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**Riding the ovarian trolley: Surrealism and surreal metaphor in
Henry Miller's *Tropics* trilogy**

Balliet, Gay Louise, Ph.D.

Lehigh University, 1994

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300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Riding the Ovarian Trolley:

Surrealism and Surreal Metaphor

in

Henry Miller's Tropics Trilogy

by

Gay Louise Balliet

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

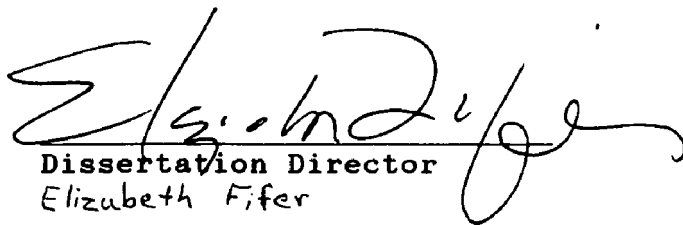
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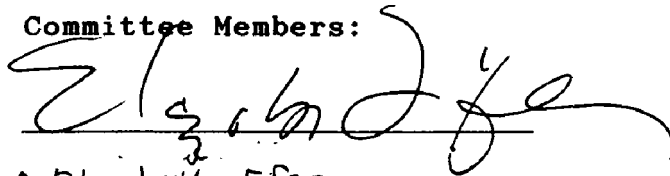
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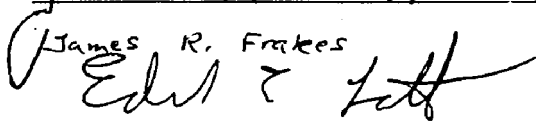
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Abstract

Henry Miller's Tropics trilogy is influenced by twentieth-century French surreal aesthetic that fashions its philosophy according to the following characteristics: 1) revolution against convention and society; 2) automatism; 3) dreams and the Freudian unconscious; 4) chance and the objet trouve; 5) the fantastic; 6) the irrational, insane, and paranoid; 7) the importance of women and love. Surreal painting and sculpture also reflect these surreal characteristics, most of which are revealed in Henry Miller's own watercolors.

A surreal image or metaphor is one of "alchemical experimentation" and is characterized by incongruity; it employs mismatches found in subject-verb relationships, adjective/noun relationships, possessive constructions, adjective and adverb phrases, "like" phrases, appositive phrases, participles, adjective clauses, and lists of words and phrases.

The surreal imagery that Miller uses in Tropic of Cancer encourages the reader's mind's eye to visualize an

image in terms of expanding and contracting that image. The mind's eye visualizes the incongruous image first as an expansion in which additional descriptions enhance the picture of the referent. At the same time, however, the mind perceives a shrinkage or contraction in judgment of that image. Thus, a surreal image undergoes first expansion and then contraction--a kind of exploding and imploding of vision and attitude. Miller's intent is to make visual an American society in dissolution.

Cancer's images, generally, seem to revert to the primal. They conjure visions of the preglacial, the prehistoric, the animal, the elemental. They also use the terminology of sex as well as that of disease, geology, metallurgy, and astronomy. Surreal episodes in Tropic of Capricorn and Black Spring portray Miller's vision of an entropic world.

Introduction

History and Aesthetics of Surrealism

I. The Origins of Surrealism

. . . let us not lose sight of the fact that the idea of Surrealism aims quite simply at the total recovery of our psychic force by a means which is nothing other than the dizzying descent into ourselves, the systematic illumination of hidden places and the progressive darkening of other places, the perpetual excursion into the midst of forbidden territory, ... (Breton Second Manifesto of Surrealism 135-36)

Thus André Breton, spokesperson for French surrealism, an aesthetic and philosophical movement founded between the two World Wars, explains the beauty of surrealist ideology--that of "convulsive Beauty" (Breton, Nadja 160). This beauty is not aesthetic but makes possible unconscious reality (Hoffman, "Problem" 135). Breton's ideological beauty is "erotic-veiled," "explosive-fixed," "magic-circumstantial" (Hassan, Orpheus 71)--the beauty can contain all man's problems and all his distresses, allowing neither "possession" nor "knowledge" but "analogy" and "hope" (Alquié 145). In such a world man becomes beautifully whole again when his unconscious desires "trouble the designs of

[our] reason" (Alquié 145).

The surrealist saves himself, the artist, and his audience through his art, which redeems through such revolutionary beauty. This kind of philosophy is necessary in the twentieth-century world of rationality, authority, and tradition. Man must discover his own success and sorrows that lie beyond the consciousness of the outside world. Alquié notes: "For man may and must go beyond anything in which he is lost, limited, alienated. Only he cannot go beyond man" (146).

This identification of beauty with the importance of the individual as he survives society and conformism was realized long before the surrealism of the 20s and 30s in Paris. One could say that surrealism has existed "at all times and in all countries" (Gascoyne 104). Even Breton said, "Surrealism existed before me, and I firmly believe that it will survive me" (qtd. in Alexandrian 9).

Precursors to the surrealist movement in France include Uccello, Bosch, Breughel, Callot, El Greco, Goya, Blake, certain pre-Raphaelites, Millet, Boecklin, Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Aubrey Beardsley, and James Ensor (Gascoyne 105). In reality the French surrealists had chosen as their forerunners Uccello, Cosimo, Durer, Altdorfer, Caron, Arcimboldo, and Fuseli. These past artists shared an affinity with the French surrealists and their philosophy:

exaltation of the imaginary, the strange, and the "evocation of the possible, supplemented by desire and dream" (Alexandrian 9).

The surrealists first admired Paolo Uccello (in such paintings as Desecration of the Host--1465-67, Urbino, Galleria Nazionale) for his indifference to naturalistic painting, for he gave arbitrary colors to his animals and other objects, thus injecting irrationality into reality (10). The surrealists also regarded Hieronymus Bosch as a prime example of their philosophy and technique. In his The Garden of Earthly Delights, The Haywain (Madrid, Prado), and Temptation of St. Antony (Lisbon, Museu Nacional) he parades an "obsessive spectacle" of the "prodigality of nature, of humanity's feverish squandering of life, and of the universal triumph of unreason" (10-11) [see fig. 1]. Such artists attack the outside forces of rationality and convention, instead delighting in the bizarre and fantastic. This painting demonstrates the irrational quality: two ears pierced through with a knife; the semblance of an eviscerated body with a tree stump sprouting from its side; a gigantic head of a human beneath a hat composed of a bagpipe and with miniature human/animals parading on its brim. The images are nightmarish in their ability to shock and disrupt normal perception and association. It is a hell scape of the irrational kind.

Surrealism also had more recent precursors. In some

dictionaries surrealism is designated as an historical period, an artistic movement occurring in Paris between the years 1919 and 1939 (Fowlie 11). This was a specific, organized movement and included particular leaders, manifestoes, pamphlets and publications, exhibitions. But the literal 20th-century surrealism shares its foundation with other philosophers/writers before it. These writers shared a distinct antipathy toward classicism and its code of "order, control, condensation, choice, synthesis, rules" (Fowlie 14). They advocated, instead, a more romantic inclination toward that which was culturally upsetting and revolutionary. Surrealism, therefore, links itself to those romantics who placed the imagination of the artists first. The more recent philosophers/writers who sought a more spontaneous form of art include Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and Apollinaire. In addition, other influences upon French surrealism were those of the Marquis de Sade, Hegel, Marx, and Freud (Fowlie 12).

Apollinaire was a contemporary of the surrealists, an extraordinary Parisian character, whose Bohemian life was fantastic. His poetry is also built around fantasy and revolt: "he broke with the familiar patterns of thought, and with the poetic clichés . . . of the . . . Symbolists, and with the familiar units of syntax" (Fowlie 88). Likewise, Apollinaire's verse contains, "phantoms, wanderers, mythic

characters bearing sonorous names, . . . (Fowlie 88). Apollinaire considered poetry magical. It had the capacity to reveal man's knowledge of self and the world as it concomitantly rejected conventionality (89-90). This philosophy is evident in his volume of poetry called Alcools, of 1913, in which reside fantasy figures: nymphs, Loreleis, clowns, thieves--all poetic projections of the "mystical child" (91).

Another precursor is Mallarmé, whose long poem "Herodiade" created a new poetic theory--i.e., "To paint, not the thing, but the effect that it produces" (64). As with Apollinaire, the poet acts as a magician, the keeper of creative secrets. In Mallarmé's poem the princess solely desires unity of self and the world (the philosophy of surrealism). The reader regards the princess moving about through a magical realm, "a domain apart from the real world" (77). Her traits appear later as those of Breton's heroine, Nadja.

Rimbaud was a true revolutionary who fashioned his life--physical and social self--according to what inner qualities he could discover and so, like Salvador Dali, he displayed shocking behavior. His principal works were "Lettre du Voyant," "Bateau Ivre," and Une Saison en Enfer, all written between 1871 and 1873 (48).

His letter to Paul Demeny reveals his theory of poetry, and this had an influence on the surrealists, especially the

phrase "Je est un autre" ("I is another self").

Essentially, this other self is the real self, not that fictional self that reacts in response to society's demands. The unreal self is that created by the outside world; it is an inhibited self, encouraged to conform to convention and discouraged from realizing a pure sense of desire, ambition, and personality. In the Demy letter he says he believes the poetry of the traditional poets had come from this false self, which resulted in "hack" writing. As a poet he needs to separate himself from society; art becomes a "ritual of alienation" in which the poet must divorce himself from literary tradition and the language of the people, instead searching for the inner self (50). This idea is indicative of surrealist philosophy. Rimbaud felt, as do the surrealists, that the poet must realize himself first, realize the fantastic monster within in order to reach the Unknown:

Implicated in this theory, . . . are all the mannerisms and methods of the surrealists: automatism, the subconscious, the dream in an awakened state, intoxication, occultisms, the violation of memory, paranoiac exaltation.
(54)

Furthermore, Rimbaud felt, as do the surrealists, that one should use language according to its magical importance. The enemy word of the surrealists is "reality" (55).

To show the surrealists' allegiance to Rimbaud, André Masson, surrealist artist, sketched drawings for Rimbaud's

Une Saison en Enfer, focusing on its occult characteristics (Hubert 220) [see fig. 2]. This painting takes on the color of rust, perhaps indicative of its title, Mauvais Sang or Bad Blood. The figures are fragmentary, with a semblance of a human figure which is torn and stripped of its humanity. On the left side of the painting is a nightmarish, though fragmentary, image of a monster, a devil character that is leering at the stripped human or that has just ripped his body, leaving only a skeleton. Renée Hubert says, "Masson's powerful strokes and color zones underline the guilt, suffering, and aspiration to purification in [Rimbaud's] text" (222). Masson paralleled Rimbaud's theories with his art: he "rejected categories and made deconstruction and regeneration almost simultaneous" (225). Another surrealist illustrating Rimbaud was Sebastian Matta, who illustrated Une Saison en Enfer, Ubu roi, Hom'mère, and Gargantua, thus keeping alive the spirit of surrealism (226) [see fig. 3]. The space in this painting is "visceral" and pertains to the unconscious world. The reader can recognize figures resembling phallic symbols which take on other qualities. These figures metamorphose into bones; body parts float through the picture. The sketchy images radiate from the dark background of the painting and reflect what is unknown to humans. Hubert says, "The poet alludes to what words cannot express, to what lies beyond silence and

immobility" (227).

During the nineteenth century, the poet Lautréamont devoted himself to the romantic notions of individualism and the solitary artist. Like the surrealists, Isidore Ducasse made individualism his creed. His Les Chants de Maldoror is decidedly surrealistic in both language and imagery; it is revolutionary, calling for poetic change and attention to creativity through insanity (Fowlie 33). The rebellion behind the surrealist character of Maldoror is more particularly a revolt against God. In addition to religion, Lautréamont denies the family, schools, and society.

Again the surrealists became engaged in illustrating, editing, and writing pieces for Lautréamont's Les Chants de Maldoror (Hubert 189) [see fig. 4 and 5]. Figure 4 reflects a disturbing world in which expressionless human forms vibrate with auras that make the central figure peek out from his misery in self-conscious realization. Figure 5 combines worlds both mechanical and stiff and those that are limp and flaccid. The brain-like image consumes a man as it is supported around its large, consuming belly-head by a wooden crutch. Incongruity resides within the hard, metallic and wooden pieces and the flaccid, womb-like, brain-like figure; the sense is irrationality. They valued his radical ideas on science, art, literature, religion, and ethics. As their forerunner Lautréamont promoted different forms of perversion--linguistic and moral (190)--and this

perversion the surrealists illustrated in their art. Like the surrealists Lautréamont "challenges the literary tradition of comparison, the standard definitions of beauty, the acceptance of codes, and the belief in fixed and, even more, lasting measures or laws" (190-1). Particularly derived from Lautréamont is Breton's requirement that beauty be convulsive (191).

Another contributor to surrealist philosophy was Baudelaire, who stressed the importance of the imagination. Fowlie remarks, "For Baudelaire, the work of art is essentially a work of the imagination and yet it is true and real at the same time" (26). Through psychoanalysis and analysis of the self, Baudelaire comes to reveal a kind of universal consciousness (26-7). Sharing an affinity with Edgar Allan Poe, he shows the propensities of an evil self that lives through art and, therefore, through its audience (27).

The surrealist revolt of the 1920s and 30s in Paris clearly had its precursors in the revolution of 19th-century poets and writers. In fact, surrealism has existed in all time. The surrealists proclaimed the dignity of man and the limitless nature of the human: his dreams, his subconscious states, his erotic desires. All that is surreal hopes for the total liberation of man: "le sel mot de liberté" (Alquié 177). The surrealist descends into dream and sleep, into

the subconscious to "engage in a primitive mode of activity, where, according to the theory of Freud, he is able to experience a decrease in his repressions, and where he ceases to resist authentic parts of his nature" (177). The surrealist needs freedom to be himself and detachment from the world: from the rules of the family, of society, of the state, of sexuality. These precursors, so like the surrealists of the 20s and 30s, sought a "spiritual absolute" and fought to transcend the world in their time. Salvation was to be had by descent into the self and the self's own realization in dream, love, desire, liberty (178). Here lay the importance of the individual, his reason for surviving society and conformism.

II. Surreal Aesthetic

Many critics agree that pinpointing surreal philosophy is a difficult, if not impossible, task. In fact, on the point of individual freedom, Breton, in his second surrealist Manifesto, is vague concerning each man's search for his own path of complete understanding--"a supreme feat of reconnaissance" (124). Not many critics have been able to come to grips with the meaning of these words. The revolutionary nature of surrealism is clear, but the vagueness inherent in this idea of "reconnaissance"--"re-knowing" or "meeting again"--is perplexing. Perhaps it is intended for us to become reacquainted with a self unknown to us before. I conclude that the surrealists have remained

deliberately vague about their aims. The first issue of Breton's La Revolution Surrealiste is inscribed:

We must arrive at a new declaration of the rights of man. . . . Surrealism does not offer itself as setting out a doctrine. Certain ideas that at present serve to support it do nothing to prejudice its later development. This first number of La Revolution Surrealiste does not therefore present any final revelation. . . . We must await the future. (qtd. in Matthews, Introduction 47)

The real surrealist will not allow himself to be dominated by any system, thus letting the doors open to all experience (Matthews, Introduction 47-8). Even Louis Aragon said, "We are working at a task that is enigmatic even to us." Furthermore, Breton had always criticized constrained thought, saying in his second Manifesto that surrealism can stimulate "a crisis of consciousness of the most general kind" (123).

Similarly, when the term "surrealist" was first used by Apollinaire in his play Les Mamelles de Tiresias (1918), he was not able to define it (Matthews, Introduction 51). Critics still have trouble defining it, sometimes refusing to, and sometimes over-simplifying the term. Some explain it as a state of mind; some claim it has no aesthetics (Gascoyne xiv); some believe it is a very restricted philosophy and refers only to those writers and artists in the 20s and 30s in Paris; some refer to it as a technique or a movement.

My own analysis of surrealism, in an effort not to over-simplify it, finds that it reflects, most importantly, a manifestation of attitude. I do not believe the surrealists, either in painting or in literature, are simply masters of pure technique or method, but I believe their attitude contains a basic aesthetic or philosophy that can be said to be surreal. I further believe that their technique is secondary to their philosophy. Technique becomes the expression of the philosophy, which is primary. First and foremost, the surrealist must remain true to the surreal aim. Though not perfectly clear, the general surrealist aim is to attempt to rid the mind of restraints imposed upon it by society so that the artist can formulate new perspectives on life.

In order to see how surrealism influenced 20th-century American literature, I believe it necessary to discuss first the tenets or characteristics of surrealism in theory and as reflected in surrealist art. First I will discuss the general thesis of the movement; then I will move into specific areas in which surrealism delights: 1) revolution against convention and society; 2) automatism and the passive artist; 3) dreams and the Freudian unconscious; 4) the relevance of chance, which includes the objet trouvé, surreal games, and black humor; 5) the fantastic; 6) the irrational, the insane, the paranoid; 7) the importance of women and love.

In general, surrealism demonstrates the notion that man must be "fulfilled in his totality" (Plank 1); he must become a dual man of sorts who attempts to come to terms both with that culture and his interior self denied by that culture. In Breton's second Manifesto of 1929, he defines surrealism thus:

. . . a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the uncommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. (123)

In realizing his dual nature, man is able to occupy both the external, social world and his inner, instinctive self. This idea parallels those theories of Sartre and the existentialists that would classify the dual nature of man as that of the "self and nonself" (Plank 61). The surrealists, therefore, call for a revolution--for the self and nonself to join and allow man a greater reality, a super-reality or sur-reality, that is the joining of the outside world and the inner world.

In trying to reach this conjoining of the inner and external natures of man, the surrealists aim to shock or bewilder sensation. They align themselves with the free will of man and with the unleashing of his imagination in the midst of a controlling, conventional world. Surrealism, as Breton mentioned, intends to "provoke the given into collapsing" (qtd. in Alquié 77). Essentially the surrealist

advocates distortion of all that people regard as normal, rational, logical in the civilized world. André Breton recommends "de-realizing" of the world (70). Through such de-realization arises an understanding of a different, not previously realized, world. Here, in "absolute reality" (27), the imaginary is always "breaking the framework of the given" to which "the real itself must be compared" (124). In essence, the surreal artist attempts to "reorganize reality" and submit it to the darker side of the imagination, thus revolting against traditional, mimetic forms of art. Recognition of man's imagination and intuition allows the artist to achieve enlightenment (Matthews, Introduction 55).

Surreal philosophy is revolutionary, therefore, and so is the production of its art. Surreal art stimulates the unconscious, the imagination, the intuitive self so that a new world can be envisioned. Matthews, in Languages of Surrealism, says

Reality is subsumed in surreality to the extent that the surreal borrows from the real in order to acquaint us with something more than reality normally seems to provide. Therefore, it is in the nature of certain surrealist images to bring before us more than we are accustomed to find in reality, while at the same time demonstrating the surrealists' belief that the real has no value unless it opens up a path to the surreal. (116)

This idea can be seen in René Magritte's painting Philosophy in the Boudoir of 1947 [see fig. 6]. Here dream

and reality are reconciled in the uniting of the nightdress and shoes with the imaginary or dream-like interior of the articles showing through. Certainly this surreal painting has borrowed images such as the shoes and the nightdress from the world of the real, but he has meshed them with toes and breasts, respectively, in order to create an incongruity that shocks and requires a different mind-set from the observer. The effect is other-worldly, irrational--all the while intellectually, perceptually liberating. A quote from Magritte in 1934 in the Belgian periodical Documents explains his orientation in his art and particularly in his painting Philosophy in the Boudoir: "We must never, at any price, depart from the reality of the element which has delivered up its secret to us. This is a point of reference" (Alexandrian 123). Surrealism affirmed the world of the imagination, a world that man could reach. Max Ernst has commented in Beyond Painting: "Painting is not for me either decorative amusement, or the plastic interpretation of a felt reality; it must be every time: invention, discovery, revelation" (qtd. in Matthews, Introduction 71). Perhaps the most succinct explanation of this point is a comment on surrealist aim by Matthews:

. . . a spirit always searching, seeking to probe surface reality and bring to light its potentialities, and finding inspiration in revelations that come most often from forms of experience society refuses to recognize as significant for

everyday living. If it admits of ridicule and misrepresentation, its prime value is to prompt reflection and warn man to beware of the habitual and the conventional, and to show that Surrealism wishes us to take note of the marvellous here and now. (Introduction 149-50)

1) Revolution

It follows that if, for the surrealists, reality ceases to have meaning without consideration of the subconscious, then reaction against that reality can be expected (Fowlie 18). Revolution is an antidote to the inhibitory effect of the real, extolling the virtues of the dark mind over pre-conceived systems of experience; revolution, in part, has its earliest precursors in Plato, Descartes, Kant, and Kierkegaard.

In particular, Kierkegaard (1813-1855) recommends that individuals encourage their subjective consciousnesses, which will allow them to realize that "other" living with it (Duplessis 106). Instead of recommending allegiance to the tradition of human morality, he advocates man exercise his free will. The surrealists share Kierkegaard's existential philosophy of the freedom of the spirit and the revolt against the system (Alquié 71). They advocate protest and revolution against anything that threatens man's desires: God, society, and its constraints (120).

In its attack on rationality this group praises technology over tradition and prefers the Eiffel Tower, for

example, to Notre Dame because it represents nonrationality (Sandrow 8-15). Surrealism disdains staid thinking and all that inhibits the self; it encourages, instead, the Freudian Id, insanity, dream, nightmare, and hallucination. Though born out of the Dada movement, surrealism was dynamic: "rooted in regeneration rather than flat disillusionment" (20). From Dada, surrealism gains its subversive character.

Matthews says:

The Surrealists reaffirm the Dadaists' concern for the value and role of human destiny within the social and cultural framework of the modern world, holding society responsible for aggravating, if not for creating, man's unhappy condition. (Introduction 42-3)

It is society's rationality, particularly, that has caused man's unhappy state. The following is Breton's personal call for revolution:

We still live under the reign of logic. The absolute rationalism which is still the fashion does not allow us to consider only facts relating directly to our experience. . .

Under the pretense of civilization and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices. It was, apparently, by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer . . . has been brought back to light. For this we must give thanks to the discoveries of Sigmund Freud. . . . The imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights. If the depths of our mind contain within it strange forces capable of augmenting those on

the surface, . . . there is every reason to seize them--first to seize them, then, if need be, to submit them to the control of our reason. (Breton Manifesto 9-10)

Behind psychoanalysis' attempt to reveal the driving forces beneath the confining social facade of man (Duplessis 111) lies a way for man to achieve a mental revolution.

The surrealists were briefly involved with Communism as a revolutionary force. They broke with the Communist cause simply because they could not declare allegiance to any system. Similarly, the surrealists rejected Christianity, which they considered mainly an extension of society. They were, however, attracted to any revolution, including the Communist one, that called for a "wholesale transformation of human values" (Zinder 36). Fowlie notes that the surrealists were "anti" everything, especially "anti" the ideals and standards of conventional literature and poetry (15).

If the role of the surreal artist is that of the revolutionary, his is a fugitive art that aims at the never-before-valued subconscious, a shift in sensibility, a drawing toward a "Cult of the Self" in which "the individual experience of the artist [is] not only more important than, but superior to, that of society as a whole" (Zinder 1-2). Breton, in his first Manifesto, recommends that the individual create according to his free self, without any concessions to the general public (4). The purpose of the

artist is "to plumb the depths of self and give free rein to the spontaneous expression of the individual psyche with no regard whatsoever for public consumption" (Zinder 2). The artist stages his revolution through using such techniques as shock, violence, black humor, and incongruity, which operate upon the audience's collective unconscious (40).

2) Automatism

One surreal technique that reveals the subconscious is that of automatism, which Breton describes as "the dictation of thought in the absence of any control exercised by reason, beyond aesthetic or moral preoccupations" (Manifesto 26). Automatic language, reveling in the freedom of the human will, frees itself from the constraints of syntax and rhetoric. Such writing, which is the flowing of free thought from the subconscious, takes on a poetic quality as it bridges the world of everyday reality with dream. Thus automatic writing can substitute as another of Freud's methods of free association, which, in turn, takes the place of hypnosis to reveal the subconscious (Alquié 23). In order to experience automatism, one has to free the mind from any conscious thought and allow the subconscious to express itself, allowing unknown sensation to pervade. The thoughts, then, arising from the mind, can be likened to "magic dictation" (Duplessis 53). Hassan calls it "the flow

of thought originating from the buried activities of the psyche" (Orpheus 70); Duplessis believes it results from the "freedom of psychological power" (50).

Surrealism is based upon psychic automatism. Breton's first automatic text, Poisson soluble, demonstrates the effect of surrealist images that offer themselves spontaneously (Matthews, Introduction 82). In his first Manifesto Breton recommends the following method for creating these images: "Write quickly, without a preconceived subject, fast so that you will not remember what you're writing and be tempted to re-read what you have written" (29-30). This is done to achieve a sense of liberation from constraints and to bring the subconscious to the surface. Matthews says of automatism:

[It] stands as a method available to all to dredge beneath the surface of the mind and to present for examination a residuum that would otherwise escape notice. . . . Drawing as it does upon the collective unconscious, automatism is seen in Surrealism as a means of communication that defies and goes far beyond the limits imposed upon rational thought, by addressing its appeal to levels of the personality lying deeper than consciousness, and common to all.
(Introduction 84-5)

Here lies surrealism's affinity with Lautréamont, for both create universal images pulled from the collective unconscious (85). Matthews adds that "Automatism is liberation, which is revolution, which is, in turn, both revelation and discovery" (89).

Automatism began as a literary art but quickly adapted itself to painting. One can discover the automatic technique as it applies to André Masson's automatic drawings [see fig. 7]. Figure 7 is one of Masson's "sand pictures" in which he translates automatic writing into automatic painting by pouring glue and then sand onto his canvas. The glue spreads randomly, as does the sand, creating patterns that are elaborated upon by the artist's pen and brush (Schneede 86). The media flows, the surrealists would claim, in patterns that could later be interpreted and associated with feelings of the unconscious. Similar to chance encounters, automatism can reflect back to the artist's desires he may never have realized before. In figure 7 the automatic drawings are combinations of birds and fish and monstrous figures that seem preglacial, pre-civilized. This painting is similar to Max Ernst's frottage paintings: both involve passive artists, a passionate spectator who watches the creation of his work and restrains his active participation, allowing the hallucinatory effects of the mind to paint the canvas. Masson's sand pictures are revolutionary, for they disallow traditional artistic technique. "This method is the opposite of abstraction: it serves the creation of objective pictures based on the products of the unconscious" (86). Matthews says: "Consideration of a variety of Surrealist canvases suggests the conclusion that in many of them the artist has simply

painted his way out of a situation, psychological, emotional, or even ethical, by a process more intuitive than reflective" (Introduction 93). Matthews regards automatism as a "probe" to the unconscious:

Surrealism defies explication, but is no less compelling for that. . . . The Surrealist image therefore--be it pictorial or verbal--having found release through automatism, makes its appeal not to the mind, or to the aesthetic sense--free to accept or reject, to balance and compare--but to deeper levels of the human personality, where rejection is instinctive, and acceptance intuitive. (Introduction 97)

Automatism was the technique that liberated the surrealists and gave them access to their inspiration.

3) Dream and the Unconscious

In order for man to achieve "total liberation" (Zinder 36), he must delve into his unconscious through his dreams, all the while casting aside the "bourgeois carapace" (36) that had confined him. Within the dream man can find "intellectual, spiritual, and artistic sustenance" (36), and from here he can reconcile those feelings with his reality. In this way surrealism enlightens. As surrealism is defined in the first Manifesto, Breton indicates the importance of the dream:

SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express--verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner--the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by

thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

ENCYCLOPEDIA, Philosophy. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life. (25-26)

Thus, in the process of de-realization, surrealism forms a synthesis of the visible world and the imaginary one (Alquié 27)--a world of surreality. The surrealists felt man is more truly revealed in his dreams; they refuse reality by turning to the dream and the subconscious within it (Fowlie 16-17)

Dream phenomena, previously neglected, could, scientifically, add to the knowledge of the little-understood unconscious. It is scientific, at least, because man spends much of his time asleep; therefore, the importance of the unconscious as it manifests itself during sleep should reveal man in his entirety, along with how he reacts and adjusts during his waking moments. Furthermore sometimes during waking moments, man thinks himself asleep, and sometimes during sleep he supposes himself awake. Dreams, therefore, may share existence with much of real life (Duplessis 39). This coexistence between dream and life necessitates an altered orientation in which man sees himself and others in a totally different light that affords

him "direct access to the inexhaustibly mysterious world of his own subconscious" (Zinder 38).

Fowlie contends that the goal of this movement was to "seek escape from the real" (18) but, I disagree. On the contrary, though the surrealists disapproved of culture and its trappings--war, material success, and social approval--they wanted some kind of assimilation of the real with the imaginary, the subconscious. I agree with Matthews when he says: "When the Surrealists turn to dreams for inspiration, theirs is not an act of withdrawal from life. The prestige attributed to dreaming has in Surrealism nothing to do with escape" (Introduction 65). Even one of the surrealists' spokesmen, Gérard de Nerval, says that the world of the imagination "has a reality quite as great as that of the waking world" (Duplessis 36). The union of social reality and man's subconscious calls for a vision of the world that is a mixture of the two--a super-reality. Here man becomes aware of revelations of self and others. The "myth of the surrealists" would not simply turn out to be the "myth of the subconscious" as Fowlie promises (190) but the marriage of the subconscious with the social order.

In the manifestation of the dream, man comes to grips with his unconscious. Breton praised Freud in his Manifesto for his attention to dream and for his belief that in this psychic reality man becomes aware of revelations of self and

others (Matthews, Introduction 63). Freud recommends that man follow his imagination as it arrives through dream; he must be an observer of his dream. Other surrealists who affirmed the importance of the dream were Aragon, in his "Une Vague de Rêves," and Eluard, in his Les Dessous d'une Vie. In 1930 Max Ernst wrote Rêve d'une petite Fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel (Matthews, Introduction 64). Dreams are, perhaps, merely "another expression of the waking state" (Duplessis 39). Understanding the unconscious evident in the dream encourages a better understanding of the surreal self (Matthews, Introduction 66).

Dream is also important for "the passive role to which dreams reduce the dreamer" (65). This state of passivity as it affects the dreamer can be seen in Max Ernst's art, particularly his frottages or "rubblings," which make certain discoveries previously unknown to him (59). Frottage takes its place next to automatic writing as a legitimate surrealist technique, and its creation resembles that of the dream, as Ernst explains: "It is as a spectator that the author assists, indifferent or passionate, at the birth of his work and watches the phases of its development" (qtd. in Matthews, Introduction 59).

Tanguy's art possesses this quality of the passive dreamer: his dream-world brings self-discovery [see fig. 8]. This painting, done in 1932, contains an undefined horizon lying beyond a bank of fog. The biomorphic objects

seem real; yet they are undefinable; here is the duality-- the joining of the real with the unknown (75). The definable objects have weight and concreteness, proven by the supporting devices beneath them, yet they sit in a bank of fog. Similar to everyone's dream, this painting reflects the incongruous mix of the sense that things are real and the sense that things are imaginary. There is no violence here, no horror of a nightmare, but there is a sense of otherworldliness and stopped time and space. The essence of the painting is a combination of things physical, tangible amidst that which is intangible, fleeting, transitory. It is known that Tanguy produced his paintings almost automatically (Schneede 82). Inherent in the painting, therefore, is the notion of the unreal that, simultaneously, seems real; it is a dreamscape, a view from the passive dreamer's mind.

4) Chance

The surrealists advocated chance happenings as a revolutionary characteristic within their ideology. These passive, chance encounters afford a person the opportunity to grasp the "other"--the forces that are unknown and lurking behind man's exterior. Through consideration of chance man may reconcile with outside reality.

The artist not only relinquishes his will to his subconscious during dream and automatic-writing exercises,

but he also relinquishes his will to chance, through which the truth speaks (Sandrow 46). Chance had been important for Apollinaire's poetry, and by 1924 the surrealists had formed the Bureau of Surrealist Research to study chance and the subconscious, attempting to find new ways to the truth. This was a case of artists helping art make itself, as Masson did with his sand paintings, frottage and decalcomania (47).

In the world of art the paintings and collages of Dali, Ernst, and Tanguy demonstrate the importance of chance. Other techniques of chance the surreal artists used were decollage, decalcomania, heatage and solarisation in photography (Man Ray), grattage, and fumage (Matthews, Introduction 107-9). Collages, for example, in their roughness, are unchained by utilitarian claims, and so these objects transcend reality and reach toward the marvelous. What is important in chance is the way to discovery that relates not only to the artist himself but to the desires of all men. This idea is expressed in Ernst's title Vision Induced by a Piece of String I Found on my Table (107).

Spontaneity is another key to the surrealist's working with chance. One of the particular elements of chance is the objets trouvés or "found objects" to which Breton devotes much attention in his L'Amour fou. Connected to Freudian determinism, the objets trouvés are related to the

specific concerns and desires of the finder. Breton felt that desires in a person were trying to objectify themselves by finding association with objects. It seemed that "man and the phenomenological world existed in a delicate, harmonious balance of necessity and freedom, an interplay of personal desire and hasard objectif, objective chance" (Zinder 38). Here chance and human desire are emphasized as man responds to the objects that chance throws before him (Matthews, Introduction 107). Not all found objects are valid--only those that evoke deep response in the finder. The found object is the object that, among other objects, possesses an attraction that has never been seen before (Alexandrian 141). Chance and the found object are enlightening.

Related to the found object is the natural object, especially stones that have a divinatory nature; the interpreted found object (something which has been turned into a bizarre object); the readymade (a mass-produced object with a difference in function); the assemblage (objects as sculpture); the incorporated object (an object linked with a painting or sculpture); the phantom object (an object suggested by a verbal description); the dreamt object [see fig. 9] (here the observer is shocked by the realization of a fur-lined teacup. Drinking tea from such a vessel is disturbing, to say the least, and invokes a visceral reaction); the box (an object with various elements

in a box; the optical machine; the poem-object; the mobile and mute object; the symbolically functioning object; the objectively offered object; and the being-object (Alexandrian 140-50).

As the surrealist painter, photographer, sculptor is able to apply chance to his work, so, too, is the surrealist writer. He uses automatic writing as a key to the unconscious. He also employs chance in the playing out of verbal games, allowing penetration to the unknown. The game appeals to chance, putting the player in a passive role. The best of the games of chance is that of the cadavre exquis or the "exquisite corpse," whose name is derived from the "le cadavre exquis boira le vin"--"The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine" (Matthews, Introduction 110-11). The game is played by several people who each add a noun, then adjective, then verb to a sentence. The result is a collective effort that forces the collective unconscious to come to the forefront on a piece of paper. The game denies the logic of social language and encourages the forces of chance. Another word game was that of Si . . . Quand, in which each player writes a hypothetical clause beginning with "if" or "when." Then one of the first clauses is joined to the second, all according to chance. Certainly many of the results are nonsensical, but startling images do appear--supposedly reflective of a "mystical essence common

to all individuals" (Sandrow 47-8).

The techniques of the surrealists allow the spontaneity of art, either through dream, automatism, or game-playing, the end assuming a revolutionary, anti-rational character. The surreal artist acts within the spontaneous act.

Matthews includes humor as a subcategory of chance. He feels humor is critical of tradition and convention and brings reality into question:

The Surrealist sees humor as the conjunction of the real and the fantastic: not only helping man resist the claims of the reality to which the world has accustomed him, but also placing within his reach the means to shake off habitual thought, thus permitting him to aspire to another form of reality, which answers another logic. By enabling man to cast doubt upon the validity of objective reality, humor derides the importance of this reality, and disposes of the limitations it places upon man's thinking. (Introduction 114-15)

One can see the importance of the duality of the real and the unknown realized through humor as well as its revolutionary nature. Surrealist humor is both "antisocial and subversive" and has as a moral incentive the need to purge (Gascoyne 17).

Humor is the device that frees the self from society's restraints; the surrealist remains detached from life and watches it perform before him; he gazes upon the performance in mockery (Duplessis 24-25). The revolutionary character of humor mocks the established order; humor is a trait of "insubordination. . . . the disguise of the desperate" (25).

Surrealist humor allows the artist to become detached; it is revolutionary; it surprises and upsets familiar relationships; it frees the spirit (24-27). Consider the detachment that is characteristic of humor--objects detached from relationships humans assign them take on an identity of their own, and they can be approached as objects themselves. An umbrella might keep company with a sewing machine, the two lying together on a morgue slab. This new way of perceiving upsets the facts of familiar objects. The surrealist upsets reality; essentially, he de-familiarizes the familiar.

Black humor is employed most by the surrealists. The term was coined by André Breton; surrealist humor was referred to as a "higher revolt of the mind" (Sandrow 93). Black humor combines laughter and hysteria: it affords a response to the upsetting, reducing it to something that can be dealt with. It is serious intent concealed by a joke (Matthews, Introduction 115). Surreal humor reflects a laughable, bizarre, irrational world in which human objects of embarrassment, thought hidden, peep through their covers and into a watching, voyeuristic world [see fig. 6].

5) Marvelous

Not only do dreams, automatism, and chance encounters figure in the surrealistic appreciation of the imagination,

but so, too, do forces of the marvelous--that which is bizarre, fantastic. In Breton's first Manifesto he writes of the marvelous: "any marvellous is beautiful, indeed only the marvellous is beautiful" (14). The surrealists promote the marvelous : the strange, supernatural, grotesque, and mysterious. They recommend resistance to the world through adventure into "phantoms and apparitions" (Duplessis 35). This advance into the bizarre unknown must release man from his staid conditions in order for him to realize a greater self.

From this philosophy springs the surrealist object or image in art as often painted by René Magritte [see fig. 10]. His art presents a new way of perceiving, thinking, and responding. His paintings reflect his surrealistic point of view that he remarked upon in the last number of VVV of 1944:

The principal value of Surrealism seems to me to be that it has reintroduced the marvellous into everyday possibilities. It has taught that if reality seemed baleful and flat it is because man did not know how to see, his glance was limited by an education deliberately intended to blind him and by an aesthetic censor inherited from past ages. (qtd. in Matthews, Introduction 144)

Magritte's painting of 1928, "Threatening Weather," shows a female torso, a tuba, and a chair as clouds. They at once have the lightness of clouds; yet they appear as heavy, concrete objects: here contrast and incongruity exemplify

the marvelous. What is also marvelous about the picture is the three-dimensional quality of the floating articles against the flat plain of the sea horizon joining the sky. This weather is threatening precisely because it does not represent the "normal" concept of weather at all. This weather threatens the observer's sensibilities and forces him to contemplate an absurd arrangement of objects. The marvelous of the surrealists is deceptive, as is Duchamp's sculpture, Why Not Sneeze Rose Selavy [see fig. 11]. Things are not as they seem: a bird cage is stuffed with rock-like cubes. The art is discomfiting, shocking. The title speaks to humans and their ailments while the sculpture is composed of non-human, rigid, non-living, non-associational objects. Similarly Meret Openheim's Le Déjeuner en Fourrure upsets reality as we know it [see fig. 9]. Here the teacup, saucer, and spoon covered with fur are rendered useless as far as our reality is concerned. The items are designed in our real world for drinking and stirring liquids, but being fur-covered adds another dimension to the items and renders them purposeless, forcing the audience to re-adjust its perception and look to a larger reality--the cup and saucer may not need to serve a utilitarian purpose or any purpose at all, for that matter. Their strength lies in their incongruity, in the revolutionary way they force one to think differently, not according to any standard set by the rules that govern how we regard cups and saucers and spoons.

Similarly Magritte's painting Le Viol, depicts the marvelous [see fig. 12]. The title is "The Rape," and this is a rape of sorts if one looks upon it as a raping of the mind. The incongruity of a female torso transformed into a head shocks: the breasts represent eyes; the navel, a nose; the pubic area, a mouth. The painting is at once disconcerting and humorous; it reflects the bizarre. This painting certainly evokes discomfiting sensations, and one might well take offense to the forcing-upon-the-mind of such a blatant, sexually-perverted image.

Just as the surrealists depict the marvelous in art, they also portray it verbally. Marvelous language used within standard grammatical constructions frees us from the restricting man-made language barriers. This kind of imagery was used particularly in surrealist poetry. Later I will demonstrate that modern fiction writers also employ surrealist imagery in a similar effort to unleash the subconscious and to revolt against restricting society:

The Surrealists have come to realize how much is lost in the unquestioning acceptance of the real; and they appreciate how much the real may be transformed by man's approach to it. When no longer submissive to the dictates of the established order, man may find a new freedom through the fuller expression of desire, which reveals itself capable of dominating the world. (Matthews, Introduction 146-47)

This approach affords man another dimension of the world as an expansion of the real--a surreality:

Thus the Surrealist marvellous object is, no less than a Surrealist poem or painting, the outward expression of a spirit always searching, seeking to probe surface reality and bring to light its potentialities, and finding inspiration in revelations that come most often from forms of experience society refuses to recognize as significant for everyday living. If it admits of ridicule and misrepresentation, its prime value is to prompt reflection and warn man to beware of the habitual and the conventional, and to show that Surrealism wishes us to take note of the marvellous here and now. (149-50)

It follows, then, that anything absurd, bizarre, strange, and upsetting to our perception is there deliberately to bring man to an awareness and to the edge of revolt against tradition and conformism.

6) The Irrational

The irrational is another form of protest that makes the importance of the imagination primary. The surrealists revolted against the rational, the conventional, valuing, instead, the illogical, the irrational, the absurd. This kind of "imaginative liberty" enhances the real rather than detracting from it (Matthews, Insanity 5). A devotee of the irrational, Salvador Dali felt that in order for man to grasp the surreal, he must drive out reason so that man can come to know his true self.

Here lies the basis for the surrealists' attraction to the shock effect and the favoring of distortion. This is

a world of Dali's soft-shelled watches, not existing in a rational, clockwork world [see fig. 13]. Time is destroyed. Time does not seem to be time so much as it seems to be space--space upset, de-rationalized. The barren world that is Dali's demonstrates the limpness of man's rational machinations seen in the worn-out, wasted watches. Man's rational world is at an end and so are other things as we know them in our world. All is reduction, emptiness, stasis. The mind stops and recoils at this thought just as Dali's watches have ceased to work. Dali is the creator of a dual universe of real and "cultivated phantasms: grasshoppers, erotic imagery, a soft world of amorphous shapes" (Alexandrian 103). A Freudian interpretation of "The Persistence of Memory" says the painting represents sexual impotence. Schneede says, "If we accept the mouth as a symbol for the female sex organ, the absence of a mouth can be interpreted as a projection of impotence anxiety onto the sexual partner" (94). Such a surreal artist as Dali employs "distortion, transformation, metamorphosis" as a revolt.

Salvador Dali attested to the primacy of the irrational even as he worked:

The fact that I myself, at the moment of painting, do not understand the significance of my pictures cannot mean that my pictures have no meaning; on the contrary their meaning is so profound, complex, coherent, involuntary, that it escapes mere analysis by logical intuition. (qtd. in Matthews,

Introduction 124)

Dali derives his inspiration, then, from that actual making of the art itself, as it happens to fall across the canvas. The meaning, apparently, arises from within, from the instincts that assert themselves through the paint.

Within the realm of the irrational lies the importance of the insane, through which an individual may come to understand himself better. Divorced from the real world, the insane man is "out of" this conventional reality--as most of us know it. He wanders in contradictory and incoherent movement, in dream and in fantasy, his subconscious on display for the benefit of all others. From the insane person the sane man can achieve a total awareness and experience surreality (Duplessis 40-41).

In the Manifesto of Surrealism of 1924, Breton spoke of the lessons one could learn from deranged people, whose company he actually preferred. Surrealists did and still do praise the artistic works of those who have been declared insane. Ernst himself was influenced by the work of the mentally deficient. Matthews says:

To the Surrealist, insanity guarantees authenticity of a kind lacking in contemporary art, for he believes, with Breton, that it is only at the point where human reason loses control that "the most profound emotion of our being has every chance of finding expression."
(Introduction 127)

One specific mental disorder that the surrealists

adopted and adapted to their philosophies was paranoia, a synthesis of the real and the imaginary. Such a person lives both in his hallucinatory world and in the world of outer reality. He projects his delusions of grandeur and of persecution upon outside reality, imbuing them with fantastic thinking, which to the insane seems to be quite logical.

The surrealist dedicated to paranoia encouraged "voluntary hallucination" (128). During voluntary hallucination a man may search his irrational feelings to discover his real self. In becoming paranoid the surrealist uses his imagination to react to a reality precipitated by either desire or fear. The paranoid passively allows paranoid images to spring from the unconscious. The paranoiac-critical method, therefore, appeals to the irrational. Salvador Dali is responsible for the method known as paranoiac-criticism:

a delirium of interpretative association
involving a systematic structure
. . . a spontaneous method of irrational
knowledge based on the interpretative-critical
association of delirium phenomena. (Dali 115)

Here Dali studies real phenomena for hidden meanings--meanings that spring from a state of temporary insanity (Fowlie 113). The paranoiac fashions the world after his own desires--sees the world and its reality in glasses tinted according to the delusions of the subconscious. Dali's method fostered delusions of persecution and grandeur

upon reality itself, all according to his own desires (Matthews, Introduction 131-32). This philosophy indicates that some objects have, embodied within them, certain meaning that are understood by one's intuitive reactions to them. When a person reacts to the irrational object, he begins to question his reaction and, in so doing, learns something about himself. In this way objects reflect our needs, motivations, desires. The paranoiac-critical method is an attempt to cultivate "objectively" our subconscious desires; it is the "substantiation of unconscious actions" (Duplessis 47); it is the concretizing of irrationality, the "methodical operation of organization and exploitation" (Zinder 44).

The world of the imagination is important for the surrealist:

In surrealism . . . the imaginary comes ceaselessly to break the framework of the given, to surpass it, to evoke an inaccessible to which the real itself must, nevertheless, be compared. (Alquié 124)

Eluard notes that imagination has no capacity for imitation and takes the form of delirium, dreams, hallucination, the unknown. The world of the imagination is the world of "mental landscape" that Tanguy creates [see fig. 8] (125). The imaginary, for the surrealist, tends to become real (126). For an artist such as Miro', who created his works in a state of hallucination, the imaginary is always realized

in a state of shock (Matthews, Introduction 128). In 1934 Joan Miró had begun what Breton referred to as his "wild paintings which make monsters arise" [see fig. 14] (Alexandrian 75). Miró's Head of a Woman of 1938 certainly rises to the hallucinogenic occasion, the irrational moment; here he crosses the bridge between surrealism's capacity for irrationality and the marvelous, which draws its strength, in part, from the collective unconscious.

7) Love and Woman

Surrealist aesthetic includes all these aspects--revolution, automatism, dream, chance, marvelous, the irrational, and, last, love. Love or the surrealist woman is "the projection of the marvellous into our dreary existence" (Matthews, Introduction 159). The woman acts with a sexual power that approaches the marvelous. Love of woman allows one to come in direct contact with desires and the unconscious, scorning the malaise of everyday living. She provides man with release from conformism and with escape into a reality of consciousness in which desire and feeling become ultimate.

The surrealists delight in love, especially physical love. In fact, they held a conference on heterosexual love in 1928. The surrealists appreciate love for its synthesis of the objective and the subjective--being in love with a person and having deep, subconscious feelings for that

person or object (Alquié 85). Surreal love is not narcissistic love; it is love outside oneself, and here the loved one is glorified beyond love for self (85).

The release of desire and the lapse into the marvelous side of love are basic to the philosophy of the Marquis de Sade, who creates a new universe out of his intense eroticism and his revolutionary spirit. De Sade's is the ultimate search for freedom, for possession of what is ordinarily denied man (Matthews, Introduction 157). His philosophy is revolutionary, for De Sade indulges his desires and his eroticism in direct antithesis to societal rules.

The surrealist is a revolutionary who needs to incorporate what lies deep within himself with what lies outside himself. For him desires, hallucinations, dreams, and subconscious yearnings are all a part of reality. Together with outside reality, these feelings help create a super-reality that frees man from social convention. The surrealist responds to the dialectic of all life, the real world and the inside world of self, in order to reach a greater understanding of life. Foremost, the surrealist stands counter to all that thwarts man's liberation of self and his unconscious desires. The surrealist world is a vision of another dimension that links the real with the fantastic recesses of the inner self.

III Language and Surreal Metaphor

This idea of "images of alchemical experimentation" (Matthews, Novel 176) is critical to my analysis of surreal metaphor. The surrealists, in fact, use alchemy as a metaphor for the "psychological transformation" a reader would undergo as he makes that "qualitative leap of perception" from reality (through the unconscious) and into sur-reality (Hedges 3). Henry Miller also used the surrealists' metaphor to describe what he did when he read. He claimed he did not merely "translate" literature into life but that he tried to "alchemise life into literature" (Ferguson 197). In accordance with alchemical, psychological transformation, Breton says in his second Manifesto:

The philosopher's stone is nothing more or less than that which was to enable man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things, which brings us once again, after centuries of the mind's domestication and insane resignation, to the attempt to liberate once and for all the imagination by the "long, immense, reasoned derangement of the senses." (74-75)

Much as Breton recognizes this ability to transmute experience, we will see how the surrealists realize their goal of the duality of reality and the unconscious through exploitation of the shifting nature of language.

Though a reader of surrealist literature may well assimilate the bizarre, fantastic, unsettling images that

"bewilder sensation," he may not be aware of the theory behind the creations of those images. To understand more thoroughly the nature of the creative process in surrealist literature and its ability to change the nature of words and the perceptive abilities of man as alchemy changed lowly matter into gold, one must briefly examine the nature and role of language, the ability of people to use language as it exists to create metaphor, and, more particularly, the nature of the surrealist metaphor or image. How does a surrealist work create alchemical imagery? How can a language used exclusively by one group of writers have the ability to transmute reality? To answer this question, one must first look at the nature of language itself.

Ferdinand Saussure was among the first to determine that language is not static. In language words can take on multiple meanings. Words, as signifiers, do not correspond directly and exclusively to their signifieds or mental pictures. Any sign is related to other signs, and so its meaning depends on this relationship to these other signs. Furthermore, language itself is constantly changing; therefore, words never can be thought of as referring to specific signifieds. If a word is capable of changing its signification, it follows that not only does it change its relationship to the world or to the signified, but it also affects other signs and how they influence other signs'

signification around them (Hedges 85). This is one alchemical transformation of which Miller speaks. As this theory affects language, Raymond Federman says, "To write is to produce meaning and not reproduce a pre-existing meaning that supposedly precedes the words" (Surfiction 8). This idea is admittedly simplified, but one need only understand that language is changeable, capable of assuming various identities. Thus language is able to lend itself nicely to the manipulation to which the surrealists subject it.

Even Breton recognizes the shifting, transmutable nature of language: "Language has been given man so that he can make surrealist use of it" (Manifesto of Surrealism 39). The surrealists depend on language's qualities of ambiguity, multiplicity, and transformation to create a kind of super perception in their readers. Language affords them "an instrument of investigation and revelation," an "instrument of inquiry and discovery" (Matthews, Languages 12). The characteristic of language among the surrealists is such that words can be juxtaposed in almost any kind of relationship or non-relationship to alter reality by the addition of the bizarre, the unconscious, dream, and imagination. Reality, therefore, through language, can be transformed into sur-reality; a super reality is created through the alchemical nature of the word whereby a reader achieves enlightenment and self-illumination.

As a significant part of language, metaphor is a more

specific, more dramatic instance of this alchemical nature of language. Aristotle praised the metaphor:

But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.
(Poetics)

Metaphor use, according to Aristotle and developmental psychologists, appears to occur in language naturally, intuitively, especially among the young. In fact, using metaphor is a developmental phenomenon that relies on prior memory development (Emig 105). Studies of children and their use of metaphor reveal that whenever children try to develop a new concept, metaphor becomes characteristic within their discourse, though, of course, in adult discourse, metaphor is usually optional (103). Being able to use metaphor, the child relies on making associations that go back to an ancient, protoplasmic memory (Arieti 64). Janet Emig, a scholar of composition and rhetoric, poses a question I consider vital to my observation of metaphor within surreal works of the American twentieth century: "How do metaphors figure in our emotional development? Can our use of certain metaphors reveal psychic wholeness or fragmentation?" (107) Here lies the crux of my study. I believe twentieth-century American writers use surreal metaphor to reveal psychic fragmentation.

In order to understand surreal metaphor and its ability to characterize a twentieth-century entropic world, one needs to understand the concept of metaphor. Metaphor has several related definitions:

1) the comparison between two items or entities, 2) partialness of comparison--that is, one point of likeness is set in a field of disparities, and 3) an expanded meaning for the entity in the primary position because of its juxtaposition with the entity in the secondary position. (Emig note 3, p. 107)

Metaphor has also been defined as a "transference of meaning across categorical boundaries" (Singer 23) and as "an image or mental picture captured in figurative speech" (Matthews, Languages 22). Perhaps it can best be explained not by pure definition but by an analysis of metaphor: "It [metaphor] entails a shift in the semantic compatibility between two signs--a shift that adds to the reader's knowledge of the real or a fictional world" (Hedges 85). Thus metaphor shares that quality of language that shifts meaning, becoming a "vehicle for a fictional world" where the reader "consider[s] an unconventional situation 'as if' it were conventional (85). In essence, metaphor juxtaposes disjunctive usages.

Critics have much to say on the nature of metaphor, in general. Metaphor is the "essential mode of production" for structuralists and poststructuralists, who see that it, while mediating parts and wholes, is "always a hybrid of mutually exclusive discursive contexts" (Singer 5). As with

any word that contains multiple meanings, according to structuralist and deconstructivist theory, a metaphor adds or expands the signification of a sign. It assigns new meaning (14) by its "improvisational yoking of disparate contextual predicates" and "supplements the language with a concept for which there is yet no adequate sign" (25). Since the metaphor is a combination of two dissimilar signs that share some degree of similarity--similarity within difference--it creates new meaning for which no word yet exists. In essence, it "assimilates contextual discrepancies so that they create a more inclusive, unifying context" (Black 38-44).

Metaphor is also "frame-breaking" (Hedges 85). That is, metaphor disrupts the traditional, rational way of making semantic knowledge and sense. The reader's job is to assimilate the similarities and differences within the metaphor in order to create the new meaning, which leads to self-knowledge. The author is responsible, as well, for supplying the reader enough meaning and syntactic structure to enable him to make sense of the juxtaposed language.

Surrealism creates its own brand of metaphor, which I will discuss later. But equally necessary is recognizing the particular language that surrealism appropriates. J. H. Matthews has much to say about surrealism and its relationship to language in his book The Languages of

Surrealism. He first acknowledges that the surrealist refuses to acquiesce to the traditional, conventional, and familiar meaning-making capability of words, and this idea lies in accordance with the surrealists' revolutionary character. Knowledge cannot be "hemmed in" by how the real world looks at and interprets language (Languages 8). He claims that a characteristic of surreal language is that it is "tentative" and "speculative" (8). This idea agrees with Breton's claim in his Manifesto of Surrealism that the surreal image is "arbitrary to the highest degree" and that is "hallucinatory" (38). The surrealist considers "known" or socially acceptable language a threat to our sensibilities. Man needs to immerse himself in figurative language, thereby exploring the "unknown" that exists within language.

Within surrealist language, as with traditional language, surrealist metaphor plays a major role. Breton analyzes surrealist image or metaphor in his first Manifesto:

It is, as it were, from the fortuitous juxtaposition of the two terms that a particular light has sprung, the light of the image, to which we are infinitely sensitive. The value of the image depends on the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference in potential between two conductors. (37)

Breton refers to the image as the "juxtaposition of the two terms"--in essence, a metaphor. So metaphor can be

considered "an image that is a mental picture captured in figurative speech" (Matthews, Languages 22). Hereafter I will use surrealist image and metaphor interchangeably.

Perhaps one can understand surreal metaphor better by understanding what it is not. According to Matthews in his The Languages of Surrealism, a surreal image is neither familiar nor developed in a deliberate manner; it is neither logical nor does it mirror rationality (24-30). In fact, the "semantic incompatibility must push against the very limits of sense" (Hedges 88). One is more likely to experience enlightenment by assimilating language that is unsettling, that disrupts, shocks, distorts.

Surrealist metaphor contains a number of traits. The surrealist image should be created by chance, should be previously unrealized, should be nonsensical. It is an image of contradiction, more particularly a "rationally inexplicable contradiction" (Matthews, Languages 52). Breton said:

[the Surrealist image] is the one that takes the longest time to translate into practical language, because it contains an immense amount of seeming contradiction or because one of its terms is strangely concealed; or because, presenting itself as something sensational, . . . or because it is of a hallucinatory kind, or because it very naturally gives to the abstract the mask of the concrete; or the opposite, or because it implies the negative of some elementary physical property, or because it provokes laughter. (Manifesto of Surrealism 38)

The surrealist metaphors are "semantically incompatible combinations of words but are capable of undergoing a process of compatibilization because of the surrounding context" (Hedges 92). Finally, "it [surrealist metaphor] confronts us with the impossible, assembling terms we take to be irreconcilable, and bringing us face to face with the rationally inadmissible" (Matthews, Languages 71 & "The Case for Surrealist Painting" 144). Joseph Halpern says of surreal metaphor:

. . . [it is] a violent yoking of unlike elements [that] make[s] the surrealist object a hybrid compilation of monstrous bits and pieces, where symmetry is interwoven with asymmetry, totality with fragmentation, synecdochic detail with random enumeration, form with nonsense. . . . Surrealist description is not so much a decadent decomposition into ecstasies of detail as a runaway cross-referenced encyclopedic indexing whose first step is to undermine the validity of classification. (96)

Critics recognize the dual, contradictory nature of surrealism.

Inez Hedges, in Language of Revolt, discusses the "mismatches" that surrealist metaphor or imagery makes. Another word for this mismatching is "frame-breaking," which I have discussed before. The mis-matching of dissimilar items that occurs at the point of surreal metaphor-making breaks the traditional frame of language normally used by the reader. The traditional frame reflects the "form" of the conventions of normal discourse (Hedges 291), and

semantic consistency is maintained. But a surreal metaphor depends on incongruity within the traditional grammatical construction. The surreal metaphor is a "semantically incompatible combination of words that is capable of undergoing a process of compatibilization owing to the surrounding context" (290). In essence the grammatical construction becomes the vehicle by which the reader is able to experience a ride to fantasy and the unconscious.

For example, surrealists combine subject-verb matches that are technically mismatches. These connect the following (examples in quotations are mine):

--a human characteristic to a verb needing a living subject--"fear gobbles."

--a non-living noun to a verb needing a living subject--"the fossil defecates,"
"the stone cries"

--a non-substantial noun to a verb needing a substantial subject--"the force chews,"
"the analogy beckons"

--a non-human noun to a verb needing a human subject--"bedposts manipulate the cheese"

--an animal to a verb requiring a human subject--"the wasp reflects on the world" (Hedges 93)

Another set of mismatches includes the following noun-adjective ones:

--an adjective with no durational qualities with a durative noun--"empty snap"

--a (human) adjective with a non-human noun--"good-natured chain"

--a (living) adjective with a non-living noun--"bleeding cinder"

--a non-mental adjective with a mental noun--"fat thought"

--an adjective normally attributed to spatially extended nouns with a noun lacking spatial extension (classified by size, convexity, and concavity)--
"obscure finger. " (Hedges 93-4)

Another set of mismatches deals with possession:

--possession of a substantial by an insubstantial (events, states, or mental entities)--"hill of thought,"
"octopus of force"

--possession of a living quality by a non-living thing--"sighs of toes"

--possession of a human quality by a non-human--"cares of eels"

--possession of a large object by a smaller one, humans excepted--
"automobile of a flea." (Hedges 94)

Finally there is the matching of "is" clauses:

--between a non-human and a human noun--"the store is a prostitute"

--between a non-living noun and a living part--"the barn is a tongue"

--between a non-substantial noun and a substantial one--"the buffalo is a technicality"

--between a concave noun and a convex one--"the crater is a head." c(Hedges 94)

In general, the effect of the surreal mismatches is to make an analogy of a sort that is disrupting because of its inherent incongruity. For example, analogy is the intent in the "is" clauses. In the other categories things that act

or take on description, become expanded by the addition of a trait or traits that traditionally, rationally, do not fit within normal discourse. One should note that in the mismatching of the content within the surrealist metaphor there is semantic coherence. The structure of the English language remains familiar while the subject matter breaks the frame of understanding. Because of the traditional syntax, however, the reader can comprehend the metaphor and come to grips with it. The standard structure combined with the perverted subject matter provides the reader with the ability to "see" the comparison more easily. Meaning is understood

. . . because they [metaphors] are embedded into a discourse displaying enough continuity to allow the construction of conceptual frames to accommodate the violation of conventional semantic codes. (Hedges 96)

The surrealists' automatic writings are filled with metaphor of this kind and invite the reader into that "protoplasmic memory" of the child's language. Breton says, "It is perhaps childhood that comes closest to one's real life. . . . Thanks to Surrealism, it seems that opportunity knocks a second time" (Manifesto of Surrealism 40).

A surreal metaphor initially acts to make a specific character, object, or event more whole. It "expands" the understanding of that character with the addition of another quality or image. Thus, the reality of the character,

having adopted this expansion, gains a new dimension; a totally new idea has been created for which there exists no word.

Yet, though the initial translation of the metaphor may expand the reality, the ultimate result is a diminution or lessening of that character, object, or event; this is the surrealist's comment on our entropic world. Through the surreal metaphor, the object is at first expanded, then contracted, reaching an ultimate low that is significant of a "wasteland" society.

To illustrate this idea, we should look at the process at work. For example, if one takes a surreal metaphor like "the woman became an eel," one envisions a human that, with the addition of "eel," becomes something more than "woman." The metaphor creates a "woman" plus an "eel," which equals an object that resembles a "woman-eel." The "eel" creates an expanded version of the woman. At the same time, there is a diminution of the "humanness" of the woman. The metaphor sacrifices a bit of humanity by the incorporation of the concept of "eel." The final result is usually a kind of negation, which matches and evokes a world of totalitarianism and conformity, a world in which man's self is constantly being compromised. Surreal metaphor suggests the psychic fragmentation characteristic of our twentieth century world.

Chapter 1

Contemporary Uses of Surrealism

I. A Link to Modernity: A General Comparison Between the French Surrealists and Modern American Writer of Surrealism

Surreal ideology is evident in much twentieth-century literature. Authors such as William Faulkner, Djuna Barnes, Henry Miller, Nathanael West, Ralph Ellison, Vladimir Nabokov, John Hawkes, William Burroughs, and Joseph Heller carry on, in part, the tradition of the surrealists and incorporate surreal elements within their works. The basic similarity between the French surrealist and the modern surrealist is the rejection of the mere recording of visible reality (Bullock 21)--of providing an antidote to the likes of Anatole France (Bree 135). Surrealist works do not wish to be documentary or naturalistic; they wish to demonstrate the "regeneration of the human race" through the apprehension of "childhood," "dream," and "heightened sensibility" (Bree 135). Specifically the surrealist ideal that exists in the writings of modern American surrealists shares with the French surrealists the basics of revolution: of intent, of narrative structure, of characterization.

While they share the same ideals, differences do exist between the two groups.

I have found that though the theoretical basis behind both groups is the idea of revolution, the French surrealists are revolutionary in their advocating a new way of perceiving--according to a dual vision of reality and the unconscious--a super reality or sur-reality. This way of perceiving and thinking contrasts with the conventional response man usually makes toward reality, in which the mind and its desires, dreams, and the unconscious are largely subordinated, if not discouraged, out of existence. The world outside encourages people to foster the civilized aspects of themselves while, at the same time, advocating control over and suppression of the darker, inner compulsions we are all "victim" to. But the surrealist calls for revolution against the conventional way of thinking and perceiving. He yearns for a new vision that appropriates the inner consciousness, the insane moments. Only by perceiving in this way can man understand himself and others adequately. As Michael Bullock says in "Surrealism and the Future of Fiction," the surrealists look for "a harmonious alliance between the conscious and the unconscious" (19). He believes the duality of the two makes for an "integrated man" (19). For the surrealist there can be no acceptance of civilization over hallucination--each

must enhance the other to create a new reality.

The twentieth-century American writer responds to this concept also; yet his purpose seems even more revolutionary, more disruptive. He does not "instruct" his reader on how to see differently, as do the French surrealists. Matthews also remarks on this quality in Languages of Surrealism, with his reference to Andre Breton, who actually told others how to write surreal poetry and whose pedantic chapter in his first manifesto is entitled, "Secrets of Surrealist Magic Art" (20). Breton's "mania of destruction" rejects existence as it is normally lived in this universe (Hoog 20). The modern writer, though, unlike many of the earlier surrealists, does not concentrate on instructing his readers about how to allow the unconscious to come forth, how to encourage the dream, hallucinations, and chance, how to reject this world. He does not demonstrate surrealistic techniques to gain access to the unconscious: automatic writing, the "exquisite corpse" games, verbal and artistic games, finding and interpreting "found objects." His is not specifically designed, as was much of the early surrealists' work, to instruct in "revolutionary perception." His intention is not the role of instructor in introductory surrealism.

An American author who agrees with this idea is Henry Miller in his "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," which became a part of The Cosmological Eye of 1939. He

establishes himself as a revolutionary with the assertion "I still prefer the anarchic life; . . ." (Miller 151). And he shares part of the surrealist revolt against convention, which has caused a "spiritual famine" (153) and to which a man must raise a poetic fist:

[to] re-establish that equilibrium which is disturbed by the power and tyranny which a few great individuals exercise over us. . . . It has to do with the adoption of a creative attitude towards life. . . . by killing off the tyrannical influences wielded over us by those who are already dead. (152)

Yet though Miller shares this similarity with the French surrealists, he takes exception to their "revolution with a cause" and favors true surrealism--the importance of the individual: "I am against revolutions because they always involve a return to status quo. . . . I believe only in what is active, immediate, and personal" (160). In fact, Henry Miller railed against the revolutionary ideals of French surrealism that he discovered while reading a book on surrealism by Herbert Read:

What strikes one as pathetic, lamentable, deplorable and ridiculous, in riffling the pages of this English book on Surrealism, is the effort "to get together." It's like a courtship between the serpent and the eagle, this momentary truce between the English and the French. Andre Breton, the great fish out of water, solemnly pontificates as usual. Reviving the language of Dr. Johnson, distorting it through his Freudian French, he seems to be giving the English elementary instruction in the art of tapping the Unconscious. (163)

In contrast, the twentieth-century American writer has taken that surreal philosophy and applied it, without any attempt to play the pedagogue. He relies on it to effect unconscious reactions in a reader who has already had exposure to the unconventional and who, therefore, needs little prodding to "see" differently. His revolutionary role is not that of the French surrealist: to teach man "out of" nineteenth-century thinking. Instead, he portrays the entropy in the world and hopes to enlighten his readers to this fact through surreal metaphor and imagery. This is not to say that the early surrealists do not attempt to enlighten, for they certainly did. The difference lies in a matter of degree and form of the revolutionary stance. It is now no longer a matter of trying to prod people into seeing differently, for people today have had much exposure to the avant-garde and are more receptive to it. It is a matter of making them see, through imagery and metaphor, the waste that man has made of his world. A reader of surrealism no longer has to be taught how to extend his perception so that he can think as a revolutionary. Generally he is able to respond to the surreal characteristics as they are truly intended--unconsciously, not deliberately. The lower, darker recesses of the reader's mind are able to grasp the surreal intent revealed through the images, and the reader arrives at a conscious

appreciation of the entropic world in which he lives. Through shock, incongruity, dreamlike imagery, and hallucinogenic metaphor he comes, not merely to perceive in a revolutionary way but to experience a kind of unconscious recognition, to realize the wasteland of the twentieth-century self.

Thus, the difference between the French surrealists and the more modern American surrealists is that the moderns have progressed beyond the need for instructing other potential surreal writers or surreal readers. The moderns rely on the unconscious within the educated reader to be able to interpret their imagery. The difference is also a matter of degree. Whereas the French surrealists advocated revolution in thinking and seeing, and while they also recommended new perception as a result of the first World War, they have not, on a whole, experienced the almost totally annihilated self that has come about as a result of our counterfeit, conformist, totalitarian society. Modern American society is even more fragmented than it had been in the twenties in France; man is even farther removed from himself than he had been.

Part of this waste stems from the acceptance of middle-class values. The modern American writer, for the most part, criticizes the middle class. J. H. Matthews cites this characteristic Surrealism and the Novel. Revolt against middle-class values occurs, he says, in the

surrealist's rejection of memory that denigrates human desire (Novel 65) and rejects social values, in its support of De Sade and total liberation through love and eroticism (68). The waste, the entropy, the barrenness is experienced in modern literature through the prism of a newer, more shocking, even more unconscious surrealist. Through modern surrealist metaphor and imagery the reader senses the paranoia that is America.

The other difference between the surrealist groups deals with the idea of escape. Matthews has written that the intention of the French surrealists is not to advocate escape from a conventional world. What these surrealists seek, he suggests, is the unification of the real with the unconscious. They do not recommend escape into the unconscious as a way to disregard reality. On the contrary, the more modern American surrealists do attempt to escape the entropy of this world through surreal metaphor and imagery, concomitantly with the unconscious realization of the surreal image. While the reader, through surreal metaphor and imagery, senses man's separation from himself and the world, he is able, simultaneously, to escape the entropy because he is momentarily out of the realm of conventional language, time-frame, and reality that have created the misery. He can almost be said to occupy another world. The language and images of surrealism release him

from the entropic, totalitarian world at least for the moment. Though the French surrealists do not recommend escape into the unconscious, the modern surrealists may, indeed, seek escape into an incongruous, fantastic universe.

A second similarity between the French surrealists and the modern American surrealist writer is their sharing of revolutionary narrative structure. J. H. Matthews cites the formlessness of the novel La Liberté ou l'amour as an example of revolutionary narrative structure (Novel 89). Modern American writers of surrealism also disrupt narrative organization and chronological sequence.

On this point Tony Tanner, in City of Words, cites William Burroughs' The Naked Lunch for its surreal characteristic of non-traditional narrative structure. He labels the book a "dark carnival" (114) containing no continuity of narrative and no particular, constant point of view (114). This lack of linear narrative is a trait of many modern surrealistic works (Matthews, Novel 71-73). The work of Robbe-Grillet does, similarly, banish storyline and attempts not to force an interpretation (Stansbury 369). Certainly John Hawkes' Second Skin, and Joseph Heller's Catch-22 and Something Happened demonstrate this quality. Surrealistic form is anti-realistic, fragmentary; it resembles the structure of the anti-novel that has arisen out of the "age of anxiety." The result of such fragmentation of plot or lack of plot is to create the

"sense" of things as they exist in this world, whereas linearity of plot calls for rationality, a vision of the conventional world. This surreal sense of things, says Tony Tanner, is reflective of the "cruelties and corruptions of civilization" (114) and the "dissolving" of the self in the modern world (115).

Similarly, Tanner considers the language of surrealism paradoxical because its metaphors and images "use language to release people from language" and thus allow people escape and freedom. He cites Naked Lunch as an example of this releasing process in which a reader is free to enter and leave the book at any point without losing sense of things. In conventional reality man cannot be liberated; surrealism allows him to find ideas that free him (Tanner 123).

Matthews also points out that surreal revolution is disinterested in dispelling confusion in its novels (Novel 75) in its rejection of reason, of the Bible, and in its use of incongruous imagery (81-82). All this incongruity helps to revolutionize the reader's thinking and responses to the works. He is able to sense the entropic world through the metaphorical language, and, through it, to escape, however momentarily.

Matthews not only sees spatial disorganization and disregard for chronological sequence as evocative of

revolution in surrealistic novels but also recognizes other traits of the French surrealists within more modern writers. The hero of Julien Gracq's Au Chateau d'Argol (1938) is separated from society, alienated. Matthews notes the quality of life of a surreal character within the novel: he lives in a world of "timeless atmosphere" and is separated from society, acting purely according to his own desires. The surreal hero "asserts desire in the face of social restraints" (Matthews, Novel 104). The surreal hero pursues self-knowledge and personal desire, as did de Sade (Novel 129). He acts according to the recommendation of his dreams and revels in erotic behavior.

The surreal hero also revels in fancy and fantasy, where "What counts is knowing what one wants" (Matthews Novel 163) and is revealed in the character's dreams, chance encounters, and hallucinations. Likewise the modern American writer of surrealism portrays characters alienated from the conventional world: Slocum in Something Happened; Yossarian in Catch-22; the invisible man in Invisible Man; Guido in Nightwood. These strange characters inhabit an equally strange Gothic world. In fact, says Jeanine Plottel in "Surrealist Archives of Anxiety," "The gothic impulse today has become surrealist" (127). She claims that all the bizarre characters, places, violence, dreams, and other ideals of gothic horror came to be used by surrealists such as Breton, who believed they arose from "automatic sense

impressions" (129). She believes these motifs have been carried into the more modern writings of writers of surrealism, as well, since the "uncanny" and the "fantastic" characterize the modern experience (133).

Matthews summarizes the strength of surrealistic works as having "images of alchemical experimentation" (Novel 176). In other words, the language of surrealism is capable of transmuting reality, i. e., real description, into something more than reality in its effort to provide its readers with the sensory impression of an entropic world. In this "alchemical experimentation" important elements are either missing or are described in an anomalous situation, leaving the work with an "implied coherence" (Halpern 94). Surrealist writing "explodes description" by "overloading the system" and "opening wide the flood-gates of association" (94):

Because surrealist tests follow relational or correlational rather than Aristotelian logics, because they lead the reader through chains of association and phonetic derivation rather than rigorous syntagms of cause and effect, the detailing effect of descriptive discourse should function as suture. The descriptive detail should offer the beginnings of motivation . . . , it should serve as a sort of hinge in the unfolding of any explicatory reading. (95)

While surrealistic description functions as "conjunction," it also functions as "rupture," which eventually leads the reader into a kind of "utopian" world "extrapolated" from

the real world. Surrealism has alchemical properties that make it a developmental system, in which the rules are expanded yet broken down (96). The verbal image has the ability to "project" a new perception that does not already have a referent. The surrealist image is alchemical in the sense that it is said to "prefigure" a "new order of things" (Matthews, "Painting" 144). Surrealism is a way for an author or painter to make visible that which lies unconscious or invisible within him (144). Thus, it appears that the image is critical to any study of the alchemical nature of surrealism.

Chapter 2

Literary and Other Influences

on Miller's Ideology and Aesthetics

Of the modern American surrealist writers, Henry Miller showed early a preference for a style that had decidedly surreal characteristics. In studying the importance of surreal metaphor and imagery within Henry Miller's trilogy, Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn, and Black Spring, one must first look at the writers who influenced him and his own view of art and the artist. In addition, Paris in the 30s and its surreal artists, as well as Anais Nin, influenced his thinking. It is noteworthy that he even addressed the surrealists in his "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," part of The Cosmological Eye. One must also understand his philosophy of life is almost identical to surreal philosophy. Then one must recognize how his watercolor technique reflected surrealist painting. Finally, one must be aware of Miller's contemporaries who are indebted to his ideology.

Henry Miller admired many writers who shared the

surrealist tradition, among them Blake, Nietzsche, Whitman, Nerval, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevski, Spengler, Strindberg, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Lautréamont (Hassan Silence 38). Lawrence Powell, in "Remembering Henry Miller," notes that on May 24, 1943, Henry, who had had dinner at his house on the twenty-third, returned a book he had borrowed--a book on Rimbaud (126). Miller was an aficionado of Rimbaud's The Time of the Assassins and, like D. H. Lawrence, had found in Rimbaud that terrible link to the mother (Hassan, Silence 46). As Miller's biographer, Ferguson has noted that Miller, like Lawrence and Rimbaud, seems to have been psychologically affected by a dominating, nagging mother. Hassan also says Miller is indebted to a tradition of American writers--Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman--with Whitman being his favorite. Of Whitman Miller said, "He is not a democrat, he is an anarchist" (qtd. in Hassan, Silence 45). In the philosophical vein of Lawrence, Miller had always hoped for a rebirth of the original America--that founded on the independent spirit and the philosophy of the rugged individualist. He disliked what modern America had become: materialistic, dehumanized, hypocritical, with the original dream lost (46). Regardless of his criticism of America, he was truly an American who lauded the philosophy of the creative American individualist. He wanted to see America rise from the muck and experience the true freedom of the individual that she had originally stood for. Besides

Whitman, Miller expressed his indebtedness to many authors and artists, as noted in his The Books in My Life:

And so, if my memory serves me right, here is my genealogical line: Boccaccio, Petronius, Rabelais, Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Maeterlinck, Romain Rolland, Plotinus, Heraclitus, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky (and other Russian writers of the Nineteenth Century), the ancient Greek dramatists, the Elizabethan dramatists (excluding Shakespeare), Theodore Dreiser, Knut Hamsun, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Elie Faure, Oswald Spengler, Marcel Proust, Van Gogh, the Dadaists and Surrealists, Balzac, Lewis Carroll, Nijinsky, Rimbaud, Blaise Cendrars, Jean Giono, Celine, ... (Miller 124)

One may regard his mentors as drawn from a kind of "literary underworld" (Wickes 12). Wickes called his precursors "all the rogues and picaros" (12). If one agrees with this analysis, then one may agree that Miller carried on the tradition of the literary outlaw whose writings issue primarily not from reality but from the subconscious.

This idea leads to Miller's personal formulation of art and the role of the artist in society. Essentially Whitman influenced Miller's philosophy on the role of art and the artist:

. . . the emotional, 'plain man' stance; the aesthetic which insists that 'who touches the book touches the man'; the religious ecstasy; the rough, wild, emotional humanitarianism; the man with a powerful sense of the importance of his feminine sides; the challenging and notorious writer whose personal honesty gets him into trouble with the authorities; the writer who changes people's lives; and the fierce social critic, whose criticism is tempered by an equally fierce patriotism which insists on the

superiority of the local, American greatness
of the Wallabout Martyrs over the greatness
of the heroes of remote antiquity. (Ferguson 38)

Like D. H. Lawrence, too, he rebelled against
civilization, instead wanting to answer not to some overly
conscious, rational, political, and social system but to
himself as an individual (Hassan, Silence 52). He resented
the "mob," which was, to him, the equivalent of society as
it acted against the individual (Trachtenberg 139). This is
also how he envisioned the role of the artist--as one in the
position of dissent (Hassan, Silence 52). Miller regarded
the individual in relationship to the universe, giving him a
kind of wholeness of life that could be achieved through the
artist's imagination. The artist was capable of unifying
the dualities of the conscious and unconscious, nature and
the individual (53). It is this portrait of the artist that
one sees in The Air-Conditioned Nightmare--artists of the
"life-giving elite" (Trachtenberg 140). Miller saw the
artist as a rebel, an outlaw, an anarchist, as Mailer does:
"The role which the artist plays in society is to revive the
primitive anarchic instincts which have been sacrificed for
the illusion of living in comfort" (qtd. in Hassan, Silence
55). Miller saw the artist as a kind of sacrificial lamb,
accepting the collapse of the world, accepting being
rejected by society so that, in the long run, he could
"revive the primeval, chaotic instincts" that society has
inhibited (Rahv, Sixth Sense 91). The artist's role was not

to interfere but to allow the misery to engulf him so that he could document it (Rahv, "Image" 30-31). Trachtenberg claims that Miller's artists had a redemptive quality (140). Miller himself noted the artist's role in "Reflections on Writing": "Understanding is not a piercing of the mystery, but an acceptance of it, a living blissfully with it, in it, through it and by it" (Reader 246). Hassan also agrees that Miller's artist is required to be "a redemptive and sacrificial figure" (55). "Reflections on Writing" from the book The Wisdom of the Heart, Henry Miller reveals himself as one who documents misery:

In an age marked by dissolution, liquidation seems to me a virtue, nay a moral imperative. Not only have I never felt the least desire to conserve, bolster up or buttress anything, but I might say that I have always looked upon decay as being just as wonderful and rich an expression of life as growth.
(Reader 250)

This is the artist Miller--a sufferer who endures so as to write and enlighten.

Miller's vision of the artist also corresponds to Anais Nin's concept of the artist. Miller believed that writing should be spontaneous and spring from the unconscious. So, too, did Anais Nin recommend use of the subconscious: ". . . the subterranean which is fluid, rhythmic, musical, versatile, mobile, fluctuating, rippling" (Nin 172). In addition, she comments on the novelist of the future,

. . . [who], like the modern physicist, knows

that a new psychological reality can be explored only under new conditions of atmospheric pressure, temperature and speed, as well as in terms of new time and space dimensions for which the old forms and conventions of the novel are completely inadequate. (173)

Nin groups Miller with the novelists of the future, noting his surreal characteristics and linking him to medieval artist Hieronymous Bosch. She also credited him with being closer to Dali than to Breton (180). Nin apprenticed Miller to her and instructed him on how to be an artist--by delving into his dreams and the unconscious. Miller also shares her ideas on the new author's methods of expression: "He has to feel his way, invent new words for a latent, potential, as yet unexpressed emotion. He has to light up with his expression worlds which may never have been lighted before" (170). She praises Miller as an artist, admiring his use of common language--the language of us all--together with enriching methods or "surrealistic flights of language" (169).

Like D. H. Lawrence, Miller delights in calling for the total destruction of the world, after which man will be free to foster his primeval instincts (Rahv, "Image" 30). The artist, for Miller, was to bear the world's miseries in order to come out of the mess an individual, happy in his aliveness. And Norman Mailer insists that Miller's art was his therapy (84). Miller called for an affirmation of the self in a dying world. The nihilism that the critics insist

is in Miller (Kermode "Jonah" and Rahv "Image" 32) is in his rejection of past traditions and conventions as well as the rejection of a future controlled by a materialistic society. His nihilism is not a nihilism of the self. Miller was, indeed, a proponent of individualism and the survival of the self. David Littlejohn says of him that "He is an individualist so extreme as to seem at times prehistoric. He is above or below, or beyond, or apart from all our most intimate social concerns" ("Tropics" 104). Kingsley Widmer also agrees with this analysis:

Thus, to be an artist meant to Miller a rebellious freedom from a world which justified everything; above all, it meant the definition, expression, and regeneration of a failing and fractured self. (18)

Of course, the important word here is "regeneration," for while that self may, in the course of its relation with society, be rejected, coerced, conventionalized, and generally made miserable, the ultimate result is a realization of its ability to survive and regenerate itself. Ultimately, then, Miller's concept of the self is affirmative--another Lawrentian theme. Society is sterility; the self is nutrient. Miller represented

a true American spirit. He knew that when you have a nation of transplants and weeds the best is always next to the worst, and right after shit comes Shinola. . . . --the air may prove most transcendent at the edge of the spew, or if not, then the nausea it produces can let the mind clear out its vertigo. (Mailer 85)

Further proof that Miller's art was life-giving rather than nihilistic is his own analysis of his art in an article by Barbara Kraft entitled, "Conversation with Henry Miller":

BK: " . . . Even when you are writing about the whores and clochards of Paris I always feel a celebration of the human condition. Of the endurance in living, of essential humanness."

HM: "That's right. That's right. That's why I've said "If you're going to be a whore, be a good whore, a great one. If you're going to be a saint, be a wonderful saint. Be it! Be it, whatever you are, to the hundredth degree. Whatever it is you are, accept yourself, first of all." (Kraft 51)

To be sure, Miller's stance on the artist is particularly American because it calls for personal liberation (Trachtenberg 140). The artist needs to turn the American nightmare around and allow the reader to die into "a new, free being" (141).

Though some critics claim that Miller wrote in a surreal vein before he came to Paris in 1930, there is much evidence that he was influenced by surreal artists, philosophy, and, particularly, surreal cinema (Raaberg, 253). Wallace Fowlie mentions Miller's happening upon Breton's manifestoes in Paris (184). But even before his trip to Paris when he was almost 40 years old, it was known that he held rebellious views about American civilization and the contamination of that society. Later it seemed particularly to be his trip to Paris that made him realize the degeneration of his own country:

The trip gave him the beginnings of a whole new set of perspectives on his own country, a frame of reference from which he would go on to attack the worst excesses of American society, notably the worship of success, the blind mania for progress, the promotion of a work ethic as though it were a religion, and that mania for personal cleanliness and hygiene (Ferguson 164)

These early years in Paris--1930-31--found Miller exposed to avant-garde film. Here he saw at Studio 28 two films made by surrealists Dali and Buñuel--Un Chien Andalou of 1928 and L'Age d'Or of 1930 (Brown 36, Ekberg 3, Raaberg 254). These were the two best examples of surrealist film, and both Miller and his confidante Anais Nin were inspired by the strange filmic jumps and juxtapositions whose effects they incorporated within their own writing (Ekberg 3). In fact, Miller had written an essay on the surrealist art of Buñuel and asked Nin to preview it (7). Kent Ekberg believes that, in particular, Miller's "Into the Night Life" of his Black Spring shows the influence of this surreal cinema (4). Says Ferguson on the influence of these two films on Miller:

Together, Un Chien Andalou and the ironically-titled L'Age d'Or had a profoundly liberating effect on Miller's approach to the art of writing. . . . he had become increasingly aware that disciplined writing was writing against the grain, and the violence and anarchy inherent in surrealism--superbly exemplified in these films--at once opened up a way out of the baffling strictures of literary orthodoxy. . . . [Miller said] "this [Buñuel's] is the lunacy of civilization, the record of man's achievement after ten thousand years

of refinement."

Both pieces, which appeared in Samuel Putnam's new magazine New Review, were prophetic of Tropic of Cancer, the former of its contents, the latter of its pervasive attitude. (176-77)

Norman Mailer, also, asserts that his more surreal writing shows "an instinctive sense he [Miller] had for film montage" (8). In addition, Miller had wanted to preface Tropic of Cancer with a letter to Buñuel, expressing his gratitude for Buñuel's influence upon his own work (Raaberg 254). Gwendolyn Raaberg claims that Miller gained more from cinematic influences upon his work than surreal literary influences. She believes he does not show as much similarity between two images as the literary surrealists do, instead relying more on a single visual image, which, she says, is more film-like (254). Yet I believe that while Miller indeed may exploit a single image, that image, if it is surreal, gains its surreal quality from the juxtaposition of two, if not more, different, conflicting ideas inherent within it. Some of Miller's "lists" demonstrate this idea. Sometimes he fleshes out a place or dream-event that includes a list of descriptions that go on for as long as two pages. In the list images conflict and connect. Some expand the original referent in concept and description while others contract it. The list provides a kind of exploding and imploding of reactions within the imagery.

Even before this exposure to surreal cinema, Miller

preferred a writing style that was totally avant-garde, expressionist, experimental (Laughlin xiii), and once he was in Paris, he devoured surreal magazines: Transition, This Quarter, Minotaure (Raaberg 253). While in Paris, he, in his association with Anais Nin and her allegiance to the forces of the dream and unconscious and psychoanalysis, agreed with much of her surreal ideology. Said Nin of surrealism in her book The Novel of the Future:

Dogmas always die of dogmatism, which is a kind of hardening of the arteries. But the fecund ideas do not die. Surrealism is not a school or a dogma any more; it is a way of expressing the subconscious. So it will endure. There is no purely surrealist writer, but there are writers who use surrealism to convey a flight from naturalism: Nathanael West, John Hawkes, Henry Miller. (35)

She later links herself and Henry Miller with the surrealists:

Both Miller and I were concerned with freedom from old forms, with revolution in writing, and we met over the championships of two rebels: Buñuel in films, André Breton in surrealistic theory. Creativity is in itself a denial of categories, dogmas, and set values. (67-8)

So, Miller and Nin, not only having shared an intimate relationship in Paris, also shared a basic philosophy that can be traced back to the original French surrealists.

In fact, Miller has shown in his "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" of 1938 his relationship to this group. In it he refers, as had Breton, to "making poetry"

and "making life a poem--adopting a creative attitude towards life [by] killing off tyrannical influences wielded over us by those already dead" (Cosmological 152). He did reject, however, surrealism as an organized group directed toward a certain preconceived effort. In this way he felt that the group tended to destroy individualism (Raaberg 253). Raaberg claims that Miller was in agreement with the philosophy of surrealism but not with its organizational qualities which forced the individual into a surreal mold and movement (254).

In his "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere" he echoes Breton's notion of the "marvellous as beautiful" (Miller 178). He says, "Surrealism is the secret language of our time. . . . Surrealism will give a new, deeper, truer, more immediate spiritual doctrine to the economic, social, and political revolutionists" (Cosmological 178). In this letter he also comments on the role of the artist as he sees it. He uses the metaphor of the artist as a boxer, compared to the usual public view of the artist as a leper (160-5). He asserts that the aim of the artist is to make people want another, different picture--the marvelous (167): "Art, as I see it, is the expression of this chasm, this desynchronization: it is the projection of the universal picture of individuation. Man against the universe" (167). Miller's advice to the artist:

Let each one turn his gaze inward and regard

himself with awe and wonder, with mystery and reverence; let each one promulgate his own laws, his own theories; let each one work his own influence, his own havoc, his own miracles. Let each one as an individual, assume the roles of artists, healer, prophet, priest, king, warrior, saint. No division of labor. Let us recombine the dispersed elements of our individuality. Let us reintegrate. (174-75)

Such is the dream of the surrealist artist.

Despite his objections to the surrealist movement as a movement, he was deeply affected by its tenets: "Scarcely anything has been as stimulating to me as the theories and the products of the Surrealists" (188). And he further comments on the surrealist section of an art exhibit that he visited in Paris and, in particular, a picture of a horse with motorized sex organs that Dali had constructed:

This perhaps is not even a representation of the Unconscious, but a necessity of the Unconscious. And, let me add, that whenever between Idea and Representation there occurs such an inviolable marriage we may without let or fear take one for the other or vice versa. As in olden times, when the Christian myth had man by the balls so that he was powerless to paint anything but madonnas, angels, demons and their like, so now it seems to me that in the paintings of the Surrealists we have the embryonic spawn of the coming angels, demons and madonnas, etc. I see some dim relationship between the bankruptcy of the conscious intellectual forces (the insanity of our present world) and the emergence of this great new empire of darkness (the insanity of the future) which, in its demand to be explored and charted, will revive the sensory powers of man so that he may look upon the world about him with renewed exaltation and more vivid consciousness. (173-74)

It is in the "Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere," however, that Miller reveals most strongly his dreams of change:

. . . re-establishing the equilibrium which is disturbed by the power and tyranny over us. (152)

When at last each man realizes that nothing is to be expected from God, or society, or friends, or benevolent tyrants, or democratic governments, or saints, or saviours, or even from the holiest of holies, education, when each man realizes that he must work with his own hands to save himself, and that he need expect no mercy, ... (155)

I am against revolutions because they always involve a return to status quo. I don't want to wear a black shirt or a red shirt. I want to wear the shirt that suits my taste. 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. (160)

As a general summary of Miller's connection with the surrealists, one can say that he values rebellion, individuality, the unconscious, primitive, anarchic instincts, and opposes all social and cultural constraints (Brown 36). He adheres to a "revolution in mores" (Wickes 5) that inherently resists "systems" and government and the work ethic. Some may regard him as anti-American, anti-bourgeoisie, and anti-WASP, anti-Christianity, anti-machine and progress, and, in fact, anti-civilization (8-9). He was a revolutionary of the type of D. H. Lawrence, who relished, as did Miller, the original America, true democracy that

liberated the individual, that freed man from domination of any kind. He rejected the American Dream that guarantees wealth in life (Trachtenberg 139); such a dream was simply a hoax. Similarly, with Lawrence, Miller detested civilization, progress, machines, intellectualism (Wickes 9). Herbert Muller says Miller spoke of "intellect, science, society, . . . art and literature as perversions of reality" (48). Instead he called for "a return to traditional or mythic national values" (Trachtenberg 140), to self-sufficiency and independence (Gordon, Mind 178). Such was the Millerian American Dream.

Miller sums up his philosophical stance in the "Autobiographical Note" to The Cosmological Eye:

My aim, in writing, is to establish a greater REALITY. . . . I am for life, which in literature, it seems to me, can only be attained by the use of dream and symbol. . . . I am against pornography and for obscenity--and violence. Above all, for imagination, fantasy, for a liberty as yet undreamed of. . . . aiming always towards a real, inner harmony, an inner peace--and silence. I believe that literature, to become truly communicable (which it is not at present), must make greater use of the symbol and the metaphor, of the mythological and the archaic. Most of our literature is like the text-book; everything takes place on an arid plateau of intellectuality. Ninety-nine percent of what is written--and this goes for all our art products--should be destroyed. I want to be read by less and less people; I have no interest in the life of the masses, nor in the intentions of the existing governments of the world. I hope and believe that the whole civilized world will be wiped out in the next

hundred years or so. I believe that man can exist, and in an infinitely better, larger way, without "civilization." (371)

The above philosophy is decidedly surrealistic in its ideology: anti-convention, anti-reality, surrendering to the dream, the symbol, the unconscious, the self. It was this aspect of the dream that led him to his own artistic accomplishment (Martin, "Dreaming" 64). Miller, through his writing, was quite capable of giving himself up to his dreams (64). And while he regarded dream as an important aspect of a person's life, he also thought of psychosis as revelatory (66), something that could show truth through its irrationality. This idea is strangely reminiscent of Salvador Dali's paranoiac-critical method.

Miller's surreal outlook figures not only in his writing but in his watercolors as well. He loved painting in watercolor nearly as much as he loved writing, and in his later years his writing played a secondary role to his painting. Lawrence Durrell said Miller first became interested in painting after he had seen a Turner show in New York (Young 18). But in his biography Ferguson says Miller first became attracted to painting because of the influence of his wife's intimate friend and bohemian partner, Mara Andrews. Mara was responsible for initiating Miller into the world of Japanese and Chinese art. She had covered her room with strange paintings, and he even asked her to teach him how to paint (Ferguson 139). While June

had gone off to visit Vienna, Miller became more heavily involved with painting around 1926-27, along with his friend Emil Schnellock, who gave him "involuntary eye training"--teaching him how to "see" with a sensitive eye and mind (Young 18). Anais Nin paid for Miller's art lessons with Hans Reichel, who painted in the tradition of Paul Klee (19), whose childlike, spontaneous sensibility would appeal to Miller. During the forties Miller became more adept at painting during the year 1943. He was known to present his paintings to friends as Christmas presents and to offer his art in exchange for food and a night's stay. Miller's first actual exhibition was in a Greenwich Village bar, then in Santa Barbara, London, and Yale ("Landscapes into Fish" 53). He later showed in Paris, Upsala, Sweden, and Tokyo.

Miller's paintings reflect a mixture of the techniques and philosophies of expressionist artists, cubists, impressionists, and surrealists ("Miller and Others"). His art retains many of the characteristics of surreal art, both in technique and approach. He and Bern Porter would paint together, and Porter captures Miller's fascination and energy with watercolor in The Happy Rock: A Book about Henry Miller:

He takes his brush and goes at it with vim,
in a joyful frenzy that is still controlled.
But suddenly, if he feels that the experiment
is getting out of hand, he shouts: "Away
with caution! To hell with it! Let's see what
happens!" Then he begins in real earnest,

jumping up and down, dancing, singing, shouting,
stabbing at the paper with right or left hand,
spitting on it, grinding his heel into it,
anything, anything at all, anything that
his impulse dictates. (18)

The above description demonstrates that Miller composed at least some of his paintings according to the theory of surreal automatism, as this admission by the author himself attests:

I throw anything I can reach on the picture boldly--pencil or crayon, brush or ink or carbon, just anything if it destroy the effect I got purposely and gives me new field of experience.
I always thought that the brilliant effect I got like this is due to chance and no longer from my intellect. It was not only the way the famous artist used, but I admit, the way I myself use in writings.
The self-portrait on the wall which has alchemist lookings of the Middle Age includes the discovery which has some connection to ear always pleases me.
[this is a translation into English]
The ear is an apparition for me--same as fingers and neck.
If I use up my whole knowledge concerning to the ear, it still looks like cauliflower or cablatamana (?). Working gradually from out to inside, more simply and more and more magically, I at last eliminated the whole ear.
Then I inscribed a little holy scar on the cheek . . . (trans. of "Water Reglitterized" by Henry Miller, qtd. in Colorado Review: 16)

From this it is easy to see that he not only incorporated the surrealists' automatic techniques, but also left much of his creativity up to chance and the unconscious, both techniques the surrealists practiced. In fact, he admits he left his creative energy mostly up to chance:

. . . let me say that I seldom plan to

do anything. . . . The monster simply grows under my hand, as it were. . . . A breast emerges on a male figure utterly without intent. . . .

What I am trying to point out is that these failures, or monstrosities, are a result of my faith in the virtue of letting things happen. (qtd. in Young 26)

His relation to chance has as its basis the surreal concept of the objet trouvé or "found object." Miller seems to have subscribed to this idea in his artistic philosophy:

Often I found myself on my knees studying a stain on the floor--studying it to detect all that was hidden at first sight. No doubt the painter, studying the face of the sitter whose portrait he is about to do, must be astonished by the things he suddenly recognizes in the familiar visage before him. . . . Suddenly you see--and it's not an eye or an ear but a little universe composed of the most extraordinary elements having nothing to do with sight or hearing, with flesh, bone, muscle, and cartilage. (64)

There is evidence that Miller incorporated the ideals of dream and the unconscious within his paintings [see fig. 15]. The two human heads are painted without any definite outline or profile. They hang, suspended, above a village. The eyes are sunken, troubled, reflecting a state of inner turmoil and disturbance--possibly insanity. The human heads resemble stains themselves, possibly humanity's staining, destruction of the earth. The shadowing in the larger figure likens it to a skull, and the amorphous quality of the severed heads provokes one to think of things perverted, Freudian, aberrational. Miller's watercolors represent the non-actual world and the fantastic (Fukuzawa 15 and "The

Novelist as Painter" 3).

Those artists his art is most said to resemble are Paul Klee, Abraham Rattner ("Landscapes into Fish"- 53), Rouault, Miro, Chagall, and Jacob Max (Fukuzawa 15), all artists who disdained restraint. Of course, Miller bridled against restraint of any kind. He was not interested in rendering realistic imagery. He was an expressionist with a surreal outlook. One critic compares his watercolors to those of Hieronymus Bosch (Roger-Marx) [see fig. 1]. His art is also said to resemble that of Raoul Dufy and John Marin, of whom Miller said: "I am influenced by the painters I like. I go by instinct. Marin is my favorite because he is poetic, fantastic, a realist. . . is sheer delight and wizardry" (qtd. in "Submissive and Sexless?" 120). His watercolor from the 1950's Architectural Fantasy resembles Marin's work Lower Manhattan of 1922 [see figs. 16 & 17]. In both paintings there is the cityscape, distorted, cubist, and out of perspective; a crowding of objects energizes the pictures. Miller's painting entails fantasy, as is evident in the title. Miller's surreal fantasy-scape attracts the observer to a more primitive, perhaps Oriental time and place, perhaps a land that he wished the world could go back to.

Primarily though, most critics seem to agree that he most closely resembles Klee and Chagall ("Miller and

Others"; "Landscapes" ; "Peintre et academician" 28-9; "Maleren Miller og en Ung Dansk" 10; "En Malende Henry Miller" 11). Though Klee was not technically a surrealist, he did paint fantastic and grotesque subjects, combining "cubism, free form, and inventive play" (Canaday 538). He is recognized for his child-like characteristics, which critics have also found in Miller's art. Miller shares Marc Chagall's childlike, dreamy, fantastic quality. Miller's untitled painting [see fig. 18] resembles Chagall's I and My Village of 1911 quite closely [see fig. 19]. In both pictures there is, in the upper left-hand corner, the fantastic profile of the cow with a soft, introspective eye. Painted on a diagonal in the lower right-hand corner is the profile of a man. Above Miller's man is a house, whereas in Chagall, there is a representation of a village. The mood in both paintings is contemplative and musing. The figures are bold but calm.

Miller's watercolors, like his writing, reflect his philosophy of life, ("The Novelist as Painter" 3), and, as with his writing, his watercolors also show his attraction to Freudian symbols (Arkush 46-7) [see fig. 20]. One could interpret this painting according to Freudian psychoanalysis. Certainly one could find sexual references in the snake-like figure at the bottom of the picture as well as in the man to the right covering his private parts. A large black head looms ominously, dominating, intimidating

the man, who looks innocent and embarrassed. One could construe anal retentiveness in the modest character on the right, and the domineering head on the left could be construed as a dominating male who controls the sheepish one. The surreal quality is evident in the Freudian unconscious and fantasy figures in the painting.

Critics recognize in Miller's paintings the qualities of the dream, the unfettered child's unconscious, the primitive, instinctive quality that became Miller's chief link to surrealism. A resemblance can also be noted between Miller's head [see fig. 21] and Rouault's Pierrot with a Rose of 1936 [see fig. 22], both expressionistic renderings. Both pictures contain the same thickness of brush strokes, the heavy colors and surreptitious expressions. Both arise out of the unconscious and the imagination.

From his visual art one can understand Miller the rebel, the avant-garde figure who rejects convention and organized society in life and art and appreciates, instead, a love of individuality and instinctual reaction that has all but been suppressed by civilized man. Thus, Miller became known as the father of the beatniks and hippies of the 50s and 60s (Geismar 55). He was in revolt against the corruption of the American Dream (Hassan, Silence 47). In an interview with Barbara Kraft, he was asked about his relationship to people like Kerouac and

Ginsberg:

HM: "I felt something with Kerouac. But not all the way. Because I think that he was on a monorail, Kerouac. It wasn't wide enough for me. And yet Kerouac was more Europeanized than most of the other writers of that epoch. Ginsberg I just can't stand." (Kraft 56)

Called the father of the "Beat Generation," he prophesized the denigration of society and the importance of the individual also found in the style and imagery of such authors as Mailer, Burroughs, Donleavy, and Pynchon (Shifreen xvi).

Chapter 3

Miller's Style and Image-Making

In summary, Miller shows a predisposition toward the avant-garde, demonstrating his early attraction to more unconventional nineteenth-century Romantic writers. Miller was attracted to the experimental in art and literature, and his familiarity with the works of Anaïs Nin and her fervor for psychoanalysis and the unconscious fostered an attraction to the philosophies and art of the surrealists, which he, in part, incorporated into his writings and watercolors. His preferred writing style is surreal and is formulated according to this surreal philosophy. He has created the very best of surreal metaphor.

Henry Miller learned as a youth growing up in Brooklyn the power of language as a key to success. Particularly, he learned that those relatives of his possessing English accents usually became more successful in life. He noticed that those who were more cultured and cultivated and who used language in an eloquent manner were those who became successful (Ferguson 7). Later, while on a trip out West,

he heard a lecture by anarchist Emma Goldman and became thoroughly convinced of the power of language, especially for the social control it allowed. He was inspired by her "revolutionary oratory" and radicalism. Shortly afterward he realized that he was destined to be a thinker, discussor, and a master of language (25). Miller would drive himself and eventually to hone a style that would set him apart from many other authors.

As many writers (Gertrude Stein and Eugene Jolas, for example) were establishing their own literary theories, Miller and his friend Alfred Perles drew up their own manifesto, which criticized the realism in the traditional magazines of the day. They called their movement "New Instinctivism": "A proclamation of rebellion against the puerilities in the arts and literature, a manifesto of disgust, a gob of spit in the cuspidor of post-war conceits, a healthy crap in the cradle of still-born deities" (qtd. in Ferguson 187). This New Instinctivism recommended that writers take a totally subjective view and use a mixture of nonsense and anarchy. This was only the beginning of the ideology that Miller would live by, thereby becoming "a religious seeker of unorthodox method" (xi). Miller and Perles adopted a naturalistic literary stance founded upon the importance of instinct and the need to do whatever one felt one had to do. It opposed the real, the conventional, the "should do" laws of literary theory. In agreement,

Anais Nin commented upon the staid condition of the literary world and the need for a different aesthetic (mostly notably, surrealism):

The doors of our culture have been shut tight against how we feel. The dream has been regarded as a symptom of neurosis; aesthetics belonged to other cultures; art was an obscene word, and surrealism was only associated with Dali's pranks. It was not even recognized as such when it appeared in Nathanael West's work or in Henry Miller's novels. (16)

The dream was considered as escape, refuge, as a delusion, a way of inaction. . . . but the surrealists and the psychologists knew that it was the source of action. Surrealist flights of imagination, invention, and wit are proofs of the existence of deep subterranean worlds. The one who can interpret his dreams does not need to fear being trapped in them. He is an explorer. (17-18)

And Miller shared in Nin's "exploration" of language, dream, and the unconscious. She encouraged and fostered within him her theory of language as "crystal formation":

By obeying the improvisations born of emotions, by abandoning myself to digressions and variations, I found an indigenous structure, a form born of organic growth, like crystal formations. . . . There is a different plot from the one we are familiar with. A plot in which it is our originality, our individuality which give surprising endings which never resemble each other. What an exciting vision of the future, to escape the uniformity we seemed to be condemned to only a few years ago. Form created organically by meaning and born of an individual character will be endlessly varied and fecundating as each crystal varies from the next. (28-9)

Miller and Nin subscribed to a revolutionary form of language that was on the order of Bunuel in film and Breton in surreal theory. They wrote by "crystallizing" language. This crystallizing of writing can be construed as a kind of theory of expansion AND contraction. But for now it suffices that Nin herself looked upon this crystallizing process as a kind of expansion. She believed that with the "standardization" of language a writer limits himself but that with the crystallizing method the writer can expand his ideas and communicate more effectively, allowing him to "express what he cannot express" (93). Normal everyday language has an inhibitory effect on a writer because it limits his abilities to express himself (93). On the other hand avant-garde writing allows one to express himself in the fullest range, as a magician almost, or as an alchemist, as the surrealists believed.

Critics both agree and disagree on the success of Miller's style. Certainly most of them see it as revolutionary (Hassan, Silence 36) in spirit and technique and signifying "dissent" and "estrangement" from the social and literary world (52). He may be anti-literary, a literary outlaw who is "egocentric and confessional; shocking, violent, obscene; rambling, incoherent, formless; antisocial, anarchic, solipsistic; hallucinatory, nightmarish, ecstatic, apocalyptic" (Wickes 12). In fact, he may serve as a ringleader for a movement that is strictly

anti-literature (Rexroth 94-105). Critics reason that if life itself is chaotic, then so must be the language that expresses it, thus necessitating the disappearance of literary form (Brown 4). They consider Miller, along with Barnes, Lowery, and West as part of a second generation of modern anti-realists (Littlejohn, "Anti-Realists" 17-33). Another way of looking at his revolutionary nature is by regarding it not simply as revolutionary but as "wild"--a kind of "cultivated wildness"; it is "Self-absorption indulged on a scale of verbal magnificence [as a form] of liberation" (Trachtenberg 144-45).

Miller's form has been described as "preartistic" (Hassan, Silence 66) and as not sharing traditional literary values inherent in comedy and tragedy. Hassan notes that Miller's form does not follow chronology or traditional time frames. Miller's language bursts forth in sparkling imagery and surreal poetry (66), exploding finally in the fantastic, combining a vocabulary derived from all the different theoretical categories of language (71). Plot and structure do not exist in Tropic of Cancer, and this "episodic" and "shifting" nature of the narrative is reflected in his other works as well (Brown 19). Miller was attracted to the incongruity of the surrealist objects existing by themselves in a chaotic relationship (35). Says Brown of Miller the surrealist:

Miller made surrealism an integral element of narrative prose. He also fashioned his own distinctive surrealistic style. Miller's blend of unconscious association, word play, and savage imagery powerfully expressed the rebellious energy of an individual narrator in a collapsing culture. Surrealism was an appropriate technique to reflect the social theme of disintegration, a technique that later writers from William Burroughs to Norman Mailer would also use. (108)

All the critics say that Miller's works are autobiographical. Wickes believes he writes confessions, introspective, autobiographical monologues (20). But Miller is equally at home writing in other various styles: the realistic, the incantatory, the satirical (Manning 7). His realistic episodes, in fact, are just as compelling as his surreal passages.

Miller's style is fashioned after much surrealist aesthetic. He uses automatism in both his writing and his drawing. He admits to being possessed by bouts of automatic writing that give his writing qualities of "free association and improvisation," and he draws verbal caricature on the order of Lewis Carroll [see the "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt" section of Black Spring] (Wickes 25-6). Particularly in Tropic of Capricorn Miller writes "cadenzas," as he calls them, or strands of automatic writing in the "Interlude" section of the novel (Raaberg 254). Several critics have compared his style to James Joyce's, citing passages that are chameleon-like (Wickes 26). These rounds of free association recall Rimbaud and Lautréamont and reveal

Miller's frankness and honesty (Fowlie 185).

Another characteristic of his style is that the surreal passages seem drawn from his own dreams, which Nin encouraged him to write down [see "Into the Night Life" section of Black Spring] (Brown 29). In this way he could incorporate the real world of his novels into his emotional, irrational, and unconscious state. Philip Rieff perceives Miller and his mentor D. H. Lawrence both as "prophets of the irrational" (100).

Critics, whether or not they like Miller's writing, have to admit that he has a fresh, original style. Some believe his prose is more magnificent than Faulkner's (Brown 4). Norman Mailer believed, as he said in Genius and Lust, that Miller's prose was grander than Faulkner's and wilder: "one has to take the English language back to Marlowe and Shakespeare before encountering a wealth of imagery equal in intensity" (4). Others praise his style for its inherent honesty (Littlejohn, "Tropics" 104). Miller has been quoted as saying: "I want a world . . . that has fear and respect for its animal origins. . . . I want a classic purity, where dung is dung and angels are angels" (qtd. in Hoffman "Little Boy Himself" & Jong 34). Miller's style is refreshing for its blend of colloquialism and surrealism, and he uses "the extremes of language, emotion, and idea fused perfectly" (Brown 4). William Gordon analyzes his style as one of

polarity in which Miller is able to combine the extremes of obscenity and spirituality, body and mind (Mind 86), art and life (Mind 60). This combining of opposites is important in studying Miller's novels. He can be at once "genial and savage" (Rahv, "Image" 28). He has the ability to combine the aesthetic and prophetic (Read 1). Miller's is a constant mixture of things-- a "fusion of anecdotes, rhapsodies, caricatures, philosophizings, and burlesques" (Widmer 17). Incongruity, therefore, is the crux of Miller's style (22). Ihab Hassan says that Miller is full of contradictions: "Acceptance and denial, humility and arrogance, optimism and pessimism counterpoint his work. The paradoxes of Miller carry over into his practice of art; . . . " (Silence 49). There is also appreciation for Miller's ability to fantasize during his free-association passages (Gordon, Mind 87), and Wallace Fowlie goes so far as to consider his writing more "rhapsody than narration" (185). Other miscellaneous comments on Miller's style are that it is grotesque, comic-apocalyptic (Widmer 24), having "disjunctions of surreal rhetoric" (27), a mix of romantic and realistic, surrealistic prose-poetics (Yerbury 67-73).

One may wonder why Miller chose surreal flights of fancy and image-making to tell his stories. Some believe his anti-realistic writing was spawned by a general attitude of revolution against mainstream American culture. By writing surrealistically, he could reject the culture that

had, in essence, rejected him (Raaberg 253). Some critics see it as pure rebellion against a system; it was a way to express the dissolution he felt engulfing the American scene (Brown 108). Through surrealism the writer can liberate himself from conventional writing and the nightmare of civilization. Likewise, the unconscious can be visualized or realized only by a flight into the incongruous (Trachtenberg 145). Surrealism becomes, for Miller, "the desperate assertion of individual artfulness over a grim and messy reality" (Widmer 27). J. D. Brown believes that, considering the emptiness in conventional life, surrealism, with its ability to help a reader find another reality, offers a glad escape and self-discovery (18).

I believe Miller preferred the surreal style as a method of escape but not in the sense that he needed to create a dream-world that would take him out of his messy reality. Even though Miller despaired because of turbulent love affairs, poverty, starvation, and problems with publishers, I do not believe he sought escape from the world. His personality enabled him to endure trials calmly and gave him the ability to live life as he needed to, in a way that seemed particularly unperturbed by the events surrounding him. He was durable; he simply lived as he had to under the conditions. But he needed to find escape from the realistic literary tradition. He was not a

"naturalistic" thinker, and, considering his rebellious nature, it was natural for him to adopt a free-flowing experimental style.

Henry Miller's surreal style is an important facet of his writing; his ability to affect his reader with vivid imagery really forms the basis for his surreal style. Much of this imagery may leave the reader feeling as though he has visited a fourth dimension (Winters 135).

Of foremost consideration when looking at the image-making abilities of Henry Miller is his sexual imagery. Perhaps this alone has provoked the most discussion among the critics. Although I will not discuss the issue of pornography in his works, for my purpose is not to address morality or lack of morality in Miller, I must discuss the imagery that applies to sex, for it dominates his works and amplifies his themes. Specifically it amplifies the theme of the plea for life and the essential self. Ihab Hassan analyzes the importance of his sexual imagery, believing that it is certainly not pornography, which would provoke titillation for its own sake, but that it is definitely obscene. Rahv called it "intra-uterine imagery" ("Image" 29). This obscene quality of his sexual imagery is all part of a dialectic (which I have already addressed in the "polarity" discussion on his style) of affirmation and denial in his works. Kingsley Widmer notes the incongruity of the imagery as well (22). Within the sexual imagery lies

disgust with the corrupt world and simultaneously the prophecy that man can come out of the dreaded condition a better person, an instinctive, total, free man.

Hassan believes that gross physicality and transcendence are mixed in the sex act and that Miller's obscenity denotes not only degeneration but also celebration. Obscenity, he claims, releases both the writer and the characters within the story from convention and repression. Obscenity, in this way, purifies: the writer, the characters, the reader. Obscenity redeems life (Silence 37) and has a "cathartic" influence (53). The sexual imagery serves a literary function: "to convey a sense of cultural and social disorder. . . and an insatiable naturalistic curiosity" (Rahv, "Image" 33). Much of his reporting of the sex act is comic, but at the edge of the humor lies outrage:

. . . Miller thinks of the sexual mechanism as comparable to modern business processes or to modern war in which the machine goes on and on in its nightmarish logic simply because the mechanism has started, though it satisfies no one's real desires. (Widmer 33)

David Littlejohn quotes a particularly vivid passage from Tropic of Capricorn that juxtaposes the earth to female sexuality:

The earth is not an arid plateau of health and comfort, but a great sprawling female with velvet torso that swells and heaves with ocean billows; she squirms beneath a diadem of sweat and anguish. Naked and

sexed she rolls among the clouds in the violet light of the stars. All of her, from her generous breasts to her gleaming thighs, blazes with furious ardor. She moves among the seasons and the years with a grand whoop-la that seizes the torso with paroxysmic fury, that shakes the cobwebs out of the sky. (qtd. in "Tropics" 108)

In such passages as this, of which there are many in Miller's Tropics, there is the theme of the affirmation of the primordial, primal, naturalistic life. Man's acceptance of his own "earthy" origins can save him from a civilization that has become overly burdened with intellectualism, industrialism, and materialism. Sex, womb imagery, and the phallus return man to his natural origins.

Though not illustrated in the above example of sexual imagery, critics do claim that food is usually associated with sex in Miller (Gordon, "Mind" 179). Again, this could be an effort to bring the reader down to some primitive, desiring level of consciousness--the oral dependency of infancy and early childhood (Gordon, "Mind" 180). And in his work food imagery is linked to excretory imagery.

As an addendum to sexual imagery, the critics comment upon his excremental metaphors (Widmer 22), his "scrofulous" images that result from a prehistoric vision (Littlejohn, "Tropics" 104). Essentially, in such images the reader is not quite so free from civilized reactions as the writer who conjures them. The result is shock. The author has dug down into an "elemental," subconscious level that the reader may

have a hard time understanding and accepting. Such an example of a primitive image is the description of a face: "nothing but a skull perforated by two deep sockets in which there are buried a pair of dead clams" (qtd. in Littlejohn, "Tropics" 104). Examples of excretory images are "You can shit arpeggios" and "bombinating from the rectum." The act of shitting has musical accompaniment, and the rectum, similarly, belts out something in a booming voice. The reader reacts with a visceral kind of understanding, not readily recognized on an intellectual level but more on a primal, instinctive, emotional level. Miller has discovered in his imagery the prehistoric, pre-civilized foundation of man's consciousness. It is imagery from the depths, from the guts, from the basic, excremental, gaseous centers of Lawrence's hypo-gastric plexus.

Miller's prose borders on the poetic, and it is full of surreal images that seem formed from Miller's indulgence in automatic writing and free association (Fowlie 185). Critics note that the dadaistic and surrealistic passages in Black Spring are taken from his dreams (Brown 29) and tend to create high and unbridled energy within the novel (34). Miller's surreal canvas is fleshed out by dream imagery and grotesque revelations of the unconscious. If to the reader the imagery tends to be meaningless, perhaps that is also what Miller is trying to get across--the meaninglessness of

life in contemporary culture. Thus, meaninglessness as theme is shown through meaninglessness in subject matter, point of view, and imagery. Kingsley Widmer says, "He [Miller] plays with his fragmentation, writing in front of a cracked mirror, exalting in his contradictions and confusions, intensifying the schizophrenia by the disjunctions of surreal rhetoric" (27). This disjunctive quality is what qualifies an image as surreal, and it follows that Miller should be attracted to Salvador Dali's incongruous images: the "anthropomorphic article" and the "intestinal morphological metaphor" (Dali, "Object" 197-207). Through such imagery that "juxtaposes realism and fantasy" (Raaberg 256), Miller is able to arrive at a union between the symbolic man and his visceral feelings (254).

This incongruity of images is what Anais Nin comments on in her The Novel of the Future. She says of Miller's "Into the Night Life" of Black Spring:

It uses physical images, familiar images,
to reconstruct some nocturnal journey
. . . and proceeds in an intoxication of
words and images, play on words and
incongruous correlation of images, a
drunken journey through grotesque
fantasies. (180)

Nin further analyzes the power of Miller's images:

. . . Henry Miller was closer to Hieronymus Bosch, closer to Dali than Breton. To write about dreams he turned the world upside down and scrambled images, but it was the contents of the physical world he reshuffled, it was not a metaphysical experience, that is a physical image suffused with light, an X ray

of our psychic reconstructions. (180)

Miller's images or metaphors "explode" his characters, subjects, and situations, demonstrating how at the same time, after the "explosion" occurs, the reader is left with an image that, somehow, seems less than it is. This is my expansion/contraction theory as it applies to Miller's metaphors and as it can be appreciated in his Tropics trilogy.

Chapter 4

Surreal Metaphor in Tropic of Cancer

Criticism on Miller has spanned the gamut of opinion. He is considered either "pathetically immature," "a cornball saint," "a stream of boozy egotistical verbiage," or "an adornment of modern American literature," "our greatest living author" (Stuhlmann, "Who Is" 116). Henry Miller cannot be denied his extraordinariness. He is, indeed, a remarkable author. This quality of distinction, whether a critic finds it pleasing or disgusting, hinges, I believe, on Miller's surreal style and his ability to juxtapose images and create unforgettable metaphors. Such creation of imagery extraordinaire dominates Tropic of Cancer. For this extraperceptual talent Norman Mailer praises Miller with this metaphorical description:

Miller is the other half of literature. He is without fear of his end, a literary athlete at ease in earth, air or water. I am the river, he is always ready to say, I am the rapids and the placids, I'm the froth and the scum and twigs--what a roar as I go over the falls. Who gives a fart. Let others camp where they may. I am the river and there is nothing I can't join. (15)

When Tropic of Cancer first appeared, Lawrence Durrell called it the only important novel of this century (Shifreen viii) and Anais Nin, who wrote the "Preface" to it, noted how its "savage lyricism" appealed to readers to develop a new kind of perception. Her appeal is framed in the same surreal imagery as Miller's:

To regard a naked book such as this with the same critical eye that is turned upon even such diverse types as Lawrence, Breton, Joyce and Celine is a mistake. Rather let us try to look at it with the eyes of a Patagonian for whom all that is sacred and taboo in our world is meaningless. For the adventure which has brought the author to the spiritual ends of the earth is the history of every artist who, in order to express himself, must traverse the intangible gridirons of his imaginary world. The air pockets, the alkali wastes, the crumbling monuments, the putrescent cadavers, the crazy jig and maggot dance, all this forms a grand fresco of our epoch, done with shattering phrases and loud, strident, hammer strokes. (Miller Cancer xxxiii)

This is Nin's call for the "function of art to renew our perception" (25). She recommends freeing images from their old associations so as to sharpen the reader's insight (26). Nin praises Miller's talent for revolutionary writing, for realizing the imaginary, subconscious machinations of the mind.

Recurring over and over again within the novel are the images of cancer, as the metaphoric title forewarns. Paris, symbolic of civilization in decay, is described as "leperous," "diseased," "syphilitic," "decaying," "plague-

like" (Widmer 26). The "tropic" in the title of Tropic of Cancer refers to the spiritual and geographical line that separates life and death (26). One is able to obtain life, self-realization, even within the death of a stinking reality. J. D. Brown says that the narrator comes to live life primitively, expecting nothing from anyone, holding no one else's values; it is enough to live, simply live, as oneself (20). Secure in himself as a living, instinctual, prelapsarian being, Henry Miller, the narrator, is finally able to co-exist with but not escape completely the life around him. Miller seems to echo a Lawrentian theme that wishes for destruction of civilization before renewal of spirit can begin. Within death and apocalypse, therefore, resides life.

But Miller's philosophy is a bit different from Lawrence's, for such complete and unequivocal destruction of mankind is not evident in this novel. The other two novels that follow will express more this sense of destruction. Henry Miller the narrator will wait calmly for apocalypse, in the meantime providing the world with a model, an artist/hero, who is capable of surviving the misery, rejecting social ideology, and becoming a man of instinct and purity. Not conceding to social forces, the narrator creates a world of his own doing, of his own values, in a symbolic move to free all people imprisoned in the wreckage of the 20th century. Leon Lewis agrees that resistance to

the reality and experience justly defines the narrator's self. Through rejection of the world and self-alienation, he comes to know and accept himself and stay healthy (Writings 81). After the world perishes, man will pick himself back up again through art and love.

The theme, caught up metaphorically within the title of the novel, portrays a diseased, fragmented, progress-ridden, materialistic, war-ridden, cerebral society that has become virtually meaningless. Miller's style enhances the theme of a society torn and stripped of decency. Miller "intensif[ies] the schizophrenia by the disjunctions of surreal rhetoric" (Widmer 27). And as the Henry Miller of the novel asserts his independence over grim reality, so does the artist exert his revolutionary spirit by writing surrealistically. How better to describe what the characters are going through emotionally, alongside the absurdity of Paris, than to unite the forces of reality and the irrational? In other words, Miller needed the surreal blend, the super-reality, in order to demonstrate the insanity that the 20th-century reality provoked. Surrealism served as a bridge between reality and self-realization. I believe this is what Hassan is referring to when he says: "The anti-form of Cancer amounts simply to this: a complex gesture of the imagination that renders in language the unity of mind and nature, knowledge and experience, artist

and man (Silence 66). Brown called the use of surrealism in Cancer a technique of "revitalization" (19). Gordon, in The Mind and Art of Henry Miller, says: "The fantasy passages allow the narrator to integrate his own past life and the episodes and characters of the present with his major themes--the birth of independence, the discovery of the lines of the body" (87). Miller's is the theme of self--life (Hassan Silence 59):

It may be that we are doomed, that there is
no hope for us, any of us, but if that
is so then let us set up a last agonizing,
bloodcurdling howl, a screech of defiance,
a war-whoop! Away with lamentation! Away
with elegies and dirges! Away with
biographies and histories, and libraries
and museums! Let the dead eat the dead.
Let us living ones dance about the rim
of the crater, a last expiring dance.
But a dance! (Miller Cancer 257)

This is Miller's hymn to natural, primitive, instinctive man--man of sex, of food, farts, and feces--of essence, of self. If we are to be doomed within the confines of society, then we must live according to our feelings.

This theme, then, has been explored, in good part, by the application of surrealistic modes of production and metaphor-making. Primarily this entails the juxtaposition of incongruous ideas or objects. In surveying the many surreal metaphors that pervade Cancer, I have found this quality the most pervasive. His technique for bringing about incongruity agrees with and also differs from the methods that Inez Hedges has formulated. Basically, his

surreal passages come in chunks, wedged between moments of reality. The narrator thinks in surreal imagery to enhance reminiscence, dreams, and the workings of his unconscious, and any emotional, philosophic commentary. Black comedy, a trait of surreal writing, is more evident in the more realistic, straightforward passages.

What I find most interesting in Miller's use of surreal metaphor is the movement of expansion and contraction that occurs within the image as the reader visualizes the juxtaposition of incongruities. Of all the critics I have consulted, none have noticed this expanding/contracting movement. But one biographer, Brassai, author of Henry Miller grandeur nature, has felt something close to what I do when I visualize Miller's metaphors:

At the beginning of our relationship I was confused by Miller's images. Like certain skyrocketers which, once exploded and extinguished, suddenly send out others whose brilliance wipes out those which preceded them. Miller's images unroll, proliferate, pile up in a baroque profusion. . . . It took me a while to understand that the author of the Tropics doesn't use metaphors to illuminate his subject but that the subject's purpose is to unleash a whole generation of images. In him the image becomes an end in itself, in an autonomous process of creation. It grows freely, expands out of itself, dilates under the influence of endless flashing explosions. An unstoppable impulse drags it through a frenetic uproar, far, far away from its point of departure. . . . (qtd. in Kessler 314)

One should note how the expansion/contraction theory operates within Cancer.

First Miller's surreal metaphors or images follow some of the patterns that Inez Hedges sets up in her book Language of Revolt. Miller does "mismatch" or throw together incongruous ideas or objects in all four categories: subject/verb, noun/adjective, possession, and "is" clauses. It is not so important to see how these mismatches actually become mismatches, however--for example, how the image "bleeding cinder" is comprised of a living adjective with a non-living noun. The realization of the incongruity comes naturally as one reads and visualizes. It occurs almost instinctively, by "chance" as the French surrealists would say--"automatically." It is, therefore, not so critical that the reader recognize the living quality juxtaposed with the non-living.

More important is how the combined image moves--inflates and deflates--in the reader's mind's eye. In short, the eye visualizes the incongruous image first as an expansion, in which additional and oppositional descriptions or properties are used to flesh out or enhance the picture of the referent. At the same time, however, the mind perceives a shrinkage or contraction in judgment of that referent. This process can also be understood as a kind of exploding and imploding. Again, I suggest that the prevailing image, particularly a noun, first expands visually by the addition of the incongruous adjective or

verb, whether it be living, non-living, mental, non-mental, spatially-extended, or otherwise. In this case of the "bleeding cinder," "cinder" first gains in definition and perception to include, along with its scorched quality, its dryness, its emptiness, those qualities of "bleeding": liquidity, the visceral, flowingness, redness. At the same time, the incongruity of the mismatch tends to contract, break down, or add negative qualities to the dominant referent, making it bloody and "bleeding"--ailing, weak, sick, injured, dying, etc. For the most part, but not in all cases of these mismatches, the expansion contracts down, that is, the referent or main image is reduced to a negative condition. I found it interesting that, of the hundreds of examples of surreal metaphor I gleaned from the novel, most, probably three-quarters of them, contracted into negativity. Very few simply stayed expanded or remained on a neutral or more positive level. This expansion/contraction theory helps to support the theme of entropy and disintegration that marks the 20th century, for most of the surreal images are there to negate or contract much contemporary existence.

What follows is an extensive compilation of surreal metaphors that follow the pattern of Hedge's study. One should note, not particularly the "how" of the incongruity of the images but rather the expansion/contraction movement that takes place within them. Often the

expansion/contraction can be better visualized when these examples are set within their context. Ideally each sample should be looked at in context.

Here is a selection of subject/verb mismatches from
Tropic of Cancer:

mimosas weep (7); eyes perspiring (9); a thousand eyes, noses, fingers, legs, bottles, windows, purses, saucers all glaring (19) [notice the subject that expands, also, because it is a list]; a fetus watching (20) [this has negative context surrounding it]; windows . . . are festering (63); misery dribbles (96); trees begin to screech (161); sun bleeds (165); Paris . . . shudders (166); trees tangled (168); cancer and syphilis . . . flames and dances (185); sex . . . was slopping (204); men and women ignited (251); words gnawing (251); marrow churned (251); tongues pounded and clanged (251); gun carriages . . . vomit and drool (252); firmament sagged (252); ocean bleeding (252); skeleton dancing (254); world has slopped (256); trees screeching (277); donkeys sobbing (287).

In such subject/verb examples the subject accepts and yet is affected by the incongruous action that follows. The significance of the subject/verb mismatches is that things of this world perform actions that are normally impossibly performed. In other words, the activity acted out by the earth's creatures and objects is chaotic, perverted, abnormal. In this world trees screech and tongues pound in reaction to the misery surrounding them.

The incongruous images are juxtaposed according to logical, normal syntax; they can be understood by a reader.

For example, in "men and women . . . ignited," the mind first pictures "men and women." With the addition of "ignited," the people take on flammable qualities and become objects of fire. At the same time the word "ignited" literally and figuratively burns up the subject, annihilating it, physically and spiritually or psychologically. Men and women who are ignited in this society are less than men and women: they are burnt-out, a civilization in conflagration.

These images deserve further analysis. In the above examples Miller's subjects are specific, though usually of the human or non-human, but still living, kind. There is little evidence, as Hedges has discovered in her compilations of surreal metaphors, that Miller used non-substantial nouns often. Consequently Miller's images make a striking visual impact on the reader, for he avoids abstractions or else, as we shall see, makes all abstractions concrete by "equalizing" them to specific nouns. Also, Miller's verbs are associated, in general, with the visceral--actions linked with bodily functions--actions that are primal, instinctive, involuntary, and reactive to human emotion. Specifically, the writing summons the reader's emotions through what I call "gut empathy"--we respond to the visceral imagery with a strong, emotional reaction. To actions such as "weep," "perspiring," "glaring," "festering," "dribbles," "to

screech," "bleeds," "shudders," "slopping," "gnawing," "churned," "vomit and drool," "bleeding," "sprouting," "sobbing," the reader identifies instinctively, though probably not consciously, because he can "feel" these behaviors as they have occurred to him during his life. The imagery is felt, so to speak, on a lower, subconscious, non-mental level. Miller's appeal is to our marrow, to the blood that drives us all forward and controls our instincts and bodily functions.

One should note the basic categories that the subject/verb mismatches fall into: a nonhuman but living subject that assumes human activity; humans or human parts performing impossible actions; nonhumans and nonliving subjects performing impossible acts. The category of the nonhuman but living subject that takes on human activity includes the following: "mimosas weep," "trees begin to screech," "sun [a living entity, depending on your perception of it] bleeds," "Paris shudders," "trees tangled," "cancer and syphilis . . . flames and dances," "ocean bleeding," "trees screeching," "donkeys sobbing." Note that the actions are not quiet or non-substantial. All have visceral, involuntary, physical qualities. The action is visual, often violent and gut-wrenching, and that is how the reader responds. This is not the kind of imagery that can be wholly intellectualized because its appeal is not only to

the mind but also to the human body and soul. Our response is animal-like, instinctive, subconscious.

Miller's category that includes human subjects or human parts teamed with impossible activity are as follows: "eyes perspiring," "a thousand eyes, noses, finger, legs . . . all glaring," "a fetus watching," "men and women ignited," "tongues pounded and clanged," "skeleton dancing." Again, the action is violent, primal, suited to the manic chaos of humans in hell.

Finally, in the subject/verb examples, the nonhuman and nonliving perform impossible acts: ". . . bottles, windows, purses, saucers all glaring," "misery dribbles," "sex . . . was slopping," "words gnawing," "gun carriages . . . vomit and drool," "firmament sagged," "horns sprouting," "world has slopped," "silence descends." The incongruity of the actor and the act creates a chaotic perception for the reader. Chaos is, ultimately, Miller's rendition of our modern world.

The next category of Hedge's is that of the noun/adjective. Here are mismatches of adjectives with nouns in Cancer:

crepuscular melange (4); laboratory cunt (7)
foggy fart (7); glass ass (8); thyroid eyes (8)
Lesbian air (15); bloody lights (16); marble
legs (19); consumptive notes (19);
intellectual tree (38); poisonous spring (42);
leprous streets (42); dandruff eyes (58);
sawdust dolls (70); human centipede (88);
electric dawn (161); syphilitic mermaids
(161); perfumed eyes (165); gangrened ducts

(165); spiderish ferocity (181); liver ideas (242); unstitched wound (246); metallurgical eyes (248); fucked-out crater (250); howling pit (250); calcium livery (251); spiked mouth (251); iron malice (251); maggot words (251); slime wash (251); hallucinated sky (252); imaginary feet (252); bloated pages (253); drunken vomit (254); rubber litany (258); epicene caterwauling (261); lecherous-looking turnip (265); intestinal apparatus (267); cloudy, absinthe-like drool (280); slithering, harplike thuds (281); boneless Dijon (281); yellow hangovers (282); velvet cortex and velvet vertebrae (317).

In the above examples it should be fairly clear how the mind accommodates to my inflation/deflation theory of surreal imagery. Yet the reader's mind may process it so rapidly or instinctively that he may not perceive the expansion/contraction movement. It almost seems to be a simple case of addition and subtraction. Whatever word the reader chooses as the dominant word, the referent, initially takes on a larger meaning with the addition of the other idea. At the same time the image takes on a more negative characteristic. Because the reader is dealing with incongruity or pieces that do not fit together, there is a kind of mental twisting that can also be explained as a twirling and untwirling in meaning or an exploding and imploding. Each side acts upon, expands, and then contracts the other.

In contrast to the categories Hedges has classified, Miller's adjective/noun mismatches contain very few of the non-durational adjectives with the durative nouns, nor does

he employ adjectives normally attributed to spatially extended nouns with a noun lacking spatial extension. His adjective/noun mismatches are visual, violent, hellish images. He creates this visual effect, in part, by taking a noun that is commonly thought of as a noun and using it as an adjective. The image resembles a double noun except that the noun-changed-to-an-adjective assumes a more subordinate position to the main noun. Such examples are "laboratory cunt," "glass ass," "thyroid eyes," "Lesbian air," "marble legs," "dandruff eyes," "sawdust dolls," "human centipede," "liver ideas," "calcium livery," "iron malice," "maggot words," "slime wash," "rubber litany," "velvet cortex and velvet vertebrae."

If the reader looks only at the adjectives, he sees descriptions of disease and abnormality: "laboratory," "thyroid," "bloody," "poisonous," "consumptive," "leprous," "syphilitic," "gangrened," "unstitched," "maggot," "hallucinated," "bloated," "drunken," "incestuous," "intestinal," "boneless." These adjectives, derived from the diseased human body, reflect the diseased human condition to which Miller felt man was victim.

In conjunction with the adjectives of disease and degeneration are nouns that are visceral, showing the body parts and innards of man: "cunt," "fart," "ass," "eyes," "liver," "legs," "ducts," "wound," "mouth," "feet," "drool,"

"cortex and vertebrae."

Very few of the images are what the grammarian would call abstract: "crepuscular melange," "consumptive notes," "liver ideas," "iron malice," "incestuous wish," "epicene caterwauling." All others are highly visual. The reader internalizes physical disease and disintegration and through this disease feels the inner disease of modern man: "marble legs," "leprous streets," "dandruff eyes," "human centipede," "syphilitic mermaids," "perfumed eyes," "metallurgical eyes," "fucked-out crater," "howling pit," "maggot words," "slime wash," "bloated pages," "drunken vomit," "lecherous-looking turnip," "intestinal apparatus," "boneless Dijon," and "yellow hangovers."

The next category of Hedge's is that of possession:

cancer of time (1); skin of time (2);
tongue full of lice (7); canal full of
glass and splinters (7); tide of semen (16);
veins of the Himalayas (165); menagerie of a
brainpan (168); color of human brains (198);
fish of the air (244); room of lockjaw (247);
carapace of indifference (249); diadem of
sweat and anguish (250); fornications of
the planets (250); ecstasy of myriad blazing
suns (250); eyes of justice (252); door
of the womb (252); flatulence and tediousness
of their works (252); machinery of humanity
(254); vaults of the flesh (254); lane of dead
bones (279); Spines of sardine bones (279);
chant of the nightwind (280); choking gargle
of louse-eaten saints (281); sanity of this
slaughterhouse geometry (282); mountain of
skulls (282); odor of repetition (282);
dregs of human sympathy (283);

Notice again the ballooning and shrinking that occur within Miller's incongruous images. Take, as an example, the

phrase "vaults of flesh." A reader visualizes first flesh piled up en masse--this expands the image of flesh. Yet, there also occurs a shrinkage, a kind of negative feeling when one considers that with the addition of "vaults" there is a sense of death, imprisonment, iron-hardness [which contrasts perfectly to the softness of "flesh"], entrapment and unyieldingness. While "vaults" fleshes out the image of "flesh" it eventually makes "flesh" less "fleshy" and more unfeeling, inhuman, even deathlike, as in the idea of a coffin. This kind of reduction, then, becomes a unifying agent in the book because in its reduction it portrays a reduced world.

It is also significant that the construction is dealing with possession. Possession implies, for the most part, an ownership which is primarily desired on the part of the owner. In Miller's possession mismatches, the objects of possession are undesirable, reduced to the animal, the atomistic, the elemental: "skin," "tide," "fornications" "eyes," etc. Any qualities that a thing may take on are negative and endow that thing, then, with onerous qualities.

In the category of mismatches dealing with possession, Miller does include the possession of a substantial by an insubstantial noun: "cancer of time," "skin of time," "carapace of indifference," "diadem of . . . anguish," "eyes of justice," "flatulence and tediousness of their works,"

"chant of the nightwind," "sanity of this slaughterhouse geometry," "odor of repetition," "dregs of human sympathy." It appears that in the above examples, the reader is able to visualize something that cannot, ordinarily, be visualized. For the surrealist author, the real is juxtaposed alongside the imaginary. In these examples the real is conjoined by the abstract, as in "eyes of justice." The effect of the incongruity on the reader is to take him to a higher, more complex and involved reality. The abstraction takes on definite, visual borders with the addition of the substantial noun.

If the reader looks at the possessor in the examples shown, he will note the primitive quality and the prehistoric, uncivilized state of man evoked: "veins of the Himalayas," "fornications of the planets," "ecstasy of myriad blazing suns," "door of the womb," "chant of the nightwind," "choking gargle of louse-eaten saints," "sanity of this slaughterhouse geometry." The powerful, cosmic examples of "fornications of the planets" and "ecstasy of myriad blazing suns" contrast with the moth-eaten civilization of modernity. These more positive images contrast with the negative ones that reflect the modern world: "choking gargle of louse-eaten saints" and "sanity of this slaughterhouse geometry."

As always with Miller, the possessors are largely visceral, parasitic, dealing with distasteful bodily

functions, excretions, and disease: "tongue full of lice," "canal full of glass and splinters," "tide of semen," "menagerie of a brainpan," "color of human brains," "room of lockjaw," "diadem of sweat and anguish," "door of the womb," "machinery of humanity," "vaults of the flesh," "lane of dead bones," "Spines of sardine bones," "mountain of skulls," "state of constipation," "dregs of human sympathy," "piece of live manure." In Tropic of Cancer these body-function images serve to denigrate modern man and his condition; however, in Black Spring images related to visceral functions sometimes indicate essentialness of self and instinctivism, redeeming Millerian concepts. For this novel, however, the "body language" has negative connotations.

Hedge's final category comprises what she calls "is" clauses. I prefer to call them predicate nominatives, thus avoiding any confusion with verb phrases containing any form of the verb "to be":

novel is gob of spit (2); world is a cancer (2); chaos is the score upon which reality is written (2); He is a portable trunk (4); Llona--[is] wild ass (7); mind is amphitheater (8); world is a cage (9); words are chicle (10); You are the sieve (11); voice is . . . a . . . weapon (13); thinker is . . . a spavined horse (14); ideas are straw (27); wife is straw (27); I am the machine (28); I am the void (28); Paris is obstetrical instrument (29); Paris is cradle of artificial births (29) [sometimes the adjective is needed to see the complete "shrinkage" of the image]; Europe--a

symphony in B-mol (41); face is a skull
(50); talk is sawdust (59); words are
loneliness (59); you are a big, empty
bladder (60); body is a mass [of geography]
(63); life is big intestine (69); pore
was . . . a window (74); Kepi . . . a
human tick (85); world is a menagerie (99);
world is mad slaughterhouse (182); cradles
[of civilization] are [putrid] sinks
. . . [charnel] house (182); tanks . . .
bloated toads (183).

Such a "microscopic" study of surreal metaphor in Tropic of Cancer may seem exhaustive, but a thorough study is necessary because the imagery is what unites the style to the themes of the novel. In the category of "is" clauses or predicate nominatives, the images undergo what I shall call an "equalizing" process. The subject of the "is" clause equates to its nominative form; it may be represented by an equals sign: "novel = gob of spit," "world = cancer," "He = a trunk," "Llona = wild ass," etc. In many of these examples those qualities that are human or of our modern world are equated with negative or nonessential, meaningless objects: "novel is gob of spit," "world is a cancer," "He is a portable trunk," "Llona--wild ass," "mind is amphitheater," "world is a cage," "words are chicle," "You are the sieve," "voice is . . . a . . . weapon," "thinker is . . . a spavined horse," "ideas are straw," "wife is straw," "I am the machine." In many of these examples the nature of the nonessential object is made of metal or a flimsy, dusty material such as straw. The effect is one of harshness, brittleness, and barrenness and corresponds to Miller's

sense of the twentieth century. More of these examples are "I am the void," "Paris is obstetrical instrument," "Paris is cradle of artificial births," "face is a skull," "talk is sawdust," "words are loneliness," "you are a big, empty bladder," "body is a mass [of geography]," "life is a big intestine," "pore was . . . a window," "Kepi . . . a human tick," "world is mad slaughterhouse," "cradles [of civilization] are [putrid] sinks . . . [charnel] house." In nearly all the above examples something either human or belonging to the human world is equated to something that is harsh, brittle, of the void, animal-ish, excretory, nonessential or meaningless.

I have found other major categories in which Miller develops his surreal metaphors. These include nouns and verbs with a prepositional phrase (adjective and adverb phrases), participles and participle phrases, a verb with a direct object, "like" phrases (these are quite numerous), adjective clauses, and lists. Again, it is not so important to see how one of these surreal metaphors is made. Nor is it so important that one recognize the grammatical pattern of the metaphor, though in some instances, such as in subject/verb, noun/adjective, possessive constructions, and "is" clauses, the constructions themselves are good for their analogical qualities and ability to give certain undesirable characteristics and actions to subjects and

nouns and verbs.

Similarly, it is revealing that "like" clauses expand and then reduce through analogy. Certainly the adjective phrases and adverb phrases can be understood in much the same way as the subject/verb and noun/adjective examples because they retain that same quality of the verb and its acting ability and the adjective with its descriptiveness. As well can the participle phrases be linked to noun/adjective relationships, for participles modify and describe nouns. Again, any noun with its adjective phrase becomes expanded by the addition of the description, just as a verb's action becomes more definite and expanded by an adverb phrase. Within these constructions is the ballooning and shrinking of the image--subject, noun, or verb. For the most part I cite the different grammatical structures in an attempt to organize and regularize the incongruity. Any adjective phrases beginning with the preposition "of" I included in Hedge's "possession" section. My expansion/contraction theory seems to apply to most of Miller's imagery.

In this next section I include the adjective and adverb phrases that are mismatches with their nouns and verbs, respectively. First the adjective phrases:

scene in which the fetus is dug up [object of preposition is an adjective clause] (5); sieve through which my anarchy strains (11); coffee grounds in my beret (13); notes of hysteria, perversion, leprosy (19); fetus with a cigar

(20); cable to the fetus (21); fetus with the long, juicy cigar (21); humus of his ideology (30); poem without a tongue (30); charwomen with roses between their legs (39); skull in which there are buried a pair (50); pair of dead clams (50); whore with wooden stump (72); jungle world in which the lean spirits roam with sharp claws [this contains an adverb phrase] (99); odalisques with tangled manes drenched with sap [two phrases here--one with addition of a participle phrase] (166); air with stagnant sperm (166); fetus with the dull, syrupy look of an angel (193); rapids with the sulfurous breath of the dragon [two phrases] (198); a snail with wings (247); cobwebs out of the sky (250); Equator [with] her red-feathered legs (251); syphilis with her wings outstretched (253); subterranean vaults of the flesh (254); dynamos between their legs (257); intestinal apparatus with a nose for dead meat [two adj. phrases here] (267); Spines . . . of sardine bones (278); earth in its dark corridors (282); anvil chorus with pulleys and strings (283).

Again notice how the expansion/contraction theory works within these images. Take, for example, "air with stagnant sperm." "Air" becomes more than air--more dense with the addition of sperm. It also takes on qualities of life, the primal nature of "sperm." But, then, almost simultaneously, the air takes on a fetidness, a disgusting aspect that reduces its quality.

All these images deserve explanation. The images all combine some element or characteristic of the human with the nonhuman or nonliving. For example, "scene in which the fetus is dug up," "sieve through which my anarchy strains," "coffee grounds in my beret," "fetus with a cigar," "cable to the fetus," "fetus with the long, juicy cigar," all

combine a quality that belongs to people with an object of relative unimportance: "scene," "sieve," "coffee grounds," "notes," "cigar," "cable." The reader can see the combining of the human with the negative or nonessential nonhuman in the other examples: "humus of his ideology," "poem without a tongue," "charwomen with roses between their legs," "skull in which there are buried a pair of dead clams," "whore with a wooden stump," "odalisques with tangled manes drenched with sap," "air with stagnant sperm," "fetus with the dull, syrupy look of an angel," "Equator [with] her red-feathered legs," "syphilis with her wings outstretched," "dynamos between their legs," "Spines . . . of sardine bones."

The other six examples do not mix human with nonhuman, instead conjoining two images that are simply incongruous: "jungle world in which the lean spirits roam with sharp claws," "rapids with the sulfurous breath of the dragon," "a snail with wings," "cobwebs out of the sky," "intestinal apparatus with a nose for dead meat," "earth in its dark corridors," "anvil chorus with pulleys and strings." Miller's chaotic, manic, perverse imagery appeals to the lower levels of life; this world belongs to a hell that is earth and modern society. Again, in these examples, the reader should note the deflation of the images in the separation of the body parts: "legs," "flesh," "intestines," "bones," "spines," "tongue," "fetus." In the images of shattered pieces of humanity, Miller is saying that man's

world is coming apart; like our bodies, it is breaking down.

Miller's adverb phrases or verbs with prepositional phrases are also incongruous and, therefore, surreal:

fills with a rustling murmur (6); crowned . . . with a whiskey bottle [should be read in context] (7); spat in his blood (8); [forest] closed on them, on their bones and skulls, on their lace tufa [three phrases] (10); claws away at her adagio (24); swimming on the face [of time] (27); subside into the humus (30); searches in her intestines (36); [spring] to burst from the manholes (42); glows with a cold, electric fire (52); [earth] is smeared with frozen grease (63); [light] curving under the vault [of my ribs] (74); [ribs] hang over a hollow nave (74); [penis] is lying on the sidewalk (127); clogged with strangled embryos (165); shudders with bright, gasping orgasms (166); reveled in maggots (181); listens with cabbage ears (183); swimming in a menstrual sea (193); spill out in a grand schizophrenic rush (246); rolling in your logarithmic grave (247); bled with anguish (251); turned to drool (251); [woman] turned to night (251); dances with lightning (256); to pee over the world (256); bombinating from the rectum (266); [streets] turn away on their crooked elbows (286); drinking down the dregs of human sympathy (283); [silence] descends in volcanic chutes (286).

In the case of the prepositional phrases rounding out or expanding the verbs, in most of the incongruous imagery that I have found, they also downgrade or make that verb more revolting or disgusting. Take "spill out in a grand schizophrenic rush." This adverb phrase broadens the idea of "spill"; yet as the spill rushes, it does so with irrationality, with abnormality. Again, Miller's surreal imagery usually ends up leaving a negative impression in

order to convey the negativity of contemporary life, love, and sexuality.

Many of these adverb phrases invoke a violent sexuality in their imagery: "[penis] is lying on the sidewalk," "clogged with strangled embryos," "shudders with bright, gasping orgasms," "swimming in a menstrual sea." Others deal with excretory functions or in some way detail some of the more disgusting acts to which a body is prone: "spat in his blood," "[forest] closed on them, on their bones and skulls, on their lace tufa," "searches in her intestines," "[light] curving under the vault [of my ribs]," "[ribs] hang over a hollow nave," "listens with cabbage ears," "spill out in a grand schizophrenic rush," "bled with anguish," "turned to drool," "to pee over the world," "bombinating from the rectum," "[streets] turn away on their crooked elbows." In the above examples these scatological, sexual, and bodily-functioning images endow the verbs with a kind of almost perverse delight with filth. Miller forces the reader to wallow in the muck of humanity. Miller's modern world is active, reveling in the dirt and stainings of its humanity, as his verbs tell: "spat," "claws," "swimming," "subside," "searches," "to burst," "glows," "is smeared," "clogged," "shudders," "reveled," "spill," "bled," "lances," "bombinating," "drinking."

What follows is a compilation of "like" phrases I chose not to include with the adjective or adverb phrases

because there were so many of them that it seemed Miller relied heavily on them in his image-making. I also supply some of the context around them so that one can visualize the incongruity and the expansion/contraction working.

Tania like a big seed (5); [he fell out] like a dead clam (7); voice like pea soup (8); people like lice (12); erection like a piece of lead with wings on it (18); [Elsa's playing music] sounded like broken pots and skulls clanking (24); pedal like a tower of dung (25); eyes like bellybuttons (25); Breasts like ripe, red cabbage (35); [She sits] like a dead storage battery (35); [Moldorf] . . . like a fat toad (35); belly like a patent-leather shoe (36); laughing like a fat worm (36); like a leper [with crabs gnawing at my entrails] (38); gargoyles like an "idee-fixe" [in the mind of a monomaniac] (39); thoroughfares . . . like a big chancrous cock (40); city sprouts like a huge organism (40); Rue Amelot hides like a slumbering lizard (42); sky smiles like a piece of old china (48); butter . . . like the big toe of a cadaver (61); accordion writhes like a sack of snakes (64); notes like glass balls (74); glands like a dog's testicles (82); members look like withered leaves (88); [two people having sex] like a machine which has slipped its cogs (144); day [is sneaking in] like a leper (161); sun bleeds like a broken rectum (165); wine gurgling like a sewer (172); Paris like a cancer (179); [swollen with the future,] like a gumboil (183); One is ejected [into this world] like a dirty little mummy (183); windows like empty sockets of eyes (185); [artists cling to you] like lice (187); China . . . crumbling like a dinosaur (198); Paris is like a whore (209); images . . . like ants pouring out of a crack in a sidewalk (246); sorrow widened like the bow of a dreadnought (251); dirge . . . like a million heads of cauliflower waiting (260); priest functions like an alarm clock (261); runts . . . like dyed skeletons packed in excelsior (279); men and women like broods of vultures (267)walking like a

crab you prong with a dirty fork (280);
church . . . like a dead mule (280);
squat . . . like a dead mule (280);
wind rushed like white hair streaming
wild (280); greasy sky like a punctured balloon
(280); Christian chant . . . like an avalanche
(281); like he's pouring rubies down his
gullet (283); world like a quagmire (284);
smile . . . like a meteoric flash over the
rim of the lost world (285); silence like
Niagara Falls in my ears (286);

Note that the "like" phrases are primarily similes, but some act as adverb phrases. These "like" metaphors have an elemental characteristic to them-- a biological, basic appeal. Consider "Tania like a big seed," "like a dead clam," "voice like pea soup," "people like lice." The reader should scan the list for examples of how Miller "reduces" his noun to a very simple, almost chemical, elemental object. Miller uses animals to identify his humans: "[he fell out] like a dead clam," "people like lice," "[Moldorf] . . . like a fat toad," "laughing like a fat worm," "like a leper [with crabs gnawing at my entrails]," "city sprouts like a huge organism," "Rue Amelot hides like a slumbering lizard," "accordion writhes like a sack of snakes," "glands like a dog's testicles," "[artists cling to you] like lice," "China . . . crumbling like a dinosaur," "images . . . like ants pouring out of a crack in the sidewalk," "men and women like broods of vultures," "walking like a crab you prong with a dirty fork," "church . . . like a dead mule," "squat . . . like a dead mule." Even animals represent baseness to Miller. Animal images do not

elevate the human.

In all the examples of "like" phrases the object of the phrases' attentions are real and not shocking. With the addition of the incongruous "like" phrase, the real object becomes perverted and surreal. In the example "Tania like a big seed," Tania is a character the reader recognizes, but with the "like" phrase she takes on a larger and, at the same time, more elemental, reductive meaning; she is a "seed." In this section of the book, Miller is describing Sylvester's wife whom Miller desires. But like society, Tania is tainted, too, as well as Carol, described as a woman who devours a man until he falls out of her--"like a dead clam." The reader should note other "real" nouns that become perverse through the "like" phrases: "voice like pea soup," "people like lice," "erection like a piece of lead with wings on it," "pedal like a tower of dung," "eyes like bellybuttons," "breasts like ripe, red cabbage," "[She sits] like a dead storage battery," "belly like a patent-leather shoe," "thoroughfares . . . like a big chancrous cock," "butter . . . like the big toe of a cadaver," "day [is sneaking in] like a leper," "sun bleeds like a broken rectum."

Again the text contains imagery of disease: the sun image above, "Paris like a cancer," "[swollen with the future] like a gumboil," "[artists cling to you] like lice."

Since there is no plot to Tropic of Cancer, the imagery does not, except in a few cases mentioned above, characterize anyone or anything in particular, but it does characterize the feelings of the narrator. For the most part, the surreal imagery does serve the main themes of Cancer--disintegration of man and disgust with modern society.

In the "like"-phrase examples Miller joins the human with the nonliving and nonhuman: "priest functions like an alarm clock," "[two people having sex] like a machine which has slipped its cogs," "One is ejected [into this world] like a dirty little mummy," "runts . . . like dyed skeletons packed in excelsior," "Tania like a big seed," "[he fell out] like a dead clam," "[She sits] like a dead storage battery," "belly like a patent-leather shoe." I have already noted these examples where Miller also matches the human with the living but nonhuman--animals. He also matches an ordinary object with an something it could not be: "voice like pea soup," "erection like a piece of lead with wings on it," "[Elsa's playing music] sounded like broken pots and skulls clanking," "pedal like a tower of dung," "gargoyles like an 'idée-fixe,'" "butter . . . like the big toe of a cadaver," "notes like glass balls," "members look like withered leaves," "day [is sneaking in] like a leper," "wine gurgling like a sewer," "Paris like a cancer," "windows like empty sockets of eyes," "Paris is like a whore," "sorrow widened like the bow of a

dreadnought," "dirge . . . like a million heads of cauliflower wailing," "wind rushed like white hair streaming wild," "greasy sky like a punctured balloon," "Christian chant . . . like an avalanche," "world like a quagmire," "smile like a meteoric flash over the rim of the lost world," "silence like Niagara Falls in my ears." All these examples are mismatches of objects with something that in reality they cannot be or do. Such is surrealism, and such is Henry Miller's perception of his world--a mixed-up, dissolute batch of incongruous values and opinions.

Miller also uses participles extensively in his surreal imagery. I provide the nouns for context along with the participles and participle phrases:

He [Moldorf] is a portable trunk filled with innumerable drawers (4); voice synchronized to the shadow of a pinhead (8); Mongols glazed like eggplants (10); brain plate covered with figures (10); Tyrolean tablecloths dipped in lysol (11); bedroom, breathing regularly through the gills (20); He . . . quivering like a toothache (36); crabs gnawing at my entrails (38); trees, nourished by the paving stones (38); A Man Cut in Slices (39); thoroughfares . . . drained of their pus (40); urchins marked with the forceps (40); Charles the Silly eaten away by ulcers and vermin, gnawing a bone (41); [narrator] Standing in the courtyard with a glass eye (63); city palpitating like a heart just removed (63); sidewalks swarming with maggots (68); worms crawling over the scenery like an army of red ants (71); nerves like glass balls dancing on a million jets of water (74); sex running through the street like a sewer (158); flesh veiled

with a thousand eyes (165); tangled manes
 drenched with sap (166); drunk with lecherous
 eczema of the future (183); bosom distended,
 swollen with sewer gas (195); China rotting
 away, crumbling to dust like a dinosaur (198);
 eyes seemed swimming in sperm (232);
 [vulva is analogized to] unstitched wound (246);
 breasts covered with spiders (247); world used
 up and polished like a leper's skull (248);
 fame walking on crutches (251); [fame]
 dwindled by the skyscrapers (251); [fame]
 chewed to a frazzle (251); marrow churned
 to pity (251); the body bursting (251);
 maggot words gnawing through the mattress
 (251); Slime wash and sapphires slipping,
 sluicing through the gay neurons (251);
 poem written with flesh (253); skeleton
 dancing in the wind (254); serpents issuing
 from the rotted tongue (254); bloated
 pages of ecstasy slimed with excrement (254);
 medievalism, rocking back and forth with
 low moans, jumping out at you from the eaves,
 hanging like broken-necked criminals from
 the gargoyles (279-80); mind locked with
 ruin and frost (281); streets . . . wheeling
 the church hind side front, mowing down the
 statues, flattening the monuments, uprooting
 the trees, stiffening the grass, sucking
 the fragrance out of the earth (281); bat
 slime dripping aloft and clanging with
 pasteboard golden wings (282); smile
 thrown across an abyss (284); night,
 dagger-pointed, drunk as a maniac (285);
 Time beating away like a meat ax (287);
 river flowing through me (318).

Because of the fragmentary style, it was hard, in some
 cases, to determine whether Miller was using a word as a
 verb or a participle. At times I had to dig back to the
 very beginning of a passage of automatic writing to find the
 noun the participle joined. Again, taking an example from
 the numerous ones above--"night, dagger-pointed, drunk as a
 maniac"--one can see how the visual impact of the noun is
 intensified or enhanced by the participles "dagger-pointed"

and "drunk." At nearly the same time, the reader perceives the negative, reductive effect that the participles have upon "night."

Certainly this imagery is very similar to what the reader has seen before. His images are broken into body parts, equated with sex and genitalia and excretory functions, and compared to images belonging in hell out of the medievalism of Hieronymous Bosch: "world used up and polished like a leper's skull," "maggot words gnawing through the mattress," "slime wash and sapphires slipping, sluicing through the gay neurons," "skeleton dancing through the wind," "serpents issuing from the rotted tongue," "medievalism rocking back and forth with low moans, jumping out at you from the eaves, hanging like broken-necked criminals from the gargoyles."

The primevalism of the images is evident in the "slime" and the amoebic descriptions: "Slime wash and sapphires slipping, sluicing through the gay neurons," "bat slime dripping aloft and clanging with pasteboard, golden wings," "maggot words gnawing through the mattress," "worms crawling over the scenery like an army of red ants," "eyes seemed swimming in sperm."

Too, some of these metaphors appear to come directly out of the disjointed art of the French surrealists: "He [Moldorf] is a portable trunk filled with innumerable

drawers," "A Man Cut in Slices," "tangled manes drenched with sap," "fame walking on crutches," "skeleton dancing in the wind," "serpents issuing from the rotted tongue," "streets . . . wheeling the church hind side front, mowing down the statues, flattening the monuments, uprooting the trees, stiffening the grass, sucking the fragrance out of the earth." These metaphors appear to spring from the paintings of Dali, de Chirico, and Magritte.

Since metaphors in the participle form comprise most of the examples, I would like to explain the images as they occur and evoke themes within Miller's story. The beginning finds the reader introduced to Miller's early acquaintances, mostly writers, in Paris: Van Norden, Sylvester, Carl, Boris, and Moldorf, a writer who, like Miller, is "word drunk" (Cancer 4). Miller's description of him is surreal: "He is a portable trunk filled with innumerable drawers." The description of Moldorf the Jew continues through page ten; the descriptions are surreal and unflattering, for Miller considers Moldorf just one of the representatives of a failed humanity. From this point Miller expresses his disgust with Jews, an attitude he would later abandon as he befriended Jewish people later in life: "Mongols glazed like eggplants, "brain plate covered with figures," "Tyrolean tablecloths dipped in lysol."

In the next grouping of these participles, Miller discusses his reaction to what he sees in Paris on a Sunday

morning: "crabs gnawing at my entrails," "trees, nourished by the paving stones," "A Man Cut in Slices," "thoroughfares . . . drained of their pus," "urchins marked with the forceps," "Charles the Silly eaten away by ulcers and vermin, gnawing a bone." These examples evoke the filth and decadence of Paris and his revulsion to it. In a scene at the Folies-Bergère Miller sees "worms crawling over the scenery like an army of red ants," "nerves like glass balls dancing on a million jets of water." While he watches the show, he is annoyed by the audience and stage personnel scratching themselves and each other, covered with lice, modern humanity degraded, uncomfortable, contagious.

The passage detailing the "unstitched wound" has an inordinate amount of surreal images. Miller here contemplates a whore's vulva, the "unstitched wound." The wound has both an attraction and a repulsion for him: "When I look down into 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" (248). It is both symbol of festering humanity and its salvation. The "wound" of the world is an "ugly gash" (249), "the dry, fucked-out aspect of things which makes this crazy civilization look like a crater." Yet this wound is also the source of salvation, for it springs from the earth mother and represents sexuality at its most primitive. The

images corresponding to the "unstitched wound" are as follows: "[vulva is analogized to] unstitched wound," "breasts covered with spiders," "world used up and polished like a leper's skull," "fame walking on crutches," "[fame] dwindled by the skyscrapers," "[fame] chewed to a frazzle," "marrow churned to pity," "the body bursting," "maggot words gnawing through the mattress," "slime wash and sapphires slipping, sluicing through the gay neurons," "poem written with flesh," "skeleton dancing in the wind," "serpents issuing from the rotted tongue," "bloated pages of ecstasy slimed with excrement." There is as much sliminess here as imagery of a prehistoric, base, biological, pared-down, geological world.

The next section of surreal participles occurs mainly because of his teaching French students the English language. Here he describes the insanity surrounding his job: "medievalism, rocking back and forth with low moans, jumping out at you from the eaves, hanging like broken-necked criminals from the gargoyles," "mind locked with ruin and frost," "streets . . . wheeling the church hind side front, mowing down the statues, flattening the monuments, uprooting the trees, stiffening the grass, sucking the fragrance out of the earth," "bat slime dripping aloft and clanging with pasteboard golden wings," "smile thrown across an abyss," "night, dagger-pointed, drunk as a maniac," "Time beating away like a meat ax." He realizes he mocks the very

architecture of Paris and modern life. His answer is to walk away from his teaching position.

Yet the final image of the flowing river enlightens him as to the importance of his essential life and the weight attached to simple existence: "river flowing through me." So the book ends with this final image of the Seine: against all of modern society's disgust reigns the author--himself, alive.

Miller does not rely upon the next categories of subject/verb/direct object and adjective clauses so much.

Here are examples I have found:

You can shit arpeggios or string a zither (6); a wild ass snuffing pleasure out of the wind (7); They embroidered the very bowels of the earth (10); We devour centuries (11); buildings have formed a sort of intestinal embrace (40); Eiffel Tower is fizzing champagne (63); I take out my artificial eye, spit on it and polish it with my handkerchief (63); light flooding my gizzards (74); I feel a great lake inside me (74); light ran blood (163); brooding stars breeding chunks of fresh-swollen flesh (252); though it rain crocodiles (254).

Again, the reader should note the excretory images, the body parts, the presence of the visceral. There is the animal fused with the human. There is excretion alongside food. It is elemental, deflated imagery. The same can be seen in the next list of mismatches within adjective clauses:

firecrackers which have the most curious

intestines (198); rivers that make oceans such as Shakespeare and Dante (256); sentences that flow on the dysentery and mirror all the sick images of the soul (257); obscenity that is ecstasy (258); suicidal wish that is constipated by words and paralyzed by thought (258) ; paradise which is always a wet dream (279).

No metaphoric grammatical construction appeared without incongruity. Note that in the above examples, all expand and then contract into the negative except "obscenity that is ecstasy," which actually seems to have the opposite effect. It begins with a negative state and becomes positive with the addition of "ecstasy." I will demonstrate how this reversal works in the other novels.

The only other method that Miller relies on in his creation of surreal metaphor is what I consider an extended metaphor, derived from the process of listing. Miller produces exhaustive lists in his description of characters or creation of images. These lists have words, phrases, clauses, appositives that enable the metaphor to shift, expand, and shrink from word to word and sentence to sentence. The lists that I am referring to that have a particularly incongruous or surreal feel to them are the description of Tania (5); Moldorf's description (8); the cathedral for those of lost identity (27); a description of Paris (29); description of New York (68); his dream of Van Norden's having sex (126); description of a pimp at a cafe on the Rue Faubourg Montmartre (158); the view of the artist

and Matisse (163-66); the unstitched wound episode (247-252); the artist (254-5); river and flow (256-8); reminiscing on the past (266-7); the Lycee (282); a moment of silence and dread (286) [see Appendix A for surreal lists].

I have given an atomistic view of surreal metaphor-making within Tropic of Cancer, something one critic called Miller's "verbal pyrotechnics" (Widmer 20). Critics referring to his surreal metaphor within this novel usually take a holistic approach, citing the sexual metaphor (Hassan, Silence 37) and archetypal images of creation and destruction (64). Those who believe Miller's writing is not pornography but obscenity praise the obscene passages for their contribution to the unification of theme--that of instinctive, natural man. This "rawness" in man is what Gordon (Mind 13) believes makes a real man. Therefore, obscenity in Cancer cannot be avoided, simply because a natural, "raw" man tends to be, at moments, obscene. If Miller's intent is to glorify the prelapsarian, ancient, earthy human, then he must depict him in all his sordidness but revel in that sordidness. The narrator is not simply disgusting. A narrator of this kind would encourage the reader to hate him or, possibly, pity him. But the reader has neither reaction. The reader shares in the narrator's happiness in his survival, his ability to endure under the worst conditions, his delight in sex, even in excrement and

gas. The reader, in a sense, becomes, through the reading, as raw a character, as content with himself and his animal nature as the narrator.

Gene DeWitt has explored Miller's metaphor of the "unstitched wound" or the female sex parts. He insists that this metaphor is the key metaphor for the entire book, likening it to a psychological wound within Miller because of the negative world around him. At the same time it represents that primitive earth-mother image, the primal self (19-21).

The concert episode is one of five passages in the mid-section of Cancer Brown believes is more dadaist than surrealistic. Here, in this episode and the one in which he accompanies Nanantatee to a whorehouse, Miller accepts completely the hopelessness of life (20-21). Yet while I agree that he accepts life's sterility, I would not classify it as dada simply because there is value--in his life itself. Miller revels in the music at the concert. Paul Jackson notes that the concert is a form of sadism for all of the audience except Miller, who, by listening to it, becomes more alive (44-45).

Critics also note the characteristics of Miller's writing that fuse the real or physical with the imaginative, sometimes referred to as "rhetorical antithesis" (Widmer 21). This characteristic, however, is the basis for surreal

thought, because, as I have mentioned before, sur-realism or super-realism is the mixing of the real with the imaginative in order to gain a different perception or dimension of life. The "excremental visions" of two anecdotes in the novel show this mixture of the physical with the metaphysical. Specifically, I refer to the Nanantatee episode. Widmer says of this scene: "The portrait of Nanantatee achieves the amusing nasty-grotesque in catching his mixed piety and obscenity, mannerliness and meanness-- the tea with the rose leaf and the smugly emitted flatus" (22). Widmer says, "The sordid, the sinister, and the richly repulsive become objects for aesthetic contemplation" (35). Miller, in essence, waxes poetic on the contemplation of a turd. The result is a surreal experience that is "comic-apocalyptic" (24).

By far, the critics agree on the metaphor of flow (Widmer 21) and the effect of the Seine on the narrator. While Miller rejects commercialism, materialism, industrialism, he finds solace in the pre-glacial river that flows and that he feels flowing through him. Many of his images revert back to the elemental (Littlejohn, "Tropics" 109). Likewise it is the river's naturalness, its basic fundamentalism, its earthy stink that he feels flows also within him. He philosophizes, at first in realist language, which changes to the surreal:

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. . . . 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. The sun is setting. I feel this river flowing through me--its past, its ancient soil, the changing climate. (Cancer 318)

Through the river the narrator accepts his alienation from society and also accepts himself. It is this metaphor-- "Seine . . . like a great artery running through the human body"-- that reverses for a moment my theory of expansion/contraction. This image is more of an expansion that does not contract, but that expands even more. With the addition of "vein" one senses a pulsating, flowing essence of being, a visceral depth that runs through man and that also runs through the river. This image also explains Miller's theme that, no matter how dissolute the world about one is, the important thing is the essence of life itself.

Chapter 5

Surreal Metaphor in Tropic of Cancer

For me Cancer means the Crab, as it was known to the Chinese sages--the creature which could move in any direction. It is the sign in the Zodiac for the poet--the halfway station in the round of realization, which changes when one comes to the constellation Libra. Opposite Cancer in the Zodiac (extreme of the Equinox--turning points) is Capricorn, the house in which I am born, which is religious and represents renaissance in death. . . . (qtd. in Stuhlmann, Letters 147)

Both Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn express a longing for the discovery of the self. The hero of Cancer is spiritually alive, despite the malaise around him. In Capricorn, however, death and destruction are so pervasive that Miller leads the reader on a journey through civilization's Inferno (Brown 50) to the realm of sex, in which there is a possibility for rebirth to an essential self, and finally to self-discovery as an artist. Self-resurrection is the goal of this novel (Wickes 28).

Dealing with themes that are essentially Lawrentian in nature, Miller explores a negative reality in an effort to

realize the center of one's being--the primal, sexual, chaotic, prelapsarian self. The journey to the essential self is portrayed in language that can best be described as surrealistically manic, psychedelic, at times so abstract as to be confusing. It is ego-enhancing for the author, who impresses the reader with lengthy passages of decorative rhetoric that approaches pure bombast. He delights in the shock effect, rendering his material in dreamlike, fantastic, irrational, chaotic language. It is decidedly surreal in technique and style while, at times, advocating a dadaist attitude. This is a novel of death-in-life (Brown 49) with a hope of life-in-death. Two values are important: to find a sense of an essential self and to become a writer (Gordon, Mind 116). Yet that re-creation of self never seems to be attained. If only temporarily it is attained in sex, but even then sex offers no lasting self-life. The only positive attainment is that the narrator realizes his dream of becoming a writer. He becomes the author of the struggle portrayed in Tropic of Capricorn.

The theme of Capricorn, which is the Lawrentian search for the essential self following an essential death, can be understood through the surreal, extended metaphors that dominate the book.

According to my introductory chapter, the surrealist is a revolutionary who scorns conventional ways of perceiving the world and traditional methods of artistic technique,

whether in painting or writing. Part of surreal aesthetic is the language of dream and fantasy as well as the forces of chance, the objet trouvé, and automatic writing. Last, surreal style involves incongruity in its metaphor-making.

Though Miller claims to be a dadaist in the novel ("I was perhaps the unique Dadaist in America" [Capricorn 286]), his ultimate positive approach to life and his search for an essential, rejuvenated self reflect a surreal attitude, for the French surrealists were optimistic in comparison to the dadaists. Nevertheless, despite his attraction to nihilism, his technique, writing style, and ultimate search for something other than nothingness take him across the boundary of dadaism and into the territory of surrealism.

The state of the world has provoked him into a state of rebellion and self-alienation: "It would have been better for my peace of mind, for my soul, if I had expressed my rebellion openly, if I had gone to jail for it, if I had rotted there and died" (Capricorn 12). But he could not express his revolt openly, partly because he was also caught up in the mechanical society of which he was so critical: "I was the evil product of an evil soil" (13). With this realization he calls for a Lawrentian destruction of civilization (he would later call for destruction of the self, too, to attain rebirth); he becomes a Birkin-like figure who wishes to murder the world in order to save it:

"Because in the bottom of my heart there was murder: I wanted to see America destroyed, razed from top to bottom" (12). Gordon says, "Tropic of Capricorn . . . is the story of rebellion against the universe of death and the beginnings of the descent into chaos" (Mind 121). This chaos or death is a kind of disorder that is vital, according to Henri Bergson's Creative Evolution (Riggs 9). This chaos leads to the essential self and individual identity. Miller discusses Bergson's work within his story and this discussion leads to one of his surreal metaphors, the labyrinth.

Miller, as part of his rebellious nature, describes how he has to experience rebirth to identity as a writer, which will ultimately bring him freedom (Gordon, Mind 129). He will not be content to "know his place" in society. He will become like an onion, peeling off each layer of skin, the skin of civilization, until he arrives at the juicy center of himself. This peeling process is explained in surreal, dream-like imagery. It also has qualities of masochism a la the Marquis de Sade, whom the French surrealists admired:

To shed the first layer is painful beyond words; the next layer is less painful, the next still less, until finally the pain becomes pleasurable, more and more pleasurable, a delight, an ecstasy. And then there is neither pleasure nor pain, but simply darkness yielding before the light. And as the darkness falls away the wound comes out of its hiding place: the wound which is man, man's love, is bathed in light. The identity which was lost is recovered. Man walks forth

from his open wound, from the grave which he
had carried about with him so long.
(Capricorn 231)

The surreal characteristic of the dream is evident in the above passage as well as in the passage that follows it. Here is another dream-like reverie in which Miller remembers his relationship (primarily sexual) with Mona (Miller's wife, June). Remembering and discarding the memory are all part of the ridding of his onion skin of the self. The Mona imagery is surreal in its fantastic, dream-like qualities. This extended metaphor, however, results, ultimately, in the lack of an essential self in Mona. Miller felt that Mona had reduced herself simply to sexual fury (Gordon, Mind 131). Though he said that she was the one he loved better than anyone else in the world, in her sexual energy she had undergone mutations until what remained of her was a void; she had no essential reality of selfhood (130). Her descent into the void is rendered in fantastic, irrational prose:

I see her festering there in that bloody
wound of love, so close to me that I could
not distinguish her from the wound itself.
. . .The grave and womb of love entombing us,
the night filling our bowels and the stars
shimmering over the black bottomless lake.
I lose the memory of words, of her name even
which I pronounce like a monomaniac. . . .
And with it all, in the fixed, close intimacy
of a night without end she was radiant, jubilant,
an ultra-black jubilation streaming from her
like a steady flow of sperm from the Mithraic
Bull. She was double barreled, like a shotgun,
a female bull with an acetylene torch in her womb.
In heat she focused on the grand cosmocrator,
her eyes rolled back to the whites, her lips
a-slaver. In the blind hole of sex she waltzed

like a trained mouse, her jaws unhinged like a
snake's, her skin horripilating in barbed plumes.
(Capricorn 231-3)

The dream-memory continues, describing Mona's transformations. Miller likens her to a viper, a turtle dove, a panther, a jaguar, heron, ibis, flamingo, swan: "She changed like a chameleon" (237). But Mona had paid a price for her sexual energy: "She had no poise whatsoever; she was eternally poised above her multiple identities in the vacuum of the self" (238). She was an inhuman colossus: "Every day she had to grow swifter wings, sharper jaws, more piercing, hypnotic eyes" (241). Miller compares her to a "great bird of the air perched on a mountain crag, dreamily surveying the terrain below" (244). But ultimately Mona had no identity of herself. She became the black hole of Calcutta. Miller searched and hoped for a Mona who was Mona as he searched and hoped for a Henry that could be Henry.

Within this extended passage lies my theory of expansion/contraction. But my theory now includes, not merely the "microscopic" or "atomistic" surreal metaphors I had so exhaustively rendered in Chapter 4. Now it can be applied to many of the extended surreal metaphors in Capricorn. In contrast to the "microscopic" analyses of Chapter 4, the expanding is of the type that occurs "macroscopically" in the Mona passage. Mona's description is expanded from pages 231 to 247. This passage is situated after the break in the text after Gottlieb Leberecht Muller

discovers the larger world of love. Mona gains largeness of description with the addition of all the surreal and natural metaphors. She becomes more than simply a woman, Mona. She takes on characteristics that are beyond those of the average woman, beyond the apprehension of the rational world--viper, jaguar, bird, etc. She is of the irrational, the dream, the monstrous, the sexual, the preglacial. Thus, the surreal Mona is an expansion of the real Mona through the linking of her real self and imaginary and incongruous comparisons. At the same time Mona is contracted because she becomes less herself. In fact she becomes a black hole, a void--devoid of all personality: "You will come back to perish once more in the black hole; . . . for you have not the wings to carry you out of the world. This is the only world you can inhabit, this tomb of the snake where darkness reigns" (247).

In effect, then, Mona also causes Miller to expand and contract as he discovers that with her he is living the life of a "full-blooded schizerino" (246):

. . . I am going to spread and spread until
I fill the room with one solid mass of stiff
jelly. I shall fill up even the cracks in
the wall; I shall grow through the wall like
a parasitic plant, spreading and spreading
until the whole house is an indescribable
mass of flesh and hair and nails. I know
that this is death, but I am powerless to
kill the knowledge of it, or the knower.
. . . I move around in my own dead body,
exploring every nook and cranny of its huge,
shapeless mass. It is an endless exploration,

for with the ceaseless growth the whole
topography changes, slipping and drifting
like the hot magma of the earth. . . .
it is a growth without landmarks, a voyage
in which the destination changes with every
least move or shudder. It is this
interminable filling of space which kills
all sense of space or time. (46-47)

Miller expanded until one could say he virtually imploded,
and with that his world contracted into nothingness: "the
more the body expands [my italics] the tinier becomes the
world, until at last I feel that everything is concentrated
on the head of a pin" (247). Surreal images here encompass
those of primordialness: "jelly," "parasitic plant," "magma
of the earth." His body shall return to its elemental
condition among the amorphous ooze, the slime of the earth's
prehistoric beginnings. Included here also are references
to the human body as geography: "growth without landmarks,"
"a voyage in which the destination changes." His final
misery is summarized when he contemplates Mona, the bird,
arriving back at the nest: "When the great plunder-bird
returns exhausted from her flight she will find me here in
the midst of my nothingness, I, the imperishable schizerino,
a blazing seed hidden in the heart of death" (247). Though
Mona's sexual obsessions are able to carry them away from
the world at large and to get them closer to instinct and
purity of the natural self, she self-destructs into a
solipsistic self.

Miller himself may have been composing his novels with

an understanding of this process of expansion/contraction, especially considering one sentence in the novel: "Vacuity is a discordant fullness" (198). When man is a social void, on the lowest animal level, he is himself; he is free. And when man is full of the trappings of society, he is most empty. The expanding that occurs within the metaphor is a fleshing out of the main idea through the prism of the surreal imagery. The incongruent images that define the character, object, or situation serve to increase the depth, dimension, meaning of that real thing. At the same time, the expansion reduces the quality of that thing. It becomes less than the human, object, situation that it is. After discussing surreal aesthetic within Capricorn, this paper will study more of these expanding/contracting metaphors.

Miller claims to exist in a surreal world of the imagination: "I was living, therefore, between two boundaries, the one real, the other imaginary--as I have lived all my life" (215). Miller enjoys the fantastic in language and in life. This quality can be seen in the place where he lived as a child--North Second Street at Fillmore Place. Again, within the metaphor of North Second Street, whose name was changed to Metropolitan Avenue, there is this sense of expansion and contraction. But before the street can be seen as expanding, it must first be seen as the surreal fantasy that it is, a mixture of concrete physicality and fancy:

It was the most enchanting street I have ever seen in all my life. It was the ideal street--for a boy, a lover, a maniac, a drunkard, a crook, a lecher, a thug, an astronomer, a musician, a poet, a tailor, a shoemaker, a politician.

. . . Soon the street looked like a dirty mouth with all the prominent teeth missing, with ugly charred stumps gaping here and there, the lips rotting, the palate gone. (216)

With the change to a metropolitan street, however, North Second Street lost its appeal, its expansive properties: "Everything had shrunk now to diminutive proportions, including the world which lay beyond the boundary line, the world which had been so mysterious to me and so terrifyingly grand, so delimited" (218). The "contraction" of the narrator along with the contraction of the street is expressed in dream imagery:

Just as I go toward this house the lot on which I am standing begins to grow vague at the edges, to dissolve, to vanish. Space rolls in on me like a carpet and swallows me up, and with it of course the house which I never succeed in entering. (219)

It should be noted, also, that this example is not the only "street" example in the book. There are other, lonely streets, those that resemble the shadowland streets of the surrealist painter de Chirico, as in the following: ". . .it was the ghastly emptiness of the street that disturbed me profoundly. All those bloody houses, one like another, and all so empty and cheerless looking" (281).

Another characteristic of surrealism in Capricorn is

that of chance and the objet trouvé. He makes reference to the surrealists' "found objects" in the passage following the "ovarian trolley":

Only the object haunted me, the separate, detached, insignificant thing. It might be a part of the human body or a staircase in a vaudeville house; it might be a smokestack or a button I had found in the gutter. Whatever it was it enabled me to open up, to surrender, to attach my signature. To the life about me, to the people who made up the world I knew, I could not attach my signature. I was filled with a perverse love of the thing-in-itself--not a philosophic attachment, but a passionate, desperately passionate hunger, as if in this discarded, worthless thing which everyone ignored there was contained the secret of my own regeneration. (54)

The happening upon a "chance" object is a surreal phenomenon similar in concept to Dali's philosophy of paranoiac-criticism. In such an occurrence, as I have already explained in the "Introduction," a person finds a personal attraction, a revelation in identity, in the "found object." Happening upon a tin can in a forest may stimulate a kind of subconscious reaction that makes itself felt by an innate attraction to that object. Because of his realization that he is attracted to "found objects," Miller knows he's not like ordinary people. The object gives him a special identity. This is why he can contemplate "ovaries." He, by discovering some seemingly inconspicuous thing like an "ovary," can spark his subconscious and lead him to a realization. In the case with the "ovaries" it is the realization of a possible regeneration of the primal self.

"On the Ovarian Trolley" is the sub-title of the book (Gordon, Mind 110). The "ovarian trolley" is a primary, surreal metaphor within Capricorn brought on by a discussion with Hymie about his wife's "diseased ovaries" while Miller and he are riding home on the trolley. Hymie's wife's ovaries are unhealthy, as is the civilization around them. But diseased or not, because they contain life, the eggs, the ovaries are the primary things. This metaphor, along with many of the sexual images that pervade the book, is significant for its contribution to the theme of the essential self. The "found ovaries" that Miller discovers by accident in the conversation with Hymie provoke him to consider, in the end, and in relation to all his "pure fucking," the possibility that he will be able to discover his real, primordial, preglacial, prelapsarian, Lawrentian self, followed by a kind of rebirth or regeneration. The fertility of the ovaries, the primitive sexual organs themselves, and man's instincts bound up within them trigger his realization of self-identity. The reader sees simple "chance" enlightenment about the prospects of attaining a pure being and becoming an author:

Suddenly, looking at Hymie and thinking of that strange word "ovaries," . . . this feeling of icy isolation came over me. . . . I was jumping from the bridge head first, down into the primeval ooze, ... In the womb nails formed on every finger, every toe; you could stop right there, at a toenail, the tiniest toenail imaginable, and you could

break your head over it, trying to figure it out. On one side of the ledger are the books man has written, containing such a hodgepodge of wisdom and nonsense, of truth and falsehood, that if one lived to be as old as Methuselah one couldn't disentangle the mess; on the other side of the ledger things like toenails, hair, teeth, blood, ovaries, if you will, all incalculable and all written in another kind of ink, in another script, an incomprehensible, undecipherable script. (51-52)

With this he realizes he is a man lacking essentials, that he had never accomplished what he needed to in life. He, too, is a victim of a civilization that suppresses the individual, conforming the human being, instead, to its economic and social needs. But Miller, through the "ovaries," realizes that he's approaching a kind of spiritual death, perhaps because they are "diseased," and that he needs to appropriate the life inherently within them. Even in the death of spirit there is still something that wants to be alive, that will continue on after physical death:

In the beginning was the Word. . . . Whatever this was, the Word, disease or creation, it was still running rampant; it would run on and on, outstrip time and space, outlast the angels, unseat God, unhook the universe. Any word contained all words--for him who had become detached through love or sorrow or whatever the cause. In every word the current ran back to the beginnning which was lost and which would never be found again since there was neither beginning nor end but only that which expressed itself in beginning and end.
(54)

While in the end it is questionable whether Miller has realized an essential self and whether he can hold onto that

self within the confines of a suffocating civilization of which he is still a part, the one positive thing that has happened is that he has become a writer. In fact, while he was of the world, he was still alienated from it, and this alienation afforded him the opportunity to be able to write about it.

Another surreal characteristic that flows through Capricorn is that of automatic writing. Not only are his surreal passages inherently automatic, but so are many of his realistic ones. Critics claim the best of his automatic writing occurs within the "interlude" section of Capricorn, which Miller himself terms "cadenzas." (Raaberg 254, Hassan Silence 82). He describes in Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch how he lived through an "automatic" event:

It was while writing the Tropic of Capricorn (in the Villa Seurat) that the real shenanigans took place. . . . One day, for no accountable reason, unless it was an overdose of riotous living, the dictation commenced. Overjoyed . . . I would go straight to the black desk which a friend had made for me, and, plugging in all the wires, together with amplifier and callbox, I would yell: "Je t'ecoute . . . Vas-y!" . . . And how it would come! I didn't have to think up so much as a comma or semicolon; it was all given, straight from the celestial recording room. (128)

So much of Capricorn is done in a kind of automatic, stream-of-consciousness style that it would be too exhaustive to report all the examples. One has only to refer to the "interlude" section to see how he accomplishes this

technique. Automatic writing afforded Miller a kind of free association that allowed the subconscious free rein. It allowed him to express feelings and thoughts that probably would not have been possible in realism.

Of course the major surreal characteristic within the novel is that of basic incongruity in the imagery--surreal metaphor. An exhaustive accounting of surreal metaphor in Capricorn would be redundant and largely unproductive, but there are a few significant examples of what I call "microscopic" metaphor-making:

America. . . cesspool of the spirit (12);
I was a searchlight (16); It [Cosmodemonic
Telegraph Company] was a slaughterhouse (19);
It [American life] looked like a grand chancre
on a worn-out cock (20); my office . . . like an
open sewer (20); brains looked like an omelette
(38); skyscrapers like phosphorescent cadavers
(50); home which was a migraine (50); Hymie was
a bullfrog (51); bullfrog eyes . . . like two
collar buttons stuck in cold fat; . . . Each
collar button was an ovary (52); I . . . was an
obsessional plant, a sort of coral growth (53);
a couple of sawdust molls with twitching ovaries
of the well-known gastropod variety (54); I am
about to give birth to a monstrous edifice, a
skyscraper (56); stone forest (68); human ants
(69); human lice (69); a human flour mill (72);
I was an eye(75); Egyptian Jew squirming like
an eel (82); steaming ovaries (87); words . . .
mounted like false teeth (99); my eyes choked
with sperm (105); world is divided into meatballs,
spaghetti, and syphilitic chancre (106); animated
fetus of the unborn death maggot (109); life is a
cold, lunar incandescence of the sun (120).

The surreal metaphors are much denser than in Tropic of Cancer, and there are more instances of extended, surreal metaphor. The density is evident in the convoluted images,

each one folding back upon itself and another at the same time. The imagery is simultaneously that of the real and physical while also that of the fantastic and metaphysical. It is at once of the present and altogether of the primeval.

In just the above sampling of images I have been able to categorize primordiality, body parts, food, animal imagery, and disease. The largest category appears to be the primordial one: "Cosmodemonic," which describes something of the universe and the devil; "phosphorescent," "coral growth," "sawdust," "gastropod," "give birth," "stone," "maggot," and "lunar incandescence of the sun." Miller seems to be breaking prehistory into its parts, as he often breaks the human body into all its parts. Miller's body parts are "cock," "brains," "cadavers," "fat," "ovary," "eye," "teeth," "sperm," "fetus," and these parts are sometimes aligned with those of the animal: "bullfrog," "bullfrog eyes," "ants," "lice," "eel," "maggot." To these images are added those of food: "omelette," "meatballs," and "spaghetti." Amid all these images exist the diseases of Miller's modern world: "migraine" and "syphilitic chancre." Images relatively new to Miller are those of the "skyscraper," "edifice," "flour mill," "slaughterhouse." So Miller predicts the death of society by architectural, machine-like images.

The best example of such dense surreal imagery is in the section on Mona:

What was life on the solid earth to us
who were decapitated and forever joined
at the genitals? We were the twin snakes
of Paradise, lucid in heat and cool as chaos
itself. Life was a perpetual black fuck about
a fixed pole of insomnia. Life was Scorpio
conjunction Mars, conjunction Mercury, . . .
conjunction quicksilver, laudanum, radium,
bismuth. (Capricorn 234)

The reader should notice the imagery of chemistry and
minerology, conjoined with that of astrology. To best
characterize the primordality of his imaginative world,
Miller relied on the language of science. The quote
continues in language of astrology:

. . . conjunction Venus, conjunction Saturn,
conjunction Pluto, conjunction Uranus, . .
. . The grand conjunction was every Saturday
night, Leo fornicating with Draco in the
house of brother and sister. The great
malheur was a ray of sunlight stealing
through the curtains. The great curse was
Jupiter, king of the fishes, that he might
flash a benevolent eye. (234).

The description throws the galaxy into fragments, into its
singular planets, and mythological and astrological
"houses."

Some extended metaphors are realistic, and some are
surrealistic. Again, it is the nature of the expansive and
contractive properties that I find interesting and
reflective of a theme that sees and relishes civilization's
death. One should try to see in the surreal extended
metaphor the expansive qualities of the image while
simultaneously recognizing that those same qualities tend to

reduce the object in terms of negativity, dissolution, despair, ennui. I have already explained that expansion/contraction in the character of Mona and of North Second Street. A few more examples bear examination.

One example frames the beginning of the novel. Miller exposes the dissolution of American society as he contemplates it from his desk at Sunset (also an image of decline) Place:

It [American society] was like a page out of the telephone book. Alphabetically, numerically, statistically, it made sense. But when you looked at it up close, when you examined the pages separately. . . when you examined one lone individual and what constituted him, examined the air he breathed, the life he led, the chances he risked, you saw something so foul and degrading. . . that it was worse than looking into a volcano. You could see the whole American life--economically, politically, morally, spiritually, artistically, statistically, pathologically. It looked like a grand chancre on a worn-out cock. . . . looking at it from where I sat it looked rottener than the wormiest cheese. (20)

Here, American life compares to a telephone book. That, considering all the information in it, is an expansion of society. But to this is added the quality of male genitalia and wormy cheese. With that the image of American society is changed to a diseased organ, spoiled food, the wasteland Miller wishes us to see.

Another metaphor is that of the narrator as a lighthouse. To his character is added sturdiness, solidity, hardness. In the same metaphor he is also an eye, the

lighthouse's searchlight, capable of seeing more than the human eye can. Yet as a lighthouse he is also powerless to avert any disaster. He is significant only in a catastrophe. At the end of the metaphor he calls for annihilation, death of the lighthouse, of himself, in order that he can be "human only terrestrially, like a plant or a worm or a brook. To be decomposed, divested of light and stone, . . . (77).

Another scene of deflation occurs while Miller is watching MacGregor and Paula having sex, entwined like an octopus. The sex expands into the octopus, and the octopus begins to dance. This finally becomes the dance of the American continent:

In the golden marshmallow dream of happiness, in the dance of the sodden piss and gasoline, the great soul of the American continent gallops like an octopus, all the sails unfurled, the hatches down, the engine whirring like a dynamo. The great dynamic soul caught in the click of the camera's eye, in the heat of rut, bloodless as a fish, slippery as mucus, the soul of the people miscegenating on the sea floor, popeyed with longing, harrowed with lust. The dance of Saturday night, of cantaloupes rotting in the garbage pail, of fresh green snot and slimy unguents for the tender parts. The dance of the gat and the slugs who use them. The dance of the blackjack and the pricks who batter brains to a polypous pulp. The dance of the magneto world, the spark that unsparks, the soft purr of the perfect mechanism, the velocity race on a turntable, the dollar at par and the forests dead and mutilated. The Saturday night of the soul's hollow dance, each jumping jigger a functional unit in the

St. Vitus dance of the ringworm's dream. (107-08)

In this metaphor one image seems to expand another in a succession. A couple having sex is like an octopus; then the octopus dances. The dancing is indicative of the fury in America's soul. Then the metaphor begins to fall back in on itself when the American continent becomes like an octopus in rut. The dance appears again, the dance of a typical American Saturday night. The expansion is obvious, and so, too, is the reduction, for American society is once again portrayed in obscene terms, in busy, mechanical language, in eschatological images, its body of nature "mutilated."

The reader should take note of the new imagery Miller enjoys: that of the machine. The images are reminiscent of dadaism: "gasoline," "dynamo," "dynamic," "click of a camera's eye," "magneto world," "spark that unsparks," "the soft purr of the perfect mechanism," "the velocity race on a turntable."

Later in the novel the dance is recalled, and the imagery is certainly reductive in the end:

. . . I am dancing the soul dance of
white desperation, the last white man
pulling the trigger on the last emotion,
the gorilla of despair beating his breast
with immaculate gloved paws. I am the
gorilla who feels his wings growing, a
giddy gorilla in the center of a satin-like
emptiness; We are dancing in the
hollow of the cup of nothingness. (121)

Likewise the experience of maturing into adulthood is

expansion that ends up a contraction. Most of what Miller remembers from his childhood had enlarged him as a child. The experiences he had had added to his growth to adulthood. Gordon, in The Mind and Art of Henry Miller, says: "Maturity meant for Miller only loss of the bright and meaningful world of childhood. With the acceptance of adult responsibility the world expands, but mystery is destroyed" (120). My inflation/delation theory is illustrated in Miller's own words: "I have gained nothing by the enlargement of my world" 145). With the expansion into adulthood came the rules, the expected conformity, the expected success in career. With all the transcendence in his childhood, he ends up feeling an incomplete person.

I have already mentioned Miller's attraction to Bergson's theories on chaos. According to Bergson, the dead kind of order, in contrast to vital order, is that of geometry. The labyrinth, a geometrical entity, is significant of "human life robbed of vitalism" (Riggs 10). Eventually the labyrinth becomes of a vital order--the city of light (10). This kind of nonvital order is present in Miller's description of the architectural geometry of Bloomingdale's. Bloomingdale's is labyrinthine. Miller describes it in surreal language:

This order has, above all, an odor--and it is the odor of Bloomingdale's which strikes terror into my heart. In Bloomingdale's I fall apart completely: I dribble onto the

floor, a helpless mess of guts and bones and cartilage. There is the smell, not of decomposition, but of misalliance. Man, the miserable alchemist, has welded together, in a million forms and shapes, substances and essences which have nothing in common. Because in his mind there is a tumor which is eating him away insatiably; he has left the little canoe which was taking him blissfully down the river in order to construct a bigger, safer boat in which there may be room for everyone. His labors take him so far afield that he has lost all remembrance of why he left the little canoe. The ark is so full of bric-a-brac that it has become a stationary building above a subway in which the smell of linoleum prevails and predominates. Gather together all the significance hidden away in the interstitial miscellany of Bloomingdale's and put it on the head of a pin and you will have left a universe in which the grand constellations move without the slightest danger of collision. It is this microscopic chaos which brings on my morganatic ailments.
(Capricorn 205)

The last lines in this passage denote the reductiveness inherent in a megalithic building such as Bloomingdale's. It smacks of cold materialism, hard, impersonal architecture. Miller seems to be relying on different images in Cancer. For example, here are images of chemistry in "man, the miserable alchemist" and "welded together in a million forms and shapes, substances and essences." There are also images of physics with "interstitial," and "collision." Also, astronomy plays a role here in "universe in which the grand constellations move without the slightest danger of collision." Shades of the labyrinth are evident in the subway, and the reader gets a sense of time-travel in the blissful pilgrimage in the canoe.

His hometown of Brooklyn undergoes a similar transformation:

I remained in Brooklyn, in my own palace of entrails, and turned round and round on the plinth of the labyrinth. [Notice the equation to the dead order of the labyrinth.] I remained at home seeking the "germinal vesicle," "the dragon castle on the floor of the sea," the Heavenly Heart," "the field of the square inch," "the house of the square foot," "the dark pass," "the space of former Heaven." . . . I saw no "Asian luxury," as had St. Augustine, ... But I saw a street called Myrtle Avenue, . . . one of the innumerable bridlepaths ridden by iron monsters which lead to the heart of America's emptiness. If you have only seen Essen or Manchester or Chicago or Levallois-Perret or Glasgow or Hoboken or Canarsie or Bayonne you have seen nothing of the magnificent emptiness of progress and enlightenment. (298)

His home is enlarged by "entrails" and other mythological and abstract figures. With the addition of these characteristics, his home and street become diminished and Miller says of them: "It is a street not of sorrow, . . . but of sheer emptiness: it is emptier than the most extinct volcano, emptier than a vacuum, emptier than the word God in the mouth of an unbeliever" (298).

Those are just a few of the extended metaphors composed in large part in surreal language that enlarge ideas and then reduce them in appearance and quality, respectively. But the reverse condition exists also. I have already said that Miller had to die in some way in order to experience

his essential self. One could construe this as my expansion/contraction theory working in reverse. The narrator finds, throughout the novel, that the less he is (in terms of the world's expectations) and the more alienated he becomes from the world, the larger he is spiritually and essentially. He must experience reduction before resuscitation:

I feel as the dead sponge of life
swollen to saturation. I no longer look
into the eyes of the woman I hold in my
arms but I swim through, head and arms and
legs, and I see that behind the sockets of
the eyes there is a region unexplored, the
world of futurity, and here there is no
logic whatever, just the still germination
of events unbroken by night and day, by
yesterday and tomorrow. . . . The eye which
was the I of the self no longer exists;
. . . Trying to retain the lost body I grew in
logic as the city, a point digit in the
anatomy of perfection. I grew beyond my
own death, spiritually bright and hard.
(121-22)

What follows this state of contraction or death or nihilism is satisfaction, a joy. The self is structured in the images of mathematics in "logic" and "digit." It has potential, as expressed in geographical imagery with "region unexplored," and "the world of futurity."

In this same sense any reductive image serves as a chance for regeneration. Anything savage, primal, primitive, vacuous is to be desired. One such metaphor is the narrator as a wild park. He envisions himself as a place of solace for all the troubled people to come and rest in. Of

this transmutation to a wild park, he says, ". . . it is infinitely better, while attending death, to live in a state of grace and natural bewilderment. Infinitely better, as life moves toward a deathly perfection, to be just a bit of breathing space. . ." (123-24). In this way, says Trachtenberg, Miller will wake from the American nightmare and its need for money, possessions, status (144).

The sex act, regarded suspiciously by our Puritanic heritage, is actually a reduction that Miller regards as an expansion. Hoffman, in "Further Interpretations," says, "The sexual act is an unconscious process by which forces are released which give life to the world" (48). In fact, the book contains a passage on the positiveness of the "pure fuck" in the "Land of Fuck":

When she pitched herself high, when she turned the juice on full, it made a violaceous purple, a deep mulberry stain like twilight, a ventriloqual twilight such as dwarfs and cretins enjoy when they menstruate. It made me think of cannibals chewing flowers, of Bantus running amuck, of wild unicorns rutting in rhododendron bed. Everything was anonymous and unformulated, . . . made her cunt so marvelously impersonal. In the broad Pacific of sex she lay, a gleaming silver reef surrounded with human anemones, human starfish, human madrepores. (183)

Images here are those of the sea, pastoral life, and geography. The sea images culminate in the woman in the throes of sex simulating a "Pacific reef," a "gleaming silver reef surrounded with human anemones, human starfish,

human madrepores." The sex of the woman reminds him of Eden or the pastoral: "cannibals chewing flowers," "of Bantus running amuck," "of wild unicorns rutting in rhododendron bed." This human sex machine is further described in such terms as a "weasel" and a "deaf-mute without her memory" (183). Miller describes the sex in terms that most people would regard as negative, self-demeaning: "Love among the newts and the cutout wide open. Love without gender and without lysol. Incubational love, such as the wolverines practice above the tree line" (184). He continues with his "song" of primitive sex: ". . . there was always with us King Kong. King Kong asleep in the wrecked hull of the Titanic among the phosphorescent bones of millionaires and lampreys . . . he was the leper armed with sawed-off gonococci" (184). The sea imagery returns the reader to primordiality. This is sex as it should be--Lawrentian sex--uninhibited, instinctive, animal-like. It is the sex of King Kong because it has been caged in the ship [Titanic] of modern society for so long. His sex had been destroyed, but the ability to survive and give life still remains in the "sawed-off gonococci."

It is critical that the reader recognize the inversion of the expansion/contraction theory as it applies to metaphors of the narrator and other characters who strive to become themselves, to be their essential selves. Examples

of these are Miller's father, who is a better, stronger, more vital man when he drinks and wastes time talking with his bar buddies than when he is supposedly enhanced by association with the church. The longer he associates with the church and the minister, the more "skeletal" he becomes. Only drink can return him to his natural self. The same holds true for Grover, the religious fanatic. Though all the other "normal" people around him consider him less of a man because of his fanaticism, Miller likes him for being his own man, even though he is associated with religion. Grover takes on a larger expanse in his so-called dissolution into fanaticism.

Despite all of Miller's surreal philosophizing, the narrator fails to realize a vital self in the end, for he is too caught up in civilization: "I realize quietly what a terribly civilized person I am" (308). Yet, for all it's worth, Miller is made more aware by it all: "The intelligence I possessed, even as a stripling, frightened me; it was the intelligence of a savage, which is always superior to that of civilized men It is a life intelligence, even though life has seemingly passed them by" (324).

Miller has his final say, which would provide him with the title of another book, The Rosy Crucifixion: "One must beat with his own rhythm--at any price" (325). He would suffer voluntarily: "All my Calvaries were rosy

crucifixions, pseudo-tragedies to keep the fires of hell burning brightly for the real sinners who are in danger of being forgotten" (325). He will expiate sin by sexuality. At least while he suffers, he will be able to write it all down in this book. He will at least have become a writer.

Chapter 6

Surreal Metaphor in Black Spring

The title itself is a metaphor for apocalypse--faith in regeneration, rebirth, resurrection after death and destruction. The rebirth is never quite realized within the book, which is why it remains a "black" spring. Yet he never gave up the faith:

On the high hill, in the spring night,
alone in the giant body of the whale, I
am hanging upside down, my eyes filled with
blood, my hair white as worms. One belly,
one corpse, the great body of the whale
rotting away like a fetus under a dead sun.
Men and lice, men and lice, a continuous
procession toward the maggot heap. This is
the spring that Jesus sang, the sponge to
his lips, the frogs dancing. . . . In every
womb the pounding of iron hoofs, in every
grave the roar of hollow shells. Womb and
shell and in the hollow of the womb a
full-grown idiot picking buttercups. . . .
Spring is coming in the night with the
roar of a cataract. Coming on the wings of
mares, their manes flying, their nostrils
smoking. (Miller, Spring 172)

In the night of the spring lies man's rejuvenation, described in surreal language, with images that are primeval--night, whale, maggot, womb. Images of the sea and decay abound: "whale," "blood," "worms," "corpse," "rotting

away like a fetus under a dead sun," "maggot heap." And the image of war is recognized in "Coming on the wings of mares, their manes flying, their nostrils smoking." Lawrentian in theme and imagery, Miller's man seeks the opportunity to get back to his primal origins, which offer him the chance to be himself rather than a puppet of a system. It is a return to life through the unconscious, the dream, the blackness of death, the prelude before resurrection: "Smash it! Smash it!" (Miller, Spring 111). This is the true, but elusive, Christian rebirth. Miller's world is "Armageddon and the trumpets of the Last Judgment" (Milosz 124). Hugo Manning sees the same themes reiterated here as in the other two novels: self-salvation and the affirmation of life, no matter how much one must suffer in it (Manning, "Purpose" 100). Karl Shapiro remarks that Miller's aim is to "find the living core of our world whenever it survives" (183). The effort is to stay alive, stay alive at all costs and endure the misery. And this is why, according to the imagery cited above, the spring that is coming is black.

Miller continues to write in surreal prose. The surreality here, however, is as dense as that of Capricorn. At times it seemed Miller was trying to instruct his reader, much as Breton had done throughout his life, in how to think, philosophize, and create surrealistically. Certainly the important surreal characteristic here is that of the

dream and subconscious. Following this is the link of the essential man to insanity, paranoia. There are references to de Chirico and Dali and he instructs the writer on the automatic accomplishment of a watercolor, a la surrealism. George Wickes says, in comparing this novel to Cancer: "There is more delirium than cancer now, more dream, hallucination, and schizophrenia. . . . The subject of Black Spring is really the imagination in all its forms, especially the creative imagination" (24). This creative imagination asserts itself in different ways, but mostly through automatic, stream-of-consciousness writing. The free associations, the "dictations," "cadenzas," best enable him to explore the dreamland of the mind, the subconscious. Miller portrays the artist as "myopic" so that he becomes closer to the dream (25). The artist must fashion for himself another way of seeing, as Dali had with his paranoiac-critical method. It is a matter of recognizing the fears, the desires, and then focusing on them. This, then, is a way into the subconscious and artistic perception.

The seven chunks of surreal prose consist of 1) the Fourteenth Ward 2) the Paris sections 3) the "Angel Is My Watermark" section; 4) the Jabberwhorl Cronstadt passage; 5) the "Into the Night Life" world; 6) the "Walking Up and Down in China" section; and 7) "A Coney Island of the Mind" section.

The structure of Black Spring is a series of self-portraits based on his childhood in Brooklyn (Gordon, Mind xxix), those happenings in Paris not in Cancer, and surreal confabulations taken from Miller's dreams, which, upon Anais Nin's urgings, he had been writing down for some years and used as material for this novel (Brown 29). The purpose, as he had told Nin, was "putting down that large irrational area, of grappling with the unseizable . . . of proceeding multilaterally in all directions" (Stuhlmann, Letters 92). Brown calls Spring an "apocalyptic pastiche" (30), and Miller had compared it to a "disoriented" design of a rag carpet (qtd. in Stuhlmann, Letters 119). Black Spring is fleshed out, not only by surreal passages but by dadaist burlesques, parodies, puns, free associations, and digressions (Brown 33). Miller journeys through his past, through America and Europe, through his dreams, through the self-portraits in an effort to discover a "renewed consciousness" (Martin, Always Bright 293).

The first section of Black Spring is titled "The Fourteenth Ward," that section of Brooklyn in which Miller grew up; here he remembers his youth in contrast to his adulthood. Within the first pages the reader is reminded of Miller's link to the surrealists, as he turns to his dreams of the Fourteenth Ward "as a paranoiac returns to his obsessions" (Miller, Spring 4). As if a student of Dali's

"paranoiac-criticism," Miller analyzes those obsessions that haunt him: the battleships in the Navy Yard, which enable him to envision himself as a "gunnersmith, chemist, dealer in explosives," etc. (5). He strolls down the street, and the images of the Fourteenth Ward flood the reader, the result being an expansion of a mere street and, following, a contraction to misery:

Henceforward we walk split into myriad fragments, like an insect with a hundred feet, a centipede with soft-stirring feet that drinks in the atmosphere; we walk with sensitive filaments that drink avidly of past and future, and all things melt into music and sorrow. (9)

Miller further expands his street with other images, surreal and natural. Within the street is a "fat bust of a whore," a "wet pavement" as a "mirror," a "swinging door" that when parted would later remind him of gorgeous bodies glimpsed in a cafe and a larger glimpse of the world and sin:

. . . feel in the years to come the first iron of love, the first stains of rust, the first black, clawing hands of the pit, the bright circular pieces of tin in the streets, the gaunt sootcolored chimneys, the bare elm tree that lashes out in the summer's lightning and screams and shrieks as the rain beats down, while out of the hot earth the snails scoot away miraculously and all the air turns blue and sulphurous. (10)

Yet while this street is enlarged with surreal dream images, the world it inhabits is reductive. Miller says: "We are never whole again, but living in fragments, and all our parts separated by thinnest membrane. . . . the dream of the

open street (11). "The Fourteenth Ward" is an exploration into what had been an "expansive" childhood, which "contracted" down with the advent of childhood. What is bothersome to the narrator is the negative world weighing him down as he dreams of the street of his childhood, described in an extended metaphor of a sailing vessel:

And the prow cleaves the waters in an unending metaphor: the heavy body of the vessel moves on, with the prow ever dividing, and the weight of her is the unweighable weight of the world, the sinking down into unknown barometric pressures, into unknown geologic fissures and caverns where the waters roll melodiously . . . while the stars die out one by one, myriads of them, myriads and myriads of worlds sinking down into cold incandescence, into fuliginous night of green and blue with broken ice and the burn of champagne and the hoarse cry of gulls, their beaks swollen with barnacles, their foul garbaged mouths stuffed forever under the silent keel of the ship. (11)

The "prow," "vessel," "keel of the ship" bears the weight of the modern world, and into the night she plunges amid the "waters." The sea imagery is flanked by that of meteorology and geology: "unknown barometric pressures," and "unknown geologic fissures and caverns." Finally images of astronomy accompany the "ship of the world": "while the stars die out" and "myriads and myriads of worlds sinking down into cold incandescence, into fuliginous night" In the reality that is the Fourteenth Ward, Miller finds himself bogged down, as in an undersea world, fragmented by the weight of the real, adult world. It is a "schizophrenic"

world, diseased and chaotically deathlike, in the Bergsonian sense of the word "chaos." It was the schizophrenia that Anais Nin referred to in The Novel of the Future:

. . . and the death of emotion has led inevitably to excess violence which is the major theme of our literature today and a symptom of schizophrenia, violence in order to feel alive because the divided self feels its own death and seeks sensation to affirm its existence. (173)

Schizophrenia is the state of America, the "black curse" (Miller, Spring 21), and he becomes bedazzled by "the glorious collapse of the world" (21). And within this desert world is the street taken from a painting by de Chirico: " . . . a single being surrounded by the most magnificent empty streets, a human biped walking between the skyscrapers when all the inhabitants have fled" (23). Within the emptiness of the streets, however, he is still hopeful of finding himself, even while he dies--a survivor, an entity unto himself. He hopes to regain his essential self in the midst of cosmic destruction.

The next surreal section is about Paris, from which he writes this story on the third or fourth day of spring. He renders a self-portrait in jumbled mythological images that at times resemble Breughel and Bosch:

I am Chancre, the crab, which moves sideways and backwards and forwards at will. I move in strange tropics and deal in high explosives, embalming fluid, jasper, myrrh, smaragd, fluted snot, and

porcupines' toes. Because of Uranus which crosses my longitudinal I am inordinately fond of cunt, hot chitterlings, and water bottles. . . .
And so, when I stand at the bar of Little Tom Thumb and see these men with three-quarter faces coming up through the trapdoors of hell with pulleys and braces, dragging locomotives and pianos and cuspidors, I say to myself: "Grand! Grand! All this bric-a-brac, all this machinery coming to me on a silver platter! It's grand! (25-26)

This Paris reminds Miller of the diseased America of his birth. Expansion and contraction are observed in the self-portrait, which is characterized by diseases of sexuality: "Chancre," "crab," and "porcupine toes." The machinery imagery also contracts man and reminds one of Bunuel's film Un Chien Andalou. And the men in the bar afford him the opportunity to write and the fantastic vision of the pain that is America.

"A Saturday Afternoon" has Miller strolling across the Boulogne Bridge to Sevres. It leads to a discussion of urinals, which sparks his memory of America and its dissolution. Then he equates himself with Robinson Crusoe, a man content to be by himself and of himself. Miller likes this image because it reflects his contentment with himself as a writer who leads a lonely, alienated life. He notes the other Crusoe/writers he admired: Melville, Rimbaud, Gauguin, Jack London, Henry James, D. H. Lawrence. But they were unable to find happiness, instead finding--the plague of modern progress. The list that follows is expansive in

its attempt to flesh out progress. It is also surreal in its inherent incongruity. Note Miller's continued interest in mental and physical illness:

colonization, trade, free Bibles,
war, disease, artificial limbs, factories,
slaves, insanity, neuroses, psychoses,
cancer, syphilis, tuberculosis, anemia,
strikes, lockouts, starvation, nullity,
vacuity, restlessness, striving, despair,
ennui, suicide, bankruptcy, arterio-
sclerosis, megalomania, schizophrenia,
hernia, cocaine, prussic acid, stink
bombs, tear gas, mad dogs, auto-suggestion,
auto-intoxication, psychotherapy, hydrotherapy,
electric massages, vacuum cleaners, pemmican,
grape nuts, hemorrhoids, gangrene. (40)

The world of the Crusoe/writers is not a paradise, nor does it provide relative happiness. They all want escape from the plague: possessions, security, honor, renown. Instead they recommend dedication, charity, love, tolerance, and humility (Manning, "Purpose" 101).

At the very beginning of the section entitled "The Angel Is My Watermark!" Miller refers to a surreal characteristic--insanity--while he contemplates a painting of three miniature, deformed men, looking too heavy for their legs. He does not find the painting discomfiting, instead admitting that somewhere in the world there have to be three men whose bodies are too big for their legs. This painting, which to people would seem an aberration, to Miller seems entirely feasible: "It seems to me that the insane have a right to their vision as well as we" (54). This is a

surreal philosophy, as I have noted in my introduction. In fact, to the real the surrealists prefer to add the other dimension, the imaginative, paranoiac dimension of the insane to create a new blend of reality.

What is important in "The Angel Is My Watermark!" section is Miller's almost pedantic approach to creating a watercolor in the methodology of the surrealists. He, like Max Ernst, composes the watercolor in what can best be called an automatic, free-associational method. But there is more to it than this. By beginning with a picture of a horse, Miller finally ends up with an angel. This probably has everything to do with Miller's philosophy within the Tropics that wishes for a return to the primal, the animal, in order to attain one's essential self and Godliness. The horse becomes the angel just as a human, in discovery of himself, finds the source of all strength and freedom--God. Miller has already discussed this idea in Capricorn with man's description of his rock-like or essential self (and Miller was himself nicknamed "The Happy Rock"):

At the very bottom of the ladder,
chez the spermatozoa, there is the
same condition of bliss as at the top,
chez God. God is the summation of
all the spermatozoa come to full
consciousness. Between the bottom and
the top there is no stop, no halfway
station. The river starts somewhere in
the mountains and flows on into the sea.
On this river that leads to God the canoe
is as serviceable as the dreadnought.
From the very start the journey is
homeward. (Miller, Capricorn 204)

Notice within the above passage and in the contemplation of the creation of the "Angel" picture, the reversal of my expansion/contraction theory. Here all that is usually regarded as primitive, unimportant--ovaries, the womb, spermatozoa, rocks, and anything belonging to the animal world--can be construed as a contraction of life. But according to Miller's viewpoint, these reductions of life are really what make man expand psychologically and artistically. To peel away the onion skin until one gets to the center of the self, to expel the social trappings from the self, exposing that self until it is nearly dead, is to experience a kind of revitalization.

While Miller creates his painting, he is also philosophizing. But the actual painting is what is visually attractive and important at the moment. First he begins with a horse's ass (an Etruscan horse, no less). He paints on legs, five of them, and one he mutates to a phallus. The horse's stomach begins to resemble a hammock. Since he has trouble visualizing a horse's skull, he shuts his eyes and tries to experience the essence of "horsiness." Then he works on the mane, which reminds him of the way de Chirico put manes on his horses. This activity leads to criticism of artists like Michelangelo and Da Vinci, who he claims are pretentious (Spring 56). He tries to look up in a book how to paint a horse, but there are no examples for him to

follow. In the tradition of Lawrence, Miller values the horse as a basic artistic symbol, and he again links it with the work of the insane:

When the horse is missing there is something radically amiss! Human art goes hand in hand with the horse. It's not enough to hint that the symbolists and the imagists are, or were, a little detraqués. We want to know, in a study of insanity, what has become of the horse! (57)

As Miller says, he, in the way of Dali, draws a straw hat and melon beneath the horse's ass. Beneath the hat and melon he draws a man's head and body, seeming to tickle the horse's ass. All this drawing is accomplished in a very free, non-intellectual, non-purposive manner. When a drawn line suddenly looks like something he hadn't intended, he changes it into something else it does resemble. There are no rules, no inhibitory formalities during his creative act. Then he adds an angel above the volcano:

It is an object of an original nature, a purely gratuitous invention, and highly symbolic. It is a sad angel with a fallen stomach, and the wings are supported by umbrella ribs. It seems to come down from beyond the cadre of my ideas and hover mystically above the wild Ionian horse that is now lost to man. (59)

He dislikes other artists' renditions of angels because they conform to what an angel is supposed to look like. Then he reminisces on a past time when he had been caught up in a watercolor mania in which he did everything to the paintings--washing, scraping, pouring coffee grounds bread

crumbs, coal, and arnica on them (61). This, of course, is the art form of the surrealists that comes close to the "sand" paintings of Ernst and collage art. As part of the experiment, he spills wine on the paintings and steps on them. He goes on to say that a kind of insanity has gripped him that is in control of his work. This insane binge sets his watercolor afire, and soon he finds that his horse is no longer a horse anymore. In his apartment he finds a picture of Christ being tortured by the Jews. What follows is decidedly surreal in philosophy:

I bought the picture because of the pockmarks,
why I didn't know at the time. It's only
now that I've discovered the reason. (63)

He had bought the picture because the pockmarks on it had reminded him of the pockmarks on another painting, "Death on Bugs," in which the pockmarks represented bedbugs. Essentially, he bought the first painting because of "chance." This was the objet trouvé that stimulated his subconscious, and now, after this realization, he adds bedbugs or pockmarks to his "Angel" watercolor. Finally, when he's satisfied with the result of his painting, he takes it over to the sink, on a whim, and holds it under running water. What follows is a totally surreal outlook and statement:

You may say it's just an accident,
this masterpiece, and so it is! But
then, so is the Twenty-third Psalm. . . .
What appears now before my eyes is the

result of innumerable mistakes, withdrawals,
erasures, hesitations; it is also the
result of certitude. . . . Credit Dante,
credit Spinoza, credit Hieronymus Bosch.
. . . Put in the Day Book: Tante Melia
[Miller's Aunt Melia was officially insane].
. . . The world of real and counterfeit
is behind us. Out of the tangible we
have invented the intangible. (65)

Whoever observes his watercolor may make of it what he
wishes. The angel is there, as the surrealists would say,
to lead you to another realm, the realm between the real and
unreal, to a faultless, personal vision:

The angel is there to lead you to Heaven,
where it is all plus and no minus. The
angel is there like a watermark, a guarantee
of your faultless vision. The angel has no
goiter; it is the artist who has the goiter.
The angel is there to drop sprigs of parsley
in your omelette, to put a shamrock in your
buttonhole. I could scrub the mythology out
of the horse's mane; I could scrub the yellow
out of the Yangtze Kiang; I could scrub the
date out of the man in the gondola; I could
scrub out the clouds and the tissue paper
in which were wrapped the bouquets with forked
lightning. . . . But the angel I can't scrub
out. The angel is my watermark. (67)

If the angel is the artist's watermark, then that watermark
affords him a realization of himself because the angel means
to him what he wishes it to mean. The angel offers him a
chance at authenticity of self that no other angel painted
by a traditional, representational artist offers. The angel
is not only a watermark but a trademark of self. This angel
is the Godliness that Miller refers to in Capricorn, that
is love and the knowledge of one's essential self. Through
this automatic composition that began with a horse's ass,

Miller is able to shed the onion layers that force him to see art in a conventional way. Finally, having shed those layers, he arrives at the center of himself and is able to see HIS angel and his own valuable self--God.

In the next section Miller meets an eccentric poet, "Jabberwhorl Cronstadt," a free Parisian spirit par excellence. Some critics have called this section dadaistic because of the nonsensical language that resembles that of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," a nonsense poem. This section, unlike many others in this novel, is actually positive and wholly expansive in attitude. Jabberwhorl is a totally positive character because he is a free and independent spirit. In contrast to characters like Carl, Van Norden, and Moldorf, Jabberwhorl represents vitality. He views life poetically, imaginatively, without guidance from any authority or system. He floods Miller with memories of nonsensical, but lively, sparkling verbiage, which flows out of the real realm of consciousness and into the likes of Alice in Wonderland. Jabberwhorl is a "natural" man, receptive to imaginative encounters, affirming life no matter how much it makes one suffer. Jabberwhorl creates his own world in order to prosper in the real world. His language becomes his world, and in some people's minds, such as his wife's, a crazy person's world. In relationship to the theme of the novel, Jabberwhorl creates a world that is

"an alternative to the dying world which Miller is attempting to both flee and destroy" (Lewis 16). He and Miller are the only ones worthy of rebirth in this civilization that is running toward self-destruction (16).

The section is dense with surreal imagery. Norman Mailer notes that it is a parody of Joyce's Finnegans Wake. Wickes also thinks the Jabberwhorlian world is like Joyce's and Lewis Carroll's (26). Considering the surrealism, one should note the expansiveness of the images. In this case the addition of the surreal images does not take away from the object itself. On the contrary, the imagery serves only to expand more positively on the nature of the Jabberwhorl character:

He lives in the back of a sunken garden,
a sort of bosky glade shaded by whiffetrees
and spinozas, by deodors and baobabs, a
sort of queasy Buxtehude diapered with elytras
and feluccas. You pass through a sentry box
where the concierge twirls his mustache con
furioso like in the last act of Ouida. They
live on the third floor behind a mullioned
belvedere filigreed with snaffled spaniels and
sebaceous wens, with debentures and megrims
hanging out to dry. Over the bell-push it
says: "JABBERWHORL CRONSTADT," poet, musician,
herbologist, weather man, linguist, oceanographer,
old clothes, colloids." (115)

This is a demonstration in pure "experimental language" for Miller as well as a way to enlighten the reader about the essence of one man who, along with Miller, is self-alienated from society. Yet Jabberwhorl does not seem to be as upset with the state of affairs of the world as Miller.

Jabberwhorl, in contrast to Miller, seems to have "arrived" at his essential self. He has created it himself through his own language and collection of things that surround him. He surrounds himself with objects, phrases, things that express his personality. Take his cat, for instance:

Suddenly the door opens to admit an enormous epileptoid beast with fungoid whiskers. It is Jocatha the famished cat, a big, buggerish brute with a taupe fur and two black walnuts hidden under its kinkless tail. It runs about like a leopard, it lifts its hind leg like a dog, it micturates like an owl. (117)

Leon Lewis, in his analysis of this section of Black Spring, notes that Jabberwhorl is in the book for the reader to follow as an example of an ideal, one who is free to experience life and exploit the self fully: "The entire episode is drenched in a wash of word-play that dissects and then resurrects language in a kind of exhibition of how the poetic intelligence can create and explore systems of phenomenology" (17). Lewis believes that Jabberwhorl, in Whitmanesque-fashion, is singing the song of himself (17):

I, Jabberwhorl, and my wife Jill, and
after us legions upon legions . . . all
standing at the iron sink. Seeds falling
down through the drain; young cantaloupes,
squash, caviar, macaroni, bile, spittle,
phlegm, lettuce leaves, sardines' bones,
Worcestershire sauce, stale beer, urine,
bloodclots, Kruschen salts, oatmeal, chew
tobacco, pollen, dust, grease, wool, cotton
threads, match sticks, live worms, shredded
wheat, scalded milk, castor oil. (128)

Here are the waste products of modern life. His is the

dance of the primordial, essence, beingness. He, along with ovaries, the womb, sex, sperm, is a way out of the world's misery. He is the way toward the resurrection that Miller envisions. Jabberwhorl sings:

"First and last things. Elixir. I, Jabberwhorl, tasting the elixir of life and death. I, Jabberwhorl, of waste and H2O composed, of hot and cold and all the intermediate realms, of scum and rind, of finest, tiniest substance never lost, of great sutures and compact bone, of ice fissures and test tubes, of semen and ova fused, dissolved, dispersed, of rubber schnausel and brass spigot, of dead cathodes and squirming infusoria, of lettuce leaves and bottled sunlight . . . I, Jabberwhorl, sitting at the iron sink am perplexed and exalted, never less and never more than a poem, an iron stanza, a boiling follicle, a lost leucocyte. . . . Sing while the world sinks. . . . " (128-29)

The imagery in which Jabberwhorl describes himself is reductive: "elixir," "waste," "H2O," "sutures," "bone," "ice," "semen," "ova," "follicle," "leucocyte." It is a reduction down to the basic physical, nearly chemical essences of man. To these images Jabberwhorl compares himself, and in this reduction Jabberwhorl expands as a positive, self-alienated being. He is a poet of exaltation of the self.

"Into the Night Life" is another surreal sketch that, says Hassan in The Literature of Silence, prefigures William Burroughs (70). Brown says this is Miller's "most completely surreal composition, a patchwork of his actual dreams, captured in the language of dreams, complete with

abrupt transitions and irrational landscapes of the unconscious" (33). It is a nightmare world full of morbid images that shock and disturb. Some believe it is "too self-consciously strange" (Ferguson 246). Certainly the nightmare is beyond the realm of normal disturbances of sleep. It is a "vision of outrage and apocalypse" (Raaberg 255), which takes him through the streets of a fantastic Brooklyn, to explore Coney Island at night, to walk through a wild park of painful memory, to pre-Columbian America, and finally toward home (Brown33). Gordon thinks his fantasy passages in this novel and in the other two allow Miller the ability to mix his past life and the present with his themes of independence and the essential self (Mind 87).

"Into the Night Life" represents all the surreal, expansive-and-contractive properties that I had discussed particularly in the microscopic examples in Tropic of Cancer. Anais Nin called this chapter one of the most surrealistic in all his work, and noted the "autointoxication" of words and images, the play on words and the incongruous images. In it he also scrambled matter of the physical world (180). But this section must be regarded first as a whole before it is analyzed in parts. The night world here is like the world of Cancer--a world of dissolution and ennui. He dreams about a woman he has known before:

Everything is out of proportion--hands, feet, thighs, ankles. She's an equestrian statue without the horse, a fountain of flesh worn away to a mammoth egg. Out of the ballroom of flesh her body sings like iron. Girl of my dreams, what a splendid cage you make! Only where is the little perch for your three-pointed toes? The little perch that swung backward and forward between the brass bars? You stand by the window, dead as a canary, your toes stiff, your beak blue. You have the profile of a line drawing done with a meat-ax. Your mouth is a crater stuffed with lettuce leaves. Did I ever dream that you could be so enormously warm and lopsided? Let me look at your lovely jackal paws; let me hear the croaking, dingy chortle of your dry breath. (Miller, Spring 138)

The woman in his dreams is expanded beyond the normal idea of woman: to her is added the other dimensions of "an equestrian statue," "a fountain of flesh," a body that "sings like iron," "a cage," "a bird." Her mouth resembles a "crater stuffed with lettuce leaves," and she has "jackal paws." The reader visualizes much more than a woman. Yet, almost simultaneously the reader experiences a negative reaction to the imagery. The woman, while more than "woman," is actually less than woman, considering the addition of the traits that include "deformed," a "statue without a horse," "flesh worn away," "sings like iron," a bird "caged" and "dead as a canary." She is a flesh-eating mammal, a jackal, and he hears a "croaking, dingy chortle of dry breath." The woman is compared to Miller's native land (138), where he waits in a desert, desperate and hungry. From here he dreams he's riding on a train that finally

ends up at the sea. What follows is another surreal passage entitled "A Coney Island of the Mind":

The amusement shacks are running full blast, the shelves full of chinaware and dolls stuffed with straw and alarm clocks and spittoons. . . . Jabber, jabber, and over it all in a muffled roar comes the steady hiss and boom of the breakers, a long uninterrupted adenoidal wheeze that spread a clammy catarrh over the dirty shebang. Behind the pasteboard streetfront the breakers are ploughing up the night with luminous argent teeth; the clams are lying on their backs squirting ozone from their anal orifices. In the oceanic night Steeplechase looks like a wintry beard. Everything is sliding and crumbling, everything glitters, totters, teeters, titters.

Every man, woman, and child in a mackintosh has adenoids, spreads catarrh, diabetes, whooping cough, meningitis. . . . The monarch of the mind is a monkey wrench.
(140-1)

Even in the amusement parks disease runs rampant. In contrast to this surreal picture, which the reader can see expanding and contracting, the next passage, which takes Miller to his dreamland of a wild park, is expansive and stays expansive as an aspect of primal essence. While the Coney Island episode used imagery that added to the picture, those images also created chaos, confusion, and despair. In contrast the wild park scene is what Miller desires-- primordial essence and freedom of self. In the beauty of the forest, he meets a young couple, who enhance the picture of contentment within nature:

Onward they move in the phantasmal flux,
onward toward the knees of the glen and

the white-whiskered waters. Into the clear icy depths of the stream they walk, her bare back, his gleaming shirt studs, and from afar comes the plaintive tinkle of glass curtains brushing the metal teeth of the carousel. The water rushes down in a thin sheet of glass between the soft white mounds of the banks; it rushes below the knees, carrying the amputated feet forward like broken pedestals before an avalanche. Forward on their icy stumps they glide, their bat wings spread, their garments glued to their limbs. And always the water mounting, higher, higher, and the air growing colder, the snow sparkling like powdered diamonds. . . . The woman is seated like an angel on a river of ice, her wings spread, her hair flown back in stiff glassy waves. (150-51)

Here in the primordial nature Miller finds his solace, his essentialness, his freedom. But the wild park scene does not last long in his dream; it is interrupted by a journey back down the street of his youth. Again Miller refers to this "shedding" process that will ultimately reveal the dead center of self from which he can then experience rebirth: " . . . I have wandered back by devious routes to the hub where all is change and transformation, a white lamb continually shedding its skin" (151). He refers again to the "shedding" in the next paragraph and his death prior to rebirth:

When down this cold funereal street they
drove the hearse which I hailed with joy
had I already shed my skin? I was the
lamb and they drove me out. (151)

But his transformation or "shedding" to the primal lamb did not last long: "In an open thicket I was born with a mantle

of soft white wool. Only a little while did I graze in peace, and then a paw was laid upon me" (151). What happens is that civilization begins to cut away at him again. The memories of his early sorrows engulf him, and he cannot be reborn: "through the melting snow a carnage reigns: low Chinese horses hung with scalps, long finely jointed insects with green mandibles" (152).

The "Into the Night Life Section" continues in all its horror and surreal imagery. Death and despair are the overall message. Rebirth is to be hoped for, but it is, at this time, impossible to attain. Resurrection can be met only in the land of the next section, "Walking Up and Down in China."

Biographers of Henry Miller note his attraction to Zen Buddhism and, more particularly, Taoism. This philosophy aligned itself completely to Miller's as Ferguson notes: "Taoism had no rules and no dogma, and its only advice to would-be adherents was the injunction to discard wisdom and just flow along with things, with a full belly and an empty head" (215). This is where he happens upon the title he chose for himself--"the Happy Rock." "The Happy Rock" mirrors Taoism's claim to man's natural state and refers to this natural man as "the Great Clod," "the Uncarved Block," and "the True Man of Ancient Times" (215). In this philosophy the man must be what he must be (this is surreal philosophy as well) as a horse must be as a horse must be.

It encompasses the world of essential, natural being,
"uncompromised by the corruption of thought" (215).

"Walking Up and Down in China" represents the realm of pure being, such as that sought in the philosophy of Taoism (Brown 33). Again, in this section there is the notion of repeated death followed by rebirths. But rebirth is not yet possible. As a man Miller carries the capability of transformation within him:

I am in China and there are no clocks
or calendars here. I am sailing up the
Yangtze in a dhow and what food I gather
is collected from the garbage dumped
overboard by the American gunboats. It
takes me all day to prepare a humble
meal, but it is a delectable meal and I
have a cast-iron stomach. (166)

It is Chinese philosophy that Miller claims is needed for such a miserable world as ours. The themes of dissolution, despair, disease, and death that had dominated Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn unfortunately continue in Black Spring. Miller expresses his warning:

I believe, as I walk through the horror
of the present, that only those who have
the courage to close their eyes, only
those whose permanent absence from the
condition known as reality can affect
our fate. . . . I believe that the whole
world--not the earth alone and the beings
which compose it, nor the universe whose
elements we have charted, including the
island universes beyond our sight and
instruments--but the whole world, known
and unknown, is out of kilter, screaming
in pain and madness. . . . and that there
will be no escape from this universal fate
unless simultaneously here, there, beyond

and everywhere each and every one, man,
beast, plant, mineral, rock, river, tree and
mountain wills it. (167-68)

At the end of the novel, Miller becomes the Zen Buddhist
himself as he awaits his own transformation into
resurrection and those around him:

I go now to sit on the mountain top, to
wait another ten thousand years while you
struggle up toward the light. . . . This
evening I would like to meditate a bit in
peace and quiet. (207)
Tonight I shall meditate upon that which
I am. (208)

From the cancer that is our world, Miller hopes to find
salvation in essential being, in life, in being. He
is, as he hopes we all are, in the final stages of shedding
his onion skins to arrive at the center of himself. He
wishes us all to follow his course of action, learning to
become ourselves, regardless of the dissolute world around
us. According to Taoist philosophy Miller will live, hope,
and dream. As a horse lives to be a horse, as an angel is
an angel, Miller must be Miller.

Conclusion

Among the critics there is no disputing that Henry Miller was a surrealist. By definition this means that he was capable, by the incongruous matching of images, to create a heightened reality or a super-reality within his novels. I have demonstrated how his ability to write in this kind of fourth dimension--sur-reality--also reflects an ability to expand and contract his images, so thoroughly suited for showing a world in dissolution. Using such metaphors enabled Miller to comment on the chaotic society of which he was a part.

In Tropic of Cancer he "expanded" realistic images into the imaginative world of the surreal by joining them with incongruous images that ranged from the primordial to images of disease and fragmentation and infestation of the human body. He also relied on scatological language as well as food imagery. In addition he included animal and insect imagery.

In Tropic of Capricorn and Black Spring Miller's image-making took an more fragmentary but inclusive turn. While a

macroscopic view of the modern world demonstrated basic human excretory functions, disease, and primordial nature in Cancer, the pattern-imagery in his other two books broke down the excretory and primordial worlds into their elemental parts. Basically, then, Miller changed his image-making pattern to include the language of science, with the language of science broken down into images of meteorology, chemistry, biology, astronomy, metallurgy, mechanics, mathematics, geometry, geology, and geography. His allegiance to the primitive and elemental became even more primal, basic, as he broke up the primordial into chemical components of slime and ooze from which the earth originated. Just as he had, in Cancer, fragmented pieces of the human body, he also chose in these later books to "atomize" the primeval--descending even further into the atomic make-up of the world, the elemental forces of life associated with the big bang.

The result is an incongruous mixture of images of the real world of modern society alongside the specifics of science. Miller's point in using such combinations is similar to his "unstitched wound" image. The images are two-sided; they can at once be understood in terms of a scrofulous, disease-laden, hard-core world as well as in terms of salvation. Man's only hope in this world lies in his ability to get back to these basic, instinctual, primordial values.



Fig. 1.

Hieronymus Bosch. The Garden of Earthly Delights, c. 1500.

Prado, Madrid. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane. Surrealist Art.

New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 11.



Fig. 2.

Etching by André Masson, Mauvais Sang (Bad Blood), from Arthur Rimbaud, Une Saison en enfer, Copyright SPADEM, Paris; VAGA, New York, 1985. Rpt. in Hubert, Renee Riese, Surrealism and the Book. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988: Plate 25.

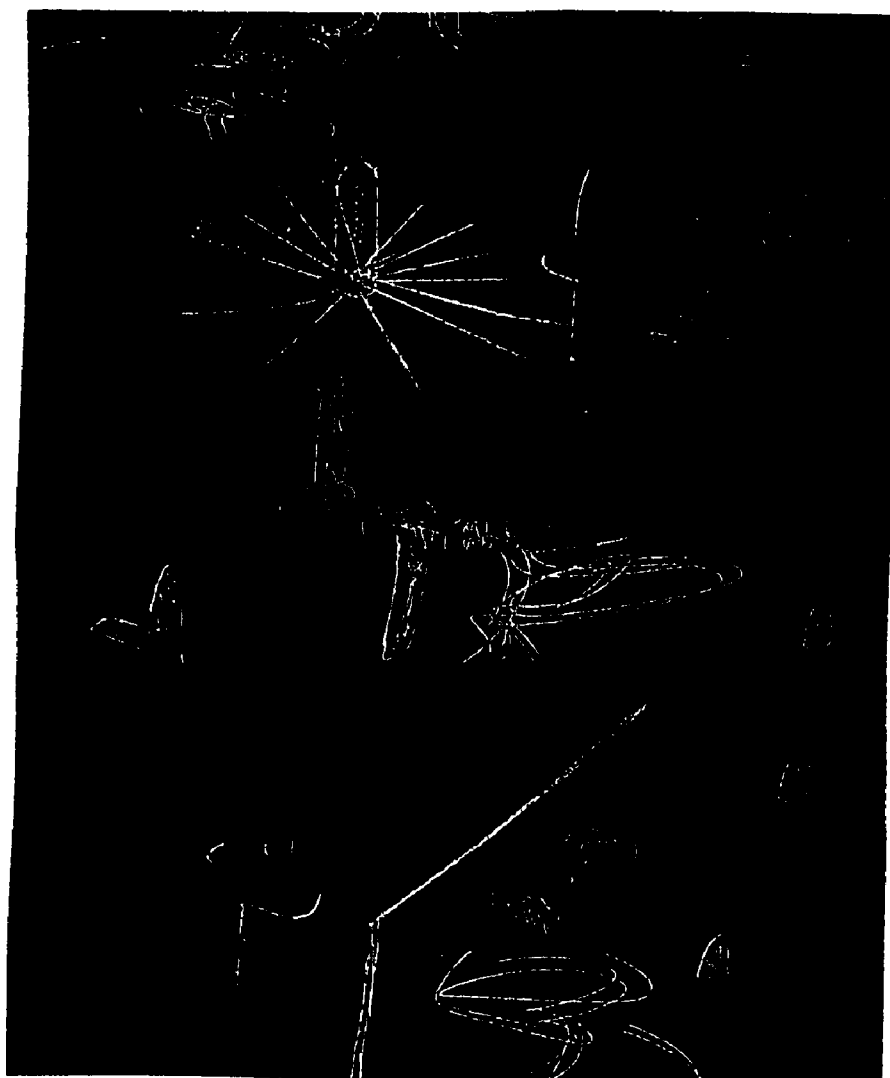


Fig. 3.

Etching by Sebastian Matta, Je fixe les vertiges (I Arrested Turmoils), from Arthur Rimbaud, Une Saison en enfer. Ediciones Poligrafa, Barcelona: 1979. Copyright: ADAGP, Paris; VAGA, New York, 1985. Rpt. in Hubert, Renee Riese. Surrealism and the Book. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988: Plate 27.

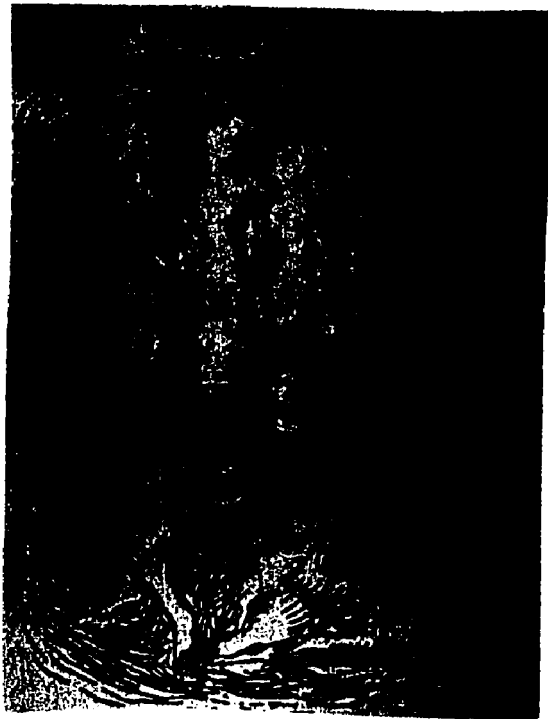


Fig. 4.

Drawing by René Magritte from Comte de Lautréamont, Les Chants de Maldoror, copyright Georgette Magritte, 1985. Rpt. in Hubert, Renee Riese. Surrealism and the Book. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988: 200.

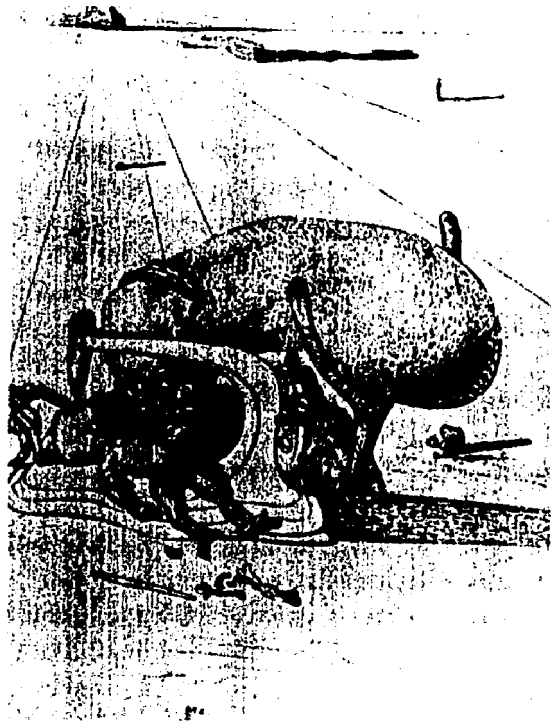


Fig. 5.

Etching by Salvador Dalí from Comte de Lautréamont, Les Chants de Maldoror, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Rpt. in Hubert, Renee Riese. Surrealism and the Book. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, 217.



Fig. 6.

René Magritte Philosophy in the Boudoir, 1947. Thomas Claburn Jones collection, New York. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane. Surrealist Art. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 128.

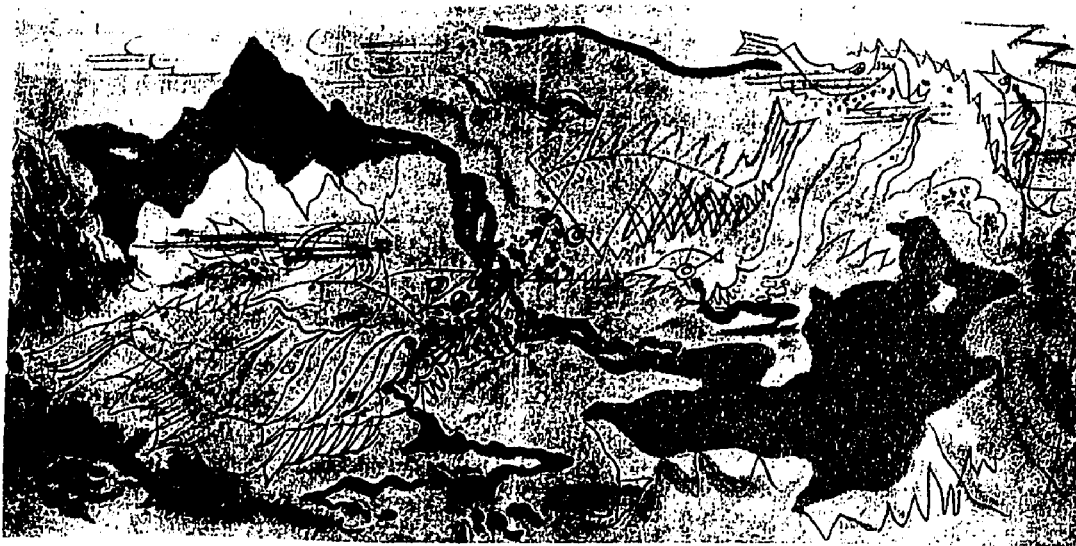


Fig. 7.

André Masson. Battle of Fish, 1927. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Rpt. in Schneede, Uwe M. Surrealism. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973: 87.

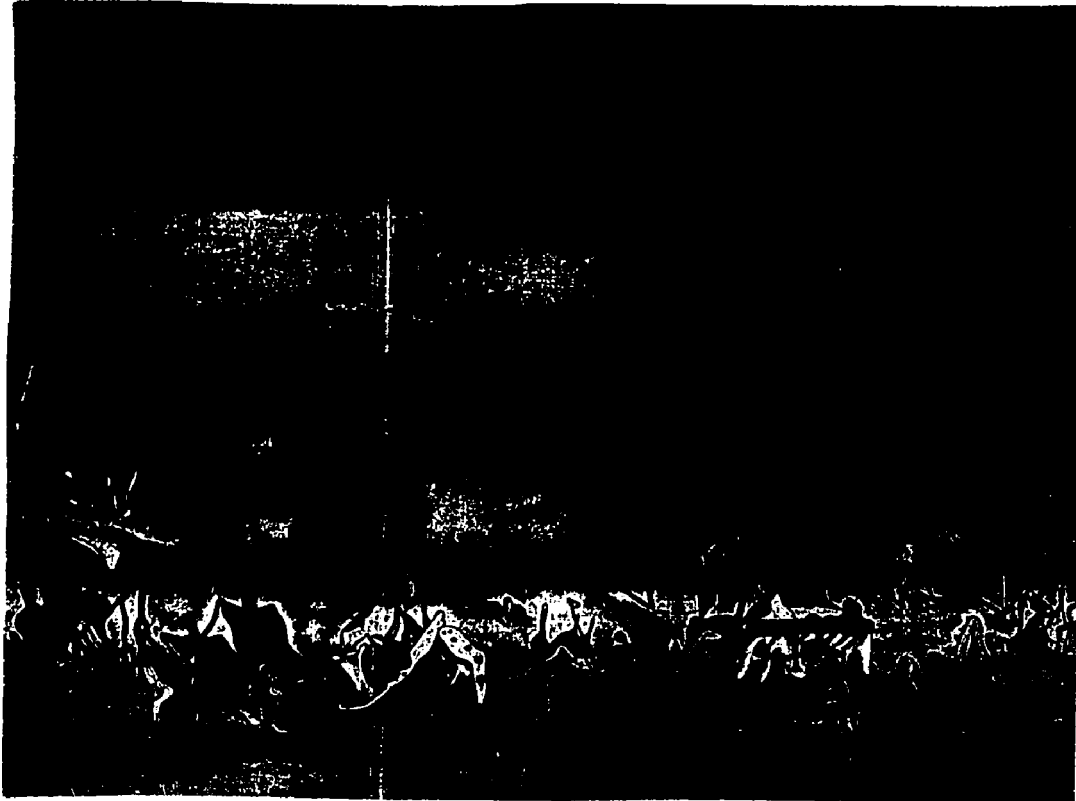


Fig. 8.

Yves Tanguy. The Ribbon of Extremes, 1932. Private collection, London. Rpt. in Schneede, Uwe M. Surrealism. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973: 83.



Fig. 9.

Meret Oppenheim. Le Déjeuner en Fourrure. (Cup, saucer and spoon in fur), 1936. Museum of Modern Art: New York. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane. Surrealist Art. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 144.

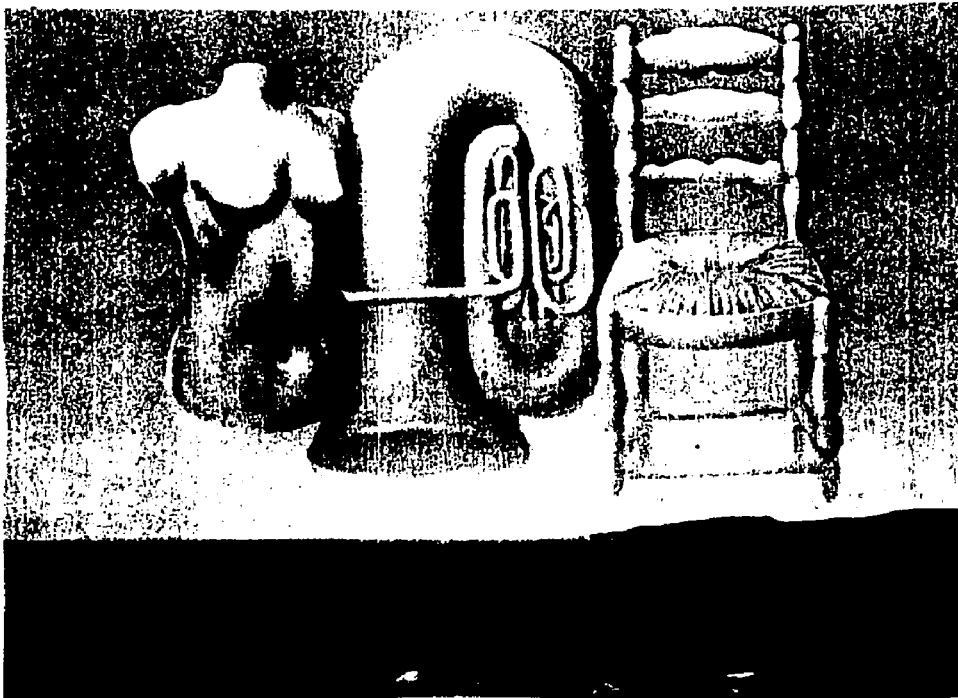


Fig. 10.

René Magritte. Threatening Weather, 1928. Roland Penrose collection: London. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane. Surrealist Art. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 124.

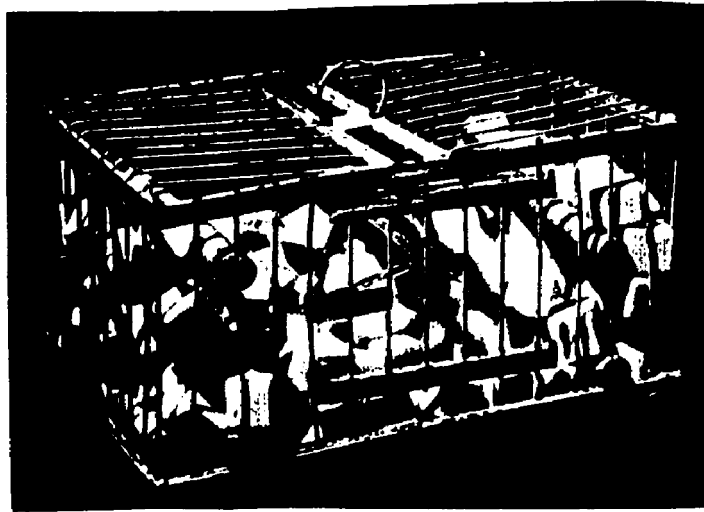


Fig. 11.

Marcel Duchamp. Why Not Sneeze Rose Selavy?, 1921, readymade. Philadelphia Museum of Art: Philadelphia. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane. Surrealist Art. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 141.



Fig. 12.

René Magritte. Le Viol, 1934. Collection of George Melly:
London. Rpt. in Sandrow, Nahma. New York: Harper and Row
Publishers, 1972: 92.



Fig. 13.

Salvador Dali. The Persistence of Memory, 1931. Museum of Modern Art: New York. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane.

Surrealist Art. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 97.

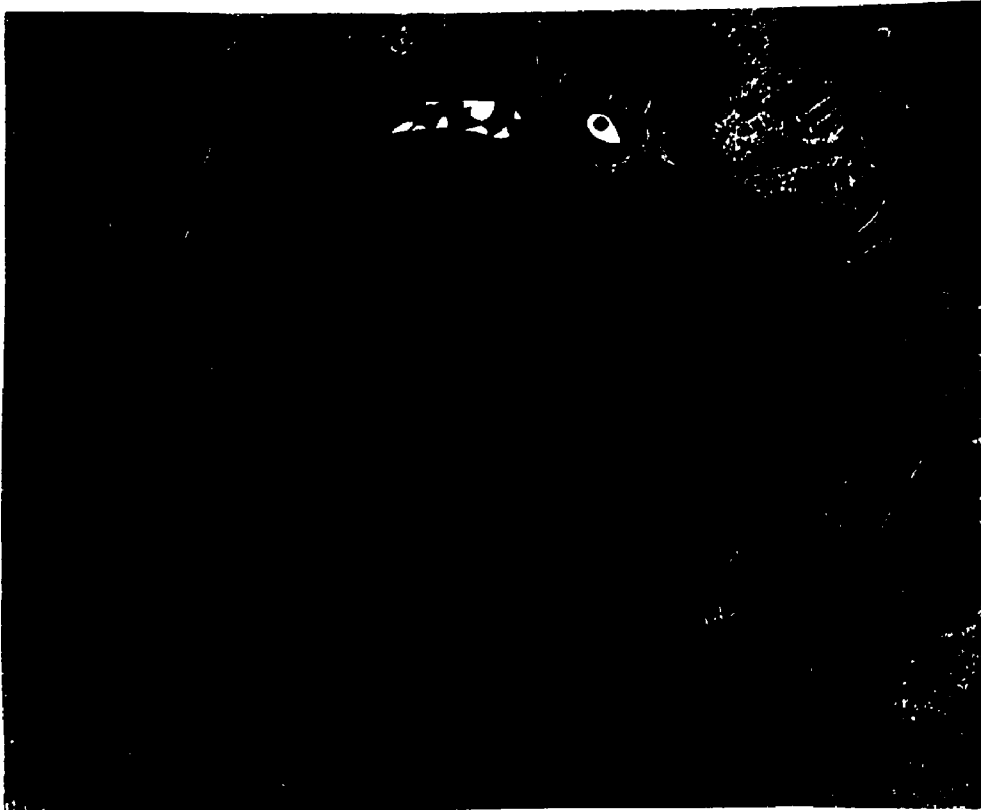


Fig. 14.

Joan Miró. Head of a Woman, 1938. Mr. and Mrs. Donald Winston Collection: Los Angeles. Rpt. in Alexandrian, Sarane. Surrealist Art. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970: 80.



Fig. 15.

Henry Miller. The Lovers, 1944. Collection of Lepska Warren, Santa Barbara, CA. Rpt. in Young, Noel. The Paintings of Henry Miller . San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1982: 50

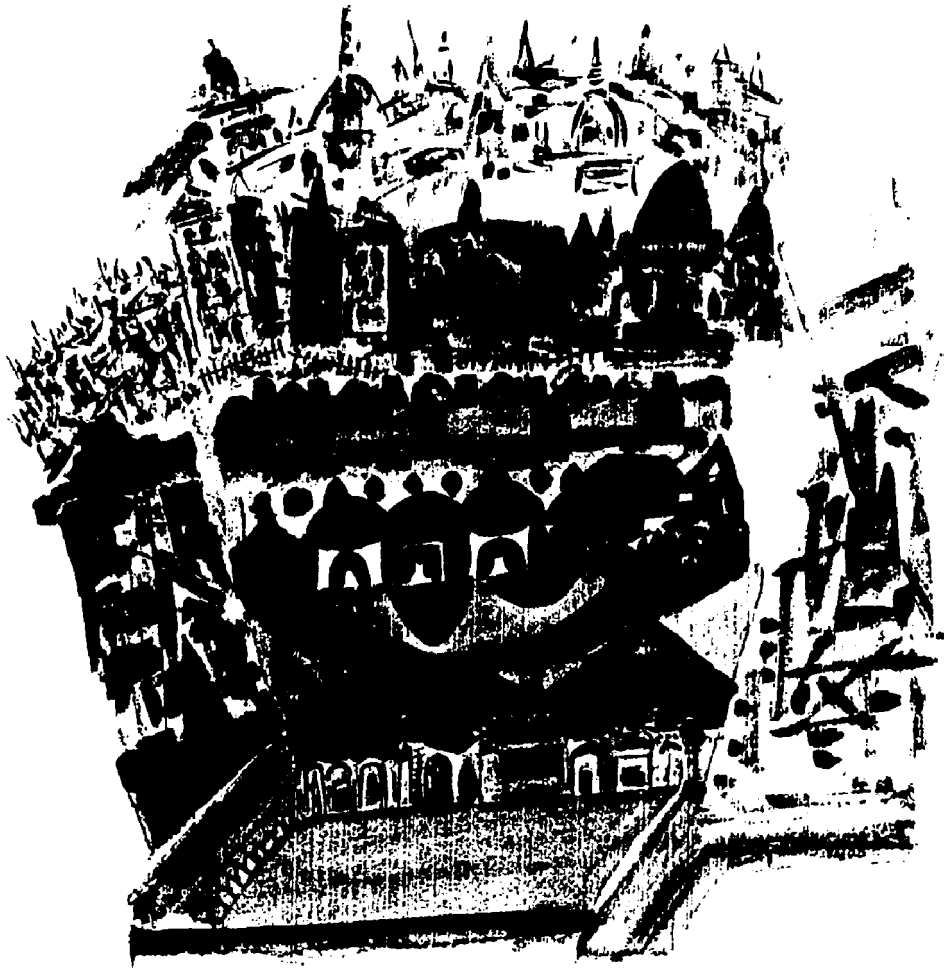


Fig. 16.

Henry Miller. Architectural Fantasy, 11/53. Collection of S. Kubo, Tokyo. Rpt. in Young, Noel. The Paintings of Henry Miller. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1982: 57.

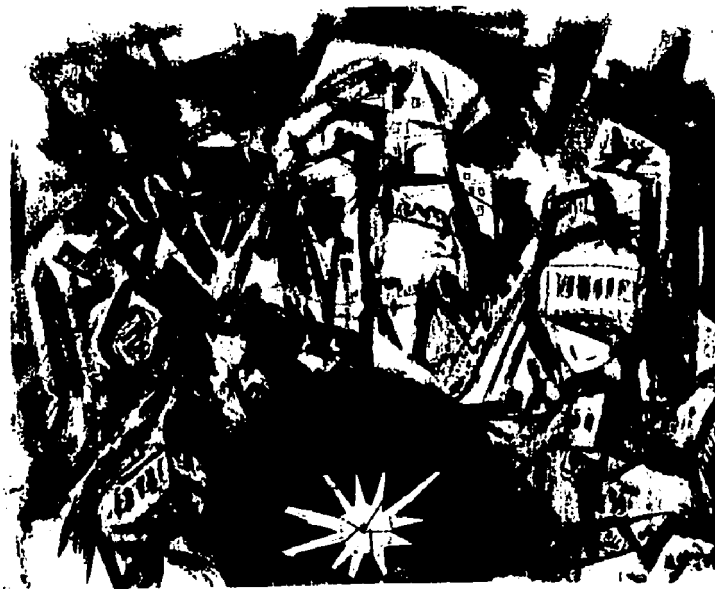


Fig. 17.

John Marin. Lower Manhattan, 1922 (composition derived from top of Woolworth Building), Museum of Modern Art, New York. Rpt. in Canaday, John. Mainstreams of Modern Art. New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1959: 444.

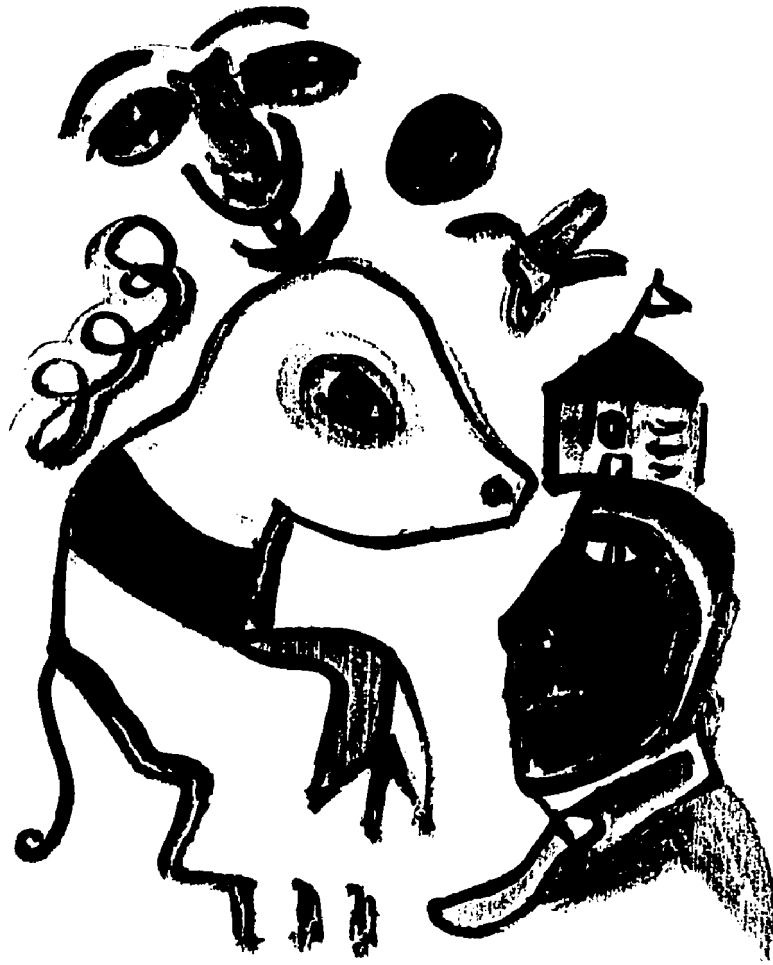


Fig. 18.

Henry Miller. Untitled, 10/67. Collection of Henry Miller.
Rpt. in Young, Noel. The Paintings of Henry Miller. San
Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1982: 88.



Fig. 19.

Marc Chagall. I and My Village, 1911. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Rpt. in Canaday, John. Mainstreams of Modern Art. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1959: 533.



Fig. 20.

Henry Miller. Untitled, 25/78. Collection of UCLA Special Collections, Los Angeles. Rpt. in Young, Noel. The Paintings of Henry Miller. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1982: 139.



Fig. 21.

Henry Miller. Untitled, 1932. Collection of UCLA Special Collections, Los Angeles. Rpt. in Young, Noel. The Paintings of Henry Miller. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1982: 40.



Fig. 22.

Georges Rouault. Pierrot with a Rose, 1936. Collection S. S. White III and Vera White, Artmore, Pa. Rpt. in Canaday, John. Mainstreams of Modern Art. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1959: 412.

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Appendix A

"Henry Miller's Surreal Lists in Tropic of Cancer

Description of Tania (5):

Tania is like Irene. She expects fat letters. But there is another Tania, a Tania like a big seed, who scatters pollen everywhere--or, let us say, a little bit of Tolstoy, a stable scene in which the fetus is dug up. Tania is a fever, too--les voies urinaires, Cafe de la Liberte, Place des Vosges, bright neckties on the Boulevard Montparnasse, dark bathrooms, Porto Sec, Abdulla cigarettes, the adagio sonata Pathetique, aural amplifiers, anecdotal seances, 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. Tania says so that every one may hear: "I love him!"

Miller begins with a description of Tania that is realistic; he compares her to another woman. But from here he reduces her to a seed scattering pollen. Then she becomes a fever, symbolic of French places and society. The images are incongruous, vibrant, violent, opulent: "burnt sienna breasts," "heavy garters, "golden pheasants

stuffed with chestnuts," "taffeta fingers," "carpets of blood and soft thighs." Images of food and disease predominate as well.

Description of Moldorf (8):

It is the caricature of a man which Moldorf first presents. Thyroid eyes. Michelin lips. Voice like pea soup. Under his vest he carries a little pear. However you look at him it is always the same panorama: netsuke snuffbox, ivory handle, chess piece, fan, temple motif. He has fermented so long now that he is amorphous. Yeast despoiled of its vitamins. Vase without a rubber plant.

The description continues onto the next page, but Miller certainly does paint Moldorf in caricature in this description. He is fermenting, plant-like, with a voice like "soup"--a representation of modern humanity.

The cathedral for those of lost identity (27):

We are swimming on the face of time and all else has drowned, is drowning, or will drown. It will be enormous, the Book. There will be oceans of space in which to move about, to perambulate, to sing, to dance, to climb, to bathe, to leap somersaults, to whine, to rape, to murder. A cathedral, a veritable cathedral, in the building of which everybody will assist who has lost his identity. There will be masses for the dead, prayers, confessions, hymns, a moaning and a chattering, a sort of murderous insouciance; there will be rose windows and gargoyles and acolytes and pallbearers. You can bring your horses in and gallop through the aisles. You can butt your head against the walls--they won't give. You can pray in any language you choose, or you can curl up outside and go to sleep. It will

last a thousand years, at least, this cathedral, and there will be no replica, for the builders will be dead and the formula too. We will have postcards made and organize tours. We will build a town around it and set up a free commune. We have no need for genius--genius is dead. We have need for strong hands, for spirits who are willing to give up the ghost and put on flesh. . . .

In this passage Miller comforts the lost souls of the world who will be able to pray in their cathedral the way they need to pray for themselves. This cathedral is that of freedom of spirit, not the typical cathedral erected by traditional religion.

Description of Paris (29):

Paris is simply an artificial stage, a revolving stage that permits the spectator to glimpse all phases of the conflict. Of itself Paris initiates no dramas. They are begun elsewhere. Paris is simply an obstetrical instrument that tears the living embryo from the womb and puts it in the incubator. Paris is the cradle of artificial births. Rocking here in the cradle each one slips back into his soil: one dreams back to Berlin, New York, Chicago, Vienna, Minsk. Vienna is never more Vienna than in Paris. Everything is raised to apotheosis. The cradle gives up its babes and new ones take their places. You can read here on the walls where Zola lived and Balzac and Dante and Strindberg and everybody who ever was anything. Everyone has lived here some time or other.

Miller describes Paris as a universal stage for all people. It is the birthing place for individuals and other cities of the world. Paris is all-encompassing in its incongruity. Sexual imagery and geographical places abound alongside respected authors.

Description of New York (68):

When I think of this city where I was born and raised, this Manhattan that Whitman sang of, a blind, white rage licks my guts. New York! The white prisons, the sidewalks swarming with maggots, the breadlines, the opium joints that are built like palaces, the kikes that are there, the lepers, the thugs, and above all, the ennui, the monotony of faces, streets, legs, houses, skyscrapers, meals, posters, jobs, crimes, loves. . . . A whole city erected over a hollow pit of nothingness. Meaningless. Absolutely meaningless. And Forty-second Street! The top of the world, they call it. Where's the bottom then? You can walk along with your hands out and they'll put cinders in your cap. Rich or poor, they walk along with head thrown back and they almost break their necks looking up at their beautiful white prisons. They walk along like blind geese and the searchlights spray their empty faces with flecks of ecstasy.

This is the New York that Miller feels represents the dissolute society of the modern American world. He contrasts the New York of Whitman to what he feels raging in his guts. The images that follow are excretory, diseased, criminal, that of the void caught in the "beautiful white prison" of the city.

His dream of Van Norden's having sex (126):

I see him standing over the woman with that alert, eager look in his eye which comes when he wants something badly. The street in which this is going on is blurred--only the angle made by the two walls is clear, and the cowering figure of the woman. I can see him going at her in that quick, animal way of his, reckless of what's going on about him, determined

only to have his way. And a look in his eyes as though to say--"you can kill me afterwards, but just let me get it in . . . I've got to get it in!" And there he is, bent over her, their heads knocking against the wall, he has such a tremendous erection that it's simply impossible to get it in her. Suddenly, with that disgusted air which he knows so well how to summon, he picks himself up and adjusts his clothes. He is about to walk away when suddenly he notices that his penis is lying on the sidewalk. It is about the size of a sawed-off broomstick. He picks it up nonchalantly and slings it under his arm. As he walks off I notice two huge bulbs, like tulip bulbs, dangling from the end of the broomstick, and I can hear him muttering to himself "flowerpots . . . flowerpots."

This is a list within a narration of the sex act. The act mixes passionate sexual energy with nonchalance. Van Norden seems unaware of the importance, other than the animal, of the sex act. To him it has the importance of a "flowerpot." He is looking for a place to plant his bulb/testicles, aimlessly looking for a flowerpot.

Description of a pimp at a cafe on the Rue Faubourg Montmartre (158):

. . . they [pimps] attach themselves to you like barnacles, they eat into you like ants, they coax, wheedle, cajole, implore, beseech, they try it out in German, English, Spanish, they show you their torn hearts and their busted shoes, and long after you've chopped the tentacles away, long after the fizz and sizzle has died out, the fragrance of the lavabo clings to your nostrils--

The pimp is not only human but takes on the characteristics of primitive animals like barnacles and

things that have tentacles. To this is added universality because he can speak every language to accomplish his job.

The view of the artist and Matisse (163):

In every poem by Matisse there is the history of a particle of human flesh which refused the consummation of death. The whole run of flesh, from hair to nails, expresses the miracle of breathing, as if the inner eye, in its thirst for a greater reality, had converted the pores of the flesh into hungry seeing mouths. . . . He stands at the helm peering with steady blue eyes into the portfolio of time. . . . Looking down the vast promontory of his nose he has beheld everything--the Cordilleras falling away into the Pacific, the history of the Diaspora done in vellum, shutters fluting the froufrou of the beach, the piano curving like a conch, corollas giving out diapasons of light, chameleons squirming under the book press, eraglios expiring in oceans of dust, music issuing like fire from the hidden chromosphere of pain, spore and madrepoire fructifying the earth, navels vomiting their bright spawn of anguish. . . . He is a bright sage, a dancing seer who, with a sweep of the brush, removes the ugly scaffold to which the body of man is chained by the incontrovertible facts of life. He it is, if any man today possesses the gift, who knows where to dissolve the human figure, who has the courage to sacrifice an harmonious line in order to detect the rhythm and murmur of the blood, who takes the light that has been refracted inside him and lets it flood the keyboard of color. Behind the minutiae, the chaos, the mockery of life, he detects the invisible pattern; he announces his discoveries in the metaphysical pigment of space. No searching for formulae, no crucifixion of ideas, no compulsion other than to create. Even as the world goes to smash there is one man who remains at the core, who becomes more solidly fixed and anchored, more centrifugal as the process of dissolution quickens.

In the art of Matisse is a world that defies the death

of society. Again the imagery is elemental, chemical, of the primitiveness of the earth. It reaches cosmic proportions and grasps the infinitude of the entire earth. Matisse is a sage who beautifies ugly man. His ability to create saves the world.

The unstitched-wound episode (247):

Mother of all harlots, spider rolling
us in your logarithmic grave, insatiable
one, fiend whose laughter rives me! I
look down into that sunken crater, world
lost and without traces, and I hear the
bells chiming, two nuns at the Palace
Stanislas and the smell of rancid butter
under their dresses, manifesto never
printed because it was raining, war fought
to further the cause of plastic surgery,
the Prince of Wales flying around the world
decorating the graves of unknown heroes.
Every bat flying out of the belfry a lost
cause, every whoopla a groan over the radio
from the private trenches of the damned.
Out of that dark, unstitched wound, that
sink of abominations, that cradle of
black-throated cities where the music of
ideas is drowned in cold fat, out of strangled
Utopias is born a clown, a being divided
between beauty and ugliness, between light
and chaos, a clown who when he looks down
and sidelong is Satan himself and when he
looks upward sees a buttered angel, a snail
with wings.

There is incongruity in this list that ranges from earthy characteristics to palatial extravagance to war to animal traits. The wound is an abomination and a Utopia from which is birthed a clown who is Satan himself. The last description of it is of a snail with wings.

Description of the artist (254-5):

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 this soggy dough into bread and the bread into wine and the wine into song. Out of the dead compost and the inert slag they breed a song that contaminates. I see this other race of individuals ransacking the universe, turning everything upside down, their feet always moving in blood and tears, their hands always empty, always clutching and grasping for the beyond, for the god out of reach: slaying everything within reach in order to quiet the monster that gnaws at their vitals. . . . 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. The rest is human. The rest belongs to life and lifelessness.

The "inhuman" is the artist--the savior of humanity, according to Miller. The artist is the existential hero who acts according to impulses and tries to resurrect lifeless humanity. Again the earth and compost imagery characterizes the passage, as do body parts and violent rending of human flesh in the name of art and salvation.

River and flow (256):

I want a world of men and women, of trees that do not talk (because there is too much talk in the world as it is!) of rivers that put you in touch with other men and women, with architecture, religion, plants, animals--rivers that have boats on them and

in which men drown, drown not in myth and legend and books and dust of the past, but in time and space and history. I want rivers that make oceans such as Shakespeare and Dante, rivers which do not dry up in the void of the past.

Miller's wish is for a Lawrentian river, one that is natural, a river unto itself and not mentalized by legends. His river puts man in contact with the flow of instinctive life and art.

Reminiscing on the past (266):

The earth is parched and cracked. Men and women come together like broods of vultures over a stinking carcass, to mate and fly apart again. Vultures who drop from the clouds like heavy stones. Talons and beak, that's what we are! A huge intestinal apparatus with a nose for dead meat. Forward! Forward without pity, without compassion, without love, without forgiveness. Ask no quarter and give none! More battleships, more poison gas, more high explosives! More gonococci! More streptococci! More bombing machines! More and more of it--until the whole fucking works is blown to smithereens, and the earth with it!

Miller demonstrates the Lawrentian desire for destruction that is necessary prior to rebirth, rebirth of the world and self. Humanity is carrion and carrion-eater at the same time. Violence and war rage within mankind. Humanity must destroy itself before it can be resurrected.

The Lycee (282):

Who am I? What am I doing here? I fall between the cold walls of human malevolence, a white figure fluttering, sinking down

through the cold lake, a mountain of skulls
above me. I settle down to the cold
latitudes, the chalk steps washed with indigo.
The earth in its dark corridors knows my step,
feels a foot abroad, a wing stirring, a gasp
and a shudder. I hear the learning chaffed
and chuzzled, the figures mounting upward,
bat slime dripping aloft and clanging with
pasteboard golden wings; I hear the trains
collide, the chains rattle, the locomotive
chugging, snorting, sniffing, steaming and
pissing. All things come to me through the
clear fog with the odor of repetition, with
yellow hangovers and Gadzooks and whettikins.
In the dead center, far below Dijon, far
below the hyperborean regions, stands God
Ajax, his shoulders strapped to the mill
wheel, the olives crunching, the green marsh
water alive with croaking frogs.

Miller here recounts his loss of identity when he was
teaching English to French students in France. Images of
death and mangling characterize his sense of himself as
hanging over the void.

A moment of silence and dread (286):

The silence descends in volcanic chutes.
Yonder, in the barren hills, rolling
onward toward the great metallurgical
regions, the locomotives are pulling
their merchant products. Over steel
and iron beds they roll, the ground
sown with slag and cinders and purple
ore. In the baggage car, kelps,
fishplate, rolled iron, sleepers, wire
rods, plates and sheets, laminated
articles, hot rolled hoops, splints
and mortar carriages, and Zores ore.
The wheels U-80 millimeters or over.
Pass splendid specimens of Anglo-Norman
architecture, pass pedestrians and pederasts,
open hearth furnaces, basic Bessemer mills,
dynamos and transformers, pig iron castings
and steel imgots. The public at large,
pedestrians and pederasts, goldfish and
spun-glass palm trees, donkeys sobbing,

all circulating freely through quincuncial
alleys. At the Place du Bresil a lavender eye.

This list seems to foreshadow imagery that is to come in the
other two novels of the trilogy. The reader should note the
metallurgical images and the machine imagery as well as
images of architecture.

Vita

Gay Louise Balliet, the daughter of Ralph and Anna Eckensberger, was born in Northampton county, PA, on May 23, 1952. She graduated "cum laude" with an A.B. in English from Muhlenberg College in 1974. She received her master's degree in English from Lehigh University in 1991. She has taught high school English for 14 years and has been instructing at Allentown College for the past three years.

Publication history consists of Such Agreeable Friends of 1987, a nonfiction book. She also has a scholarly article published in 1990 in English Language Notes entitled, "The Wife of Chaucer's Reeve's Tale: Siren of Sweet Vengeance." She has been a member of the Author's Guild of New York City since 1987. Gay owns and operates Just for the Halibut, an art gallery on Cherryville Road outside of Northampton, PA; her specialty is underwater photography.