camden House, Rochester, New York.

- Mayne, G. (1993) *Eroticism in Georges Bataille and Henry Miller*. Summa Publications, Birmingham, Alabama.
- Miller, H. (2010) *The colossus of Maroussi*. New Directions, New York.
- Miller, H. (2102) *Paris 1928: Nexus II*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Mitchell, E. B. (1971) Artist and Artists: The 'Aesthetics' of Henry Miller. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.
- Molino, A. (1998) *The couch and the tree: Dialogues In psychoanalysis and Buddhism*. North Point Press, New York.
- Nalbantian, S. (1997) *Anais Nin: Literary perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Nin, A and Miller, H. (1989) *A literate passion: Letters of Anaïs Nin & Henry Miller, 1932-1953*. Mariner Books, New York.
- Nin, A. (1966) *The Diary of Anais Nin: 1931-1934*, vol. 1. Swallow Press, New York.
- Nin, A. (2001) *Henry and June*. Penguin Classics, London.
- Orwell, G. (1987) *Down and out in Paris and London*. Penguin, London. [1933]
- Prentiss, C. (2006) *Zen and the art of happiness*. Power Press, Malibu.
- Rabinovitch, C. (2002) *Surrealism and the sacred: Power, eros, and the occult in modern art*. Basic Books, New York.
- Rahv, P. (1971) Henry Miller: Image and Idea. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.
- Rank, O (2011) *Beyond psychology*. Dover Publications, Mineola.
- Rank, O. (1996) *A psychology of difference*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Rank, O. (2015) *Don Juan legend*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

- Rank, O. (2011) *Psychology and the soul*. Martino Fine Books, Eastford.
- Rexroth, K. (1960) The Neglected Henry Miller. In: Christman, H. M. (ed.) *A view of the nation: An anthology - 1955-1959*. Grove Press, New York.
- Rexroth, K. (1987) Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation. In: Morrow, B. (ed.) *The world outside the window: The selected essays of Kenneth Rexroth*. New Directions Publishing, New York.
- Rushdie, S. (1991) Outside the Whale. *Imaginary homelands: Essays and criticism 1981-1991*. Penguin, London.
- Seigel, J. (1999) *Bohemian Paris: Culture, politics, and the boundaries of bourgeois life, 1830-1930*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Shapiro, K. (1971) The Greatest Living Author: In Defense of Ignorance. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.
- Snyder, R. (1974) *This is Henry, Henry Miller from Brooklyn: Conversations with the author from the Henry Miller odyssey*. Nash Publishing, Los Angeles.
- Spengler, O. (1926) *Decline of the west*, trans. by Atkinson, C. F. George Allen & Uwin, London.
- Stuhlmann, G. (ed.) (1965) *Henry Miller: Letters to Anaïs Nin*. Putnam, New York.
- Stuhlmann, G. (ed.) (1988) *A literate passion: Letters of Anaïs Nin & Henry Miller, 1932-1953*. Allison & Busby, London.
- Adiswarananda, S. (2007) *The Vendanta way to peace and happiness*. Skylight Paths, Woodstock, VT.
- Thich, N.H. (2014) *No mud, no lotus: The art of transforming suffering*. Parallax Press, Berkeley.
- Wickes, G. (1992) Henry Miller: Down and Out in London and Paris. In: Gottesman, R.

(ed.) *Critical essays on Henry Miller*. G.K. Hall & Co., New York, pp. 103-130.

Wickes, G. (ed.) (1996) *Henry Miller and James Laughlin: Selected letters*. W.W. Norton & Co., New York.

Widmer, K. (1971) Henry Miller. In: Mitchell, E. B. (ed.) *Henry Miller: Three decades of criticism*. New York University Press, New York.

Wilson, E. (1992) Twilight of the Expatriates. In: Gottesman, R. (ed.) *Critical essays on Henry Miller*. G.K. Hall & Co., New York, pp. 91-94.

Wiser, W. (2001) *The twilight years: Paris in the 1930s*. Robson Books, London.

Woolf, M. (1992) Beyond Ideology: Kate Millet and the Case for Henry Miller. In: Gottesman, R. (ed.) *Critical essays on Henry Miller*. G.K. Hall & Co., New York, pp. 165-178.

Yamada, K. (2004) *The gateless gate: The classic book of Zen koans*. Wisdom Publications, Somerville, MA.